

C.R.A.C.K. PROGRAM -- PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT OR CONTROL OF CERTAIN POPULATIONS?

On the surface, CRACK's goals don't necessarily seem dangerous or objectionable. For example they say that "The program is completely voluntary for participants,"¹ and that their mission is "to *empower* the active or recovering addict with the ability and freedom to control their lives."²

Statements, by their founder and director, Barbara Harris however make clear that control, not empowerment, is in fact CRACK's primary purpose. As one commentary, quoting Ms. Harris observed,

"Addict, recovering addict, dirty, clean . . . whatever. The distinction hardly matters to CRACK (Children Requiring a Caring Kommunity), the group that gave [the client] the money. 'As long as they stay on birth control,' says founder Barbara Harris, 'That's all we care about.'³

Similarly, Ms. Harris has stated: "Finally I realized. . . . that if I wanted these women to take birth control, I'd have to do it on my own,"⁴ and she has said "It's sad that they're on drugs, but the bottom line is, I don't want them to get pregnant."⁵ Ms. Harris has also written: "We don't say we're concerned with the welfare of the mothers. Crack's mission is to stop them from having more doomed babies."⁶ A flyer they distributed also strongly suggests that their real mission is control rather than empowerment. Its headline read: "Don't let a pregnancy ruin your drug habit."⁷

In fact, CRACK's chief spokesperson, has expressed extraordinary disdain for the program's clients, comparing them to animals: "I'm not saying these women are dogs, but they're not acting any more responsible than a dog in heat."⁸ She has also stated: "We don't allow dogs to breed. We spay them. We neuter them. We try to keep them from having unwanted puppies, and yet these women are literally having litters of children."⁹ And again, in another context: "They're having litters. They are literally having litters."¹⁰

¹ Project Prevention, *How We Help the Children*, at <http://www.cashforbirthcontrol.com/program..>

² Project Prevention, *Our Mission*, at <http://www.cashforbirthcontrol.com/index.html>.

³ Amy Roe, *The Fix*, WILLAMETTE WEEK ONLINE, at <http://www.wweek.com/flafiles/News3491.lasso>.

⁴ Margot Hornblower, *Benevolent Bribery-or Racism? A California Mom Stirs Debate by Paying Drug Users to Stop Having Kids*, TIME, Aug. 23, 1999, at 47; Eli Sanders, *\$200 to Curb an Addict's Fertility Controversial Program Finds Willing Takers in Seattle*, SEATTLE TIMES, Apr. 13, 2000, at A1.

⁵ People Magazine 9/27/99 at 147.

⁶ Barbara Harris, *Letter to the Editor*, SALON, Sept./Oct. 2002, at <http://www.salon.com/archives/date.html>.

⁷ On file with NAPW.

⁸ *Dateline NBC: The Crusader; One Woman's Crusade to Help Babies Born to Drug Addicted Mothers* (NBC television broadcast, Sept. 9, 1998).

⁹ *Crack Uses Unethical Tactics to Stop Women with Substance Abuse Problems from Becoming Pregnant*, in POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS 8 (1999) (citing, *Mothers Paid to Stop Having Children*, MARIE CLAIRE, Dec. 1998).

¹⁰ Jeff Stryker, *Cracking down*, Salon at http://www.salonmagazine.com/mwt/feature/1998/07/cov_10feature.html.

See Sarah Dateno, *Coercive Pop Control Comes Home*, POPULATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE REVIEW (Aug./Sept. 1999) available at <http://www.pop.org/main.cfm?id=153&r1=1.00&r2=3.00&r3=98.00&r4=7.00&level=4&eid=42> ("[w]e campaign to neuter dogs and yet we allow women to have 10 or 12 kids that they can't take care of."); see also *Children or Crack: Which Would You Choose?*, THE GUARDIAN (Dec. 3, 1998), available at

On the television news program 60 Minutes II, Ms. Harris was asked about these comments and given an opportunity to distance herself from them. She replied: “Well you know my son that goes to Stanford said ‘Mom, please don’t ever say that again’ But it’s the truth, they don’t just have one and two babies they have litters.”¹¹

Although CRACK claims that --“[e]very woman that chooses to use birth control does so by choice, we don’t talk anyone into making that decision, the decision is up to her and her doctor,”¹² this does not always seem to be the case.

In Michigan, the CRACK program was willing to pay \$500 for one woman whose childbearing they found particularly egregious.¹³ According to Pam Cade who started the Michigan chapter of CRACK “. . .this case is so horrible that we want to make her an offer she can’t refuse.”¹⁴ Barbara Harris, said “We will get this woman on birth control by any means necessary.” “If she says no, we’ll up the ante.”¹⁵ And, indeed, the news story about their efforts reports that “[t]he group has enlisted a Pontiac police officer to find [the woman] and extend the offer.”¹⁶

The testimonials that CRACK chooses to post on their website make clear their true mission of control: “We are both firm supporters of your ideas to *control* and or *stop* CRACK addicted mothers from having any more addicted babies, by *requiring* such methods as Norplant;”¹⁷ “Personally I feel if a "bribe" is what it takes to get these people from having unwanted and damaged children then let's bribe them.”¹⁸

<http://www.familywatch.org/library/crack.htm> (“[w]e have campaigns to spay cats to prevent them from having unwanted kitten, yet we allow these women to have litters of 14 children.”).

¹¹ *60 Minutes II: CRACK BABIES/Sterilization* (CBS television broadcast, Mar. 13, 2001) CRACK’s claims about the number of children their “typical” drug using woman lack support. For more information on this subject, please contact National Advocates for Pregnant Women.

¹² *Stop Child Abuse, An Announcement About the CRACK Program*, AORN Alameda County, CA Newsletter (archives of various articles that used to be on the homepage), Aug. 1997-June 2001, at <http://a.rn11.com/yh/pu/yhgeouspu2.htm>.

¹³ Kathleen Gray, *Drug-Using Mother is Offered Money to Stop Having Babies*, DETROIT FREE PRESS, May 5, 2001.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Project Prevention, *Quotes*, at <http://www.cashforbirthcontrol.com/cause/quotes.html>.

¹⁸ *Id.*