

## Thanks for nothing, birth control

*No wonder there's a 'sex recession'.*

Carolyn Moynihan | Nov 16 2018

It has been a busy week or two for the powerful birth control lobby in the United States. Between the Midterm elections and Thanksgiving they have been rousing their faithful, sending messages to politicians and launching a new campaign that embraces all the gender-related issues beloved of progressives.

They have been encouraged by the blue ripple that brought a Democratic majority to the House, bearing a pink raft of new women members; but there are signs that their cause may have peaked and become irrelevant to the needs of millennial America. And the #MeToo experience gives the lie to the myth that their prize product has been a great liberation for women.

On Monday this week the new president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Dr Leana Wen, started her first official day at work with a softball interview on CBS This Morning. Kindly hosts led her through a set of talking points about PPFAs wonderful history of preventing unintended pregnancies and “saving lives”. The delicate subject of abortion – which accounts for by far the greatest part of the organization’s “services” and has taken tens of millions of lives – was barely mentioned.

Abortion certainly contributes to controlling the number of births, but hiding it under the term “birth control” and selling it all as “basic health care” is deceptive. Former Planned Parenthood boss Cecile Richards alleges that Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner told her that the Trump administration would increase funding for her organization if it stopped doing abortions – a gesture she described as a “bribe.” Of course, it went down like a lead balloon. Since then the White House has adopted a rule that would require “physical as well as financial separation” between entities that receive federal funds for birth control and those that provide abortions.

So, when “Thanks, Birth Control Day” came around on Tuesday, it brought an appeal from PPFAs executive vice-president, Dawn Laguens, to sign a message to the Trump-Pence administration (copy to your Congressional Representative) calling for a stop to “attacks on accessing care at Planned Parenthood health centers” and to the roll-back of the Obamacare contraception mandate. The latter, because the

White House last week confirmed its interim concessions to the conscience rights of some Christian institutions and a few other employers with sincerely held moral objections to covering abortifacient contraceptives in insurance plans.

“America just elected a pro-reproductive health care majority to the U.S. House and I urge you to join them in defending access to basic health care, like birth control,” the message asserts.

### New names for old campaigns: Power to Decide, UNSTOPPABLE

It turns out that Thanks, Birth Control Day is “catalyzed” annually by Power to Decide, “the campaign to prevent unplanned pregnancy,” once known as the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, but facing a shrinking market among teens. To support its political campaign the influential group commissioned a poll of 1000 Americans 18+ showing that 78 percent consider birth control (including abortion?) to be “a basic part of women’s health care.” Not

men’s, note, even after 50 years.

Among the cute social media plugs, merchandise and celebrity testimonies (“Shay Mitchell loves being in total control over her reproductive health...”) on Power’s flash website there are some grateful messages from the team that runs it. Among them, three about freedom to travel, a couple about how expensive kids are, plus “My next baby will be a cat”, “Keeping me kid-free”, “Cause it’s my life and it’s my body,” and – my favorite -- “Because all women should have control over their bodies” – as if she hasn’t handed the control over to technology so she doesn’t have to think about her body.

Planned Parenthood has also poured some of its ample profits into a creative campaign called “UNSTOPPABLE”, which sets birth control in the context of other progressive causes like paid family leave, equal pay, freedom from sexual violence and LGBT rights. In August the first of a series of videos was launched, the work of New York producer Tanya Selvaratnam, who told the UK Independent last month (in another puff piece for Planned Parenthood): “It’s a beautiful experience to bring together a vital organization that’s more than a hundred years old with a lot of creative people who are honored to support such work.”

And yet here the “thanks, birth control” story begins to unravel.



## The victims include sex itself

Ms Selvaratnam is not a good advertisement for the boom years of birth control and Planned Parenthood. A Harvard graduate who moves in elite circles, she would not have lacked access to birth control. In fact, she was in her late thirties before she attempted motherhood, only to suffer repeated miscarriages. In 2014 she published a book, *The Big Lie: Motherhood, Feminism, and the Reality of the Biological Clock*, in which she complained about her generation being brought up in ignorance of their own fertility and its decline with age. She wrote:

“I didn’t think about that reality when I was growing up or even later during my college years when I was pondering my future. My generation was going to be different from that of our mothers. We were reaping the benefits of feminism. No one was going to tell us what to do, and we could control our bodies. But crucial information was missing, and we didn’t know to seek it out: We have a finite supply of eggs, and if we wait until we are in our late thirties to start having kids, many of us may be disappointed.”

The other thing Selvaratnam didn’t get was sexual relationships. She is divorced, though she could have been the innocent party in that. In 2016, in her mid-40s, she met the (now former) Attorney-General of New York, Eric Schneiderman, and began a sexual relationship with him. How that turned out became very public knowledge when *The New Yorker* published expose about his abusive, violent behavior with her and three other women earlier this year. Yet she stayed in the relationship for more than a year.

Although its details are unique, her story in its main features – marital failure, infertility, childlessness, abusive sexual relationships – has become a very common one in the era of mass birth control, as her own book and the #MeToo movement witness. To repeat: contraception and abortion may have liberated women for education, work – and, of course, travel – but it has played havoc with the things that matter most, to most women: marriage and motherhood.

Or did. There are signs that today’s young adults are losing interest not only in marriage but in sexual relationships, and even the sexual act itself. The Atlantic’s December issue was published online a couple of days ago with a cover story on a “sexual recession” that can be blamed partly on technology that is more magical than the pill: the internet -- and porn.

Now, why would porn replace sex if it wasn’t more exciting than the real thing? Why would the Eric Schneidermans of the world want to act out throttling and slave-master routines with a beautiful woman who’s looking for love? Isn’t it because sex routinely

divorced from the possibility of procreation is simply boring? Simply mechanical and pointless?

The idea that women should be thanking birth control for a culture marked by divorce, infertility, childlessness, involuntary celibacy, sexual aggression and violence is bizarre. Tanya Selvaratnam is smart enough to see through the birth control myth; she would be doing Millennials a real favor if she could turn her creative gifts towards exposing it, and leave Planned Parenthood to peddle its own dreary culture of meaningless sex.

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