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Canada's only national political pro-choice advocacy group

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Anti-choice propaganda movie “Unplanned” could incite violence against providers

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By Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (www.arcc-cdac.ca)

The American film “Unplanned”, soon to be screened in a few Canadian theatres, is a dangerous piece of anti-abortion propaganda. It preaches an absolutist and extreme case against abortion that has nothing to do with reality. Because of the film’s demonization of abortion providers, pro-choice advocates fear that the movie could incite fanatics to commit acts of harassment or violence against clinics or doctors.

“Unplanned” is based on the memoir of Abby Johnson, a former worker at a Texas Planned Parenthood abortion clinic, who quit after converting to the “pro-life” movement, where she now enjoys fame and a comfortable living. Her memoir has been heavily contested, with key elements of her story not credible and unlikely to have happened.* While “Unplanned” has been popular with the anti-choice crowd in the U.S., mainstream reviews of the movie have been uniformly very negative.**

In the film, Planned Parenthood and its leaders are portrayed as demonic, cold-hearted monsters, their only goal to maximize profits by selling as many abortions as possible. In reality, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America is non-profit and offers a wide range of basic and mostly free healthcare services for low-income people, with abortion making up just 3.4 percent of its services. Like other U.S. abortion providers, Planned Parenthood clinics have no choice but to charge for abortion care because anti-choice laws prohibit government funding for abortion.

“The film’s vicious falsehoods against providers could incite hatred and violence against them, including here in Canada,” said Joyce Arthur, Executive Director of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. “But the film also aims to challenge abortion rights. That’s a non-starter in Canada, where women and transgender people have a Charter right to abortion based on their rights to bodily autonomy and equality.”

Arthur predicts that “Unplanned” will fail to reach the Canadian public. “This film won’t succeed in a country that respects human rights. That may explain why the film’s producers couldn’t achieve widespread distribution here.” She added: “I think only anti-choice people will enjoy seeing the film because it wallows in fetal gore – which is why it got slapped with a Restricted rating in the U.S.”

* Inaccuracy of “Unplanned” film:

- <https://www.glamour.com/story/what-unplanned-gets-wrong-about-abortion-according-to-experts>
- https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/an-obgyn-debunks-unplanned-the-anti-abortion-movie_n_5cb74ff4e4b0ec270a4684bd
- <https://rewire.news/article/2019/04/05/shock-gore-and-more-unplanned/>
- <https://www.salon.com/2019/04/12/unplanned-and-shameless-hit-anti-abortion-movie-is-a-total-right-wing-grift/>

** Two typical examples of bad reviews of “Unplanned”:

- “In a dim-witted Christian drama part-financed by the disgraced founder of a pillow manufacturer, a woman discovers abortion is evil.” The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/mar/28/unplanned-review-anti-abortion-propaganda-is-a-gory-mess>
- “The memoir of a Planned Parenthood worker turned anti-abortion activist isn't good drama but it's effective propaganda (if you're part of the choir).” Variety, <https://variety.com/2019/film/reviews/unplanned-review-1203175761/>