

Eye on Editorials

EDITORIAL: "Only in America" By Evan Kroboth - Lion's Eye Editorial Editor - esk5070@psu.edu

What does an ACORN, James O'Keefe, and some "conservative activists" have in common? They're all nuts. But to be fair, some are political hacks, others are simply mean-spirited and/or greedy. Some must be incredible masochists to consistently vote against their own fundamental self-interest, both economically and socially, and others call themselves "teabaggers," but you can't have teabagging without nuts. Of course any faux-populist movement contains in unequal measure a representation of many strata of crazy. Take a moment to do a cursory image search for pictures of the signage carried by the various teabaggers, or the teabaggers themselves. It boggles the mind, that these people serious believe our current president is a as one sign put it "[A] Half-Breed Muslin" [sic] I don't think they meant a thin cotton fabric either, although the next time they hold a gathering, be sure to look out for protestors accusing the president of having a low thread count. Thankfully not all conservative activists rely on fallacious logic, vaguely and in some cases overtly racist imagery, claims about birth certificates, or all manner of other ill-conceived notions. Some prefer an approach with a little more panache, well as much panache as a milquetoast white guy masquerading as a "pimp" posses.

Some of you, may remember the media hoopla that took place after James O'Keefe posed as a pimp and "filmed" ACORN employees giving him

advice on such sundry matters as pimpin', they didn't know much, but had heard it wasn't easy, and tax evasion. Which as it turns out, is "all about the Benjamin's", provided you neglect to declare them. Following O'Keefe's release of the tapes, he was lauded as a "hero" by a rather doughy looking radio personality and his ilk, and caused Congress to hastily vote to cut the grant money for ACORN. An action later ruled unconstitutional, as they had yet to be convicted of any actual wrong doing.

Fast forward a bit, O'Keefe and three others are arrested posing as telephone repairmen in Senator Mary Landrieu's office. It would seem that you can't just walk into a Senator's office and pretend to be from the phone company. O'Keefe seems to have gotten himself in a bit of pickle, but having an acting U.S. Attorney for a father has to come in handy sometime. As the U.S. Attorney's Office in New Orleans has decided to wait another month to decide what, if any charges to bring against the foursome. Perhaps in addition to possible jail time and a hefty fine, a ban on wearing plumed hats in public is in order?

It appears that it really is "hard out there" for a "pimp" as on Monday March 1st, Brooklyn prosecutors after a four month investigation cleared ACORN of all wrongdoing. The version of the tapes released by O'Keefe had been edited in order to serve his agenda.

That's right; no evi-

dence of wrongdoing, by the employees of ACORN existed on the original unedited tapes. Since this is the case, why do conservatives dislike ACORN? The 400,000 member coalition of community groups has a history of helping Americans with low to moderate income with neighborhood safety, health care, voter registration, and affordable housing, all admirable goals in a society where inadequate government intervention has led to a cycle of poverty and desperation for many Americans. Yet some people would rather spend billions to keep all manner of people incarcerated, rather than spend the same money on social programs that would allow them to become contributing members of society, rather than a needless burden. The sad truth of the matter is that any organization that works to empower groups on the fringes of society, is a threat to the existing power structure, and in this case maligned by conservatives as some sort of leftist Illuminati-like organization of bogeymen.

In a statement released by O'Keefe on the, to put it mildly, conservative biggovernment.com, "The public will judge whether reporters who can't get their facts straight have the credibility to question my integrity as a journalist." After all, releasing doctored tapes in order to manufacture a story makes you a bastion of journalistic integrity?

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The Wooden Spoon: "Feminist Theory, Italian Style"

By Nancy Perone - Lion's Eye World and Local Editor - nip5014@psu.edu

Instead of all of the terrible things going on in the world, I prefer to find news/articles in my spare time that Americans can relate to—it's the American Studies minor in me. It was August, so I must've been on campus for one reason or another and picked up my free copy because of Penn State's newspaper readership program. At any rate, I eventually flipped to the Op/Ed section and it immediately grabbed my attention because of two things that it mentioned: Italy and Women Rising Up. The actual article is titled Italian Women Rise Up by Chiara Volpato. Chiara, I learned, is one of the major female leaders for that part of the world and also is a social psychology professor at the University of Milan-Bicocca.

In my opinion, she hits the nail right on the head. Her editorial discusses not only Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi-- who's known for making sarcastic remarks and comments about women that only a chauvinistic, patriarchal society could love—but also the "glass ceiling" that is ever present in Italy today. Prime Minister Berlusconi has held his position three times in Italy's history, but his influence on the Italian people through the mass media has been present since the 1980s.. Berlusconi's television line up reflects on his personality, showcasing beautiful, Italian women who want to become "showgirls". When I say showcasing, this is all that they do. Very rarely do the women get to say anything as

they are being judged on their looks. Berlusconi has placed a few of these showgirls into public office, including Mara Carfagna, Italy's Equal Opportunity's Minister.

While Carfagna is doing a lot of good, making Berlusconi look good, his mouth continually gets him into trouble. Berlusconi is quoted in a BBC article as saying, "the left has no taste, even when it comes to women." This is coming from a man in his seventies trying to talk smack against his rival political party. The BBC also reports that he has had to apologize publicly, as per his wife, for "flirting" with other women. This is who they have lead their country? Well, America did vote for Bill Clinton, Monica Lewinsky scandal and all.

Enough about him. Let's get back to the glass ceiling that Italy has but is conceivably lower than America's. American women have fought for their rights and have come a long way. This is not to say that Italian women don't have the same rights, but they are immersed in an "old-school way of thinking" culture that has immeasurable double standards. The Catholic Church and the Vatican have a heavy presence in Italy, almost as much as the government. Simultaneously, there still lives the patriarchal culture where "men rule" so to speak. Women work, to cite Volpato's article, but they also are expected to be the sole keepers of the home. Birthrate in Italy is down because of the fact that men get more

leisure time than women do—all the more better for Berlusconi's bank accounts. Italy even ranks 79 on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index.

So, whether or not Italy wants to come clean about it, their society is slowly secreting anti-feminism. Women like Chiara are out there who want Italian women to aspire to be more than how their Prime Minister spends his free time. They have even rallied against these types of behaviors along with her by boycotting the G8 Summit. It is unfortunate that their voice isn't quite as loud as American women when it comes to standing up for their rights. Many newspapers don't let any talk of such things get published. There are a few exceptions, including la Repubblica, but it's very few and far between.

Sure, you may be thinking this is just reminiscent of American society and the attitude of the media that sex sells. You are right, but this attitude also comes from the dark and ugly days of when America too let patriarchal views dominate their world. There is nothing wrong with males wanting to be the head of their households or good fathers even, but when it's taken too far and women are degraded, we have a problem.

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