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# Dr. Taylor Explains Why She Stands With Planned Parenthood

Posted on **March 15, 2012** by **Serena Freewomyn**

*Dr. DeShawn Taylor is the medical director of Planned Parenthood Arizona. Dr. Taylor has been part of the Planned Parenthood family for seven years. I caught up with Dr. Taylor to ask her about her role at Planned Parenthood Arizona and her inspiration for becoming a reproductive-health provider.*

### When did you know you wanted to be a doctor?

In elementary school I knew I wanted to be a doctor or a teacher. By the time I got to junior high, I decided to go into medicine.

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***The first generation of post-Roe abortion providers “had a sense of urgency, because they knew that women needed safe abortions. They have seen women die as a result of botched abortions.”***

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### What was your motivation for going into reproductive health?

Actually, I wanted to be a neurosurgeon for the longest time. During my sophomore year of college I read a book called “**Gifted Hands**” that was about an inspiring neurosurgeon. But my character doesn’t fit the role of a neurosurgeon. I don’t have a God complex, and neurosurgeons thrive on saving lives.

When I started to think about what else I would like to do, I knew I wanted to take care of women. I thought about practicing family medicine or becoming an ob/gyn. I decided that I had the ability to be a surgeon, so becoming an ob/gyn was a good fit for me. I also have a strong commitment to social justice, and I feel like it’s my duty to serve women. If a woman is pregnant and wants to keep the pregnancy, I will provide prenatal care and help her with her delivery. If a

woman is pregnant and doesn't want to be, I will give her an abortion. The woman is my patient, and that's who I am here to serve.

One thing about my role as an ob/gyn that has been a little unexpected is that once you commit to providing abortions, you have to become an advocate for women, even if you didn't plan on it. Abortion is such a polarizing issue that you turn into more than just a doctor when you're an abortion provider. The role of advocate is forced on you, but you grow into it. I help women decide when, and if, they want to become a parent. It's just the right thing to do.

### **When did you first become involved with Planned Parenthood? And what is your Planned Parenthood story?**

My first interaction with Planned Parenthood was when I became a fellow in family planning at University of Southern California in 2005. In medical school I had learned how to perform abortions up to 16 weeks of pregnancy, and then with the fellowship I trained at Planned Parenthood Los Angeles and learned how to perform abortions up to 24 weeks of pregnancy. After the fellowship, I was offered a job at PPLA as an independent contractor.

I ended up here in Arizona because I had family out here. I randomly asked PPAZ if they needed a provider to come in on the weekends, since I was coming out here to visit so frequently. They told me they actually had an opening for the medical director position, and here I am. I believe that everything happens for a reason. I've been with Planned Parenthood for seven years, but I'm a lifer at this point.

### **Do you ever worry that there will be a shortage of abortion providers in the coming years, since many providers are retiring and many medical schools, like the one at the University of Arizona, do not provide training for abortion?**

We have already seen shortages of abortion providers in this country. The [Guttmacher Institute](#) has released several reports that show the numbers of providers declining. A 2009 study showed that the decline had leveled off, since more people have been able to offer the abortion pill versus focusing only on surgical abortions.

The area where the shortage still exists is in the number of providers who provide second trimester abortions, particularly beyond 20 weeks of pregnancy. It's a very small group of doctors who provide later abortions. The good news, though, is that the majority of abortions occur in the first seven weeks of pregnancy.

The biggest thing that we are losing when doctors retire is the generation of providers who have seen women die due to abortion being illegal before *Roe*. These doctors had a sense of urgency, because they knew that women needed safe abortions. They have seen women die as a result of botched abortions. But

the current generation of young people doesn't have that same sense of urgency. It's similar to the civil rights era. Young people today don't know what it was like when African Americans had to use a separate water fountain, and so they're not as worried about civil rights issues.

### What is Planned Parenthood Arizona doing to address this shortage of abortion providers?

We are part of the [Family Planning Fellowship](#) that is growing. It's a multi-pronged approach to providing training, and part of it includes providing external medical training for medical students and residents. We work with Medical Students for Choice to bring students into Planned Parenthood health centers to learn how to perform abortions, as well as the whole range of reproductive health care we provide. It's not just about abortion. Birth control education is seriously lacking in medical schools, too. Planned Parenthood Arizona is working on this, but the organization as a whole is also committed to training the next generation of abortion providers.

*Thank you very much to Dr. Taylor for sharing her time with me, and for the very important work that she does for women here in Arizona.*

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#### About Serena Freewomyn

Serena Freewomyn is an alumna of Arizona State University's Women & Gender Studies Program. In addition to volunteering with Planned Parenthood Advocates of Arizona, Serena volunteers with Project Linus Tucson, where she makes and delivers blankets to children who are in the hospital or being removed from abusive households. When she's not busy making quilts or jewelry, Serena writes creative nonfiction and enjoys coffee, chocolate, and macarons.

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sdawg on [July 10, 2013 at 6:20 pm](#) said:

Rereading this interview renews my admiration and respect for Dr. Taylor. She is an amazing role model for those of us in the pro-choice movement.

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