

Anti-abortion bloggers convene in Washington

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Technology is playing an integral role in delivering the anti-abortion message, say those in the movement, but better communication between bloggers as well as firsthand reporting is needed, agreed prominent anti-abortion bloggers Monday at their first annual conference.

Anti-abortion bloggers convened at the Family Research Council to discuss strategic uses of the blogosphere to communicate Christian anti-abortion messages prior to the 33rd annual March for Life in Washington.

A growing number of anti-abortion blogs have joined the abortion debate, promoting the views of the movement against legalized abortion and playing watchdog to abortion-rights activists, legislation and abortion clinics.

Networking among anti-abortion bloggers through technology will counter the portrayal of the anti-abortion movement in mainstream media, according to Charmaine Yoest, vice president for external relations at the Family Research Council and managing editor of the daily blog www.FRCBlog.com.

Yoest compared the anti-abortion blogging movement to a line of high-tech 21st-century water buckets putting out a large fire burning since the Roe vs. Wade decision was passed down in 1973.

"We form an association, that's the American way," said Yoest, one of

three hosts for the event.

Emphasizing the impact of technology in actively promoting the anti-abortion stance, she said more women on both sides of the debate were becoming more conscious of the healthy fetus via technology including sonograms.

"We are headed into a whole new era of abortion public policy," Yoest said.

Aside from the abortion debate, bloggers also addressed concerns of effective messages and network building within their blogging community.

"The blogosphere, I sometimes think, is the ultimate Darwinian experiment -- survival of the fittest," said Kathryn Lopez, syndicated columnist and editor of The Corner at National Review Online, mentioning the blogosphere was an amazing medium but that there was no science to the success of a blog.

Lopez, who was the keynote speaker, was unable to attend the conference in person but phoned in.

However, she insists individual bloggers should pinpoint and contact notable bloggers who would be interested in their posts, pitching them their site and any specific posts, rather than just sending a link.

"The world needs more reporting," said Lopez, noting that anti-abortion blogs could gain more attention through reporting than commentating due to the abundance of instant pundits.

"Tim" of ProLifeBlogs.com (who requested anonymity), another host of the event, added that the blogging community could also become more

effective by providing solid messages in principles, writing firsthand experiences, engaging in meaningful discussions with the abortion-rights culture, collaborating with others and partnering with anti-abortion organizations.

But the Internet also offers bloggers an opportunity to discuss other issues associated with the abortion debate.

According to Peter Shinn, another host and blogger of March Together for Life, blogs are a good way to speak about God and anti-abortion bloggers, recognizing that most anti-abortion individuals he has met have been Christians, he said.

"Move Together is growing, but the main focus now is the pro-life unity," said Shinn, who is also promoting ProLifeUnity.com, which sends out calls for support for member efforts including the Monthly Call for Life.

Moreover, freelance writer and blog consultant La Shawn Barber (lashawnbarber.com) noted the blogosphere provides a good forum to discuss race and the anti-abortion movement, an issue that she says needs to be addressed more.

A number of international bloggers attended the event such as "Auds" (who also asked to remain anonymous), blogger of realitycheckdotie.blogspot.com and a student from Ireland who came to Washington for the first time this week.

According to Auds, the Irish media have not reported adequately on the issue. And with the recent emergence of political blogs, Auds predicts more anti-abortion bloggers will appear as more individuals adapt to technology with the introduction of broadband, she said.

Joseph P. Gillin, 50, of the blog Life at the Frontier (lifeatthefrontier.blogspot.com), says blogging is a medium in which bloggers can pass information, educate the public and communicate with other bloggers.

"It will help turn the tide, raising awareness about the dignity of human life and protecting it," said Gillin, who began blogging almost three years ago. "And it's a healthy progress, finding more sources of information than the few networks I grew up with."

Meanwhile, Mary Worthington, 23, of The Revolution (myheartsrevolution.blogspot.com), said she posts three to five times a week writing about the anti-abortion movement, contraceptives, human sexuality and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

"We need to avoid the temptation of only blogging among each other but rather we need to communicate with the general public who really needs to hear our message," Worthington said. "The mainstream media portrays us as extremists, but the blogging movement provides a lot of factual information on the movement."

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