

Amy's Story

Of course she has a story—everyone does. Amy Woodruff is someone's daughter, certainly. Perhaps she's someone's mother, sister, girlfriend, wife, or ex. She has a context: friends, connections, causes. And she has a history. Sometime in the past, she had birthday parties, enjoyed movies and music and amusement parks, went to school, had her heart broken. Her life is a matrix of continuity and change like the rest of us. But now she's caught in the glare of internet publicity, frozen in the act of advising a supposed pimp how to maintain an illegal sex trade.

Last week, a pro-life organization known as Live Action released a video (see below) showing Ms. Woodruff, manager of a Planned Parenthood location in Perth Amboy, N.J., counseling a prostitute and pimp.

During the conversation, which runs for over 10 minutes, the couple share just enough information to clarify that they are pimping girls as young as 14. Some of them don't speak English. "Like, some of them are, like, Asian." They want to know how to get contraceptives for the girls, and abortions if need be. Throughout, Amy is helpful as can be: Yes, she understands their situation; yes, there are ways PP can help, as long as they get "as little information as possible—cause we don't want to be involved. . . ." In certain cases she can refer them to another facility whose "protocols aren't as strict as ours and they don't get audited the same way that we do."

Of course, Amy didn't know it was a sting. Her visitors were posing, very convincingly, and one of them carried a concealed camera.

Watching the video, it's easy to see this woman at the local DOT or EPA. She's the kind of low-level official you'd want to

have on your side if there's a slight anomaly in your paperwork. "No problem—just fudge a date here or a number there and we're cool. You just didn't hear it from me, right?" She's friendly and frank, with the right balance of professionalism and humanity. Humanity, mind you, while instructing a venal couple how to make a profit from teenage sex slaves. As for the couple, they come off as bumbling entrepreneurs who didn't expect the business to take off so fast, or like average folks seeking advice on filling out a tax form.

This is not the scenario Planned Parenthood uses to justify its existence—no confused teenager seeking reliable information, no college co-ed terrified that pregnancy will derail her life, no weary mom of five whose recent amniocentesis indicates Down syndrome. Amy has probably been around the block enough times to know that Mr. Sex Trade and his companion are predators. What's her motivation for helping them? Is it just the money? Or has her moral compass been readjusted so many times that east is west?

Watching Amy, and Kimberley at the Planned Parenthood in Richmond, Va., and the staff in Falls Church, Charlottesville, and Roanoke, brings to mind Hannah Arendt's phrase, "the banality of evil." The devil usually scores by reduction: reducing love to sex, lasting joy to fleeting pleasure, virtue to slogans. How many of his victims are easily confused, to the detriment of their immortal souls? Later that afternoon—driving her daughter to ballet class, perhaps—did Amy suddenly slap a hand to her forehead and think, "Oh my gosh! What did I just do?" Or did she wake up that night in a cold sweat?

I'm guessing not. More likely, she went to work the next day, and the next, and the next, until the internet exposed her, neck-deep in the banality of evil.

Her organization fired her, while presenting themselves as

victims of a frame-up. "Planned Parenthood is no stranger to the attacks of those who oppose sexual and reproductive rights," reads a Twitter response. "We're still here, providing the care you need. That being said, back to business. . . ."

Back to business, indeed. Pray that taxpayer funding for this business will be cut off. Pray for the confused girls and distraught women who wander through those doors. And please, pray for Amy.

Janie Cheaney, who lives in Missouri, is a columnist for WORLD Magazine, writes novels for young adults, and is the author of the Wordsmith creative writing series.