

Center for Medical Progress Leaders Score Major Legal Victory

Pro-life activist and Center for Medical Progress co-founders Sandra Merritt and David Daleiden scored a major victory Wednesday when a San Francisco, California, court determined there was insufficient legal basis for 14 of the charges the state attorney general leveled against each of them.

Merritt, along with Daleiden, played a central role in the undercover videos that exposed Planned Parenthood's involvement in the trafficking of body parts from aborted babies in violation of federal law. They have since spent much of their time in court battling civil and criminal charges of wrongdoing.

Merritt's attorneys have argued criminal complaints for recording supposedly "private" conversations held in restaurants, hotel lobbies and other public places—which have never been filed against undercover journalists ever before—were legally deficient for a number of reasons, including:

- the attorney general decided to prosecute Merritt in secret proceedings;
- the complainants and her alleged victims were never identified;
- the complaints were unconstitutionally vague as to what she allegedly did wrong and
- the complaints were full of factual inconsistencies.

"The attorney general, who has received thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from Planned Parenthood, claims that Merritt and David Daleiden filmed 14 people without permission between October 2013 and July 2015 in Los Angeles, San

Francisco and the county of El Dorado,” Liberty Counsel stated in a press release about the hearing held Wednesday evening. “One felony count was filed for each person filmed. The 15th charge was for ‘criminal conspiracy’ to invade ‘privacy.’ However, the videos produced by Merritt and Daleiden exposed unethical and potentially illegal conduct by Planned Parenthood, and Planned Parenthood itself has admitted, under oath, that the recorded conversations took place in ‘non-confidential’ and public venues.”

According to Merritt’s attorney from Liberty Counsel, Horatio Mihet, the charges for each of the conversations she recorded were dropped. They can be refiled, if the state attorneys can come up with a better legal basis for those charges. She still faces the conspiracy charge, which her attorneys also hope to have dropped soon.

“Sandra did not break any law, and the criminal complaint against her is legally deficient, vague and full of inconsistencies,” Mihet said. “No other citizen journalist or organization has ever been charged with a crime for undercover recordings.”

Daleiden, who is represented by attorneys from Life Legal Defense Foundation, also had 14 of the 15 charges against him dropped. Life Legal executive director Alexandra Snyder also stated the charges were without legal basis.

“Life Legal has maintained that the felony charges against David and Sandra are without merit and should be dismissed in their entirety,” she said. “David and Sandra got on the wrong side of Planned Parenthood and its cronies, but they are clearly on the right side of the law.” {eoa}