

Book on abortion gets cold reception

Subject still taboo well after Roe ruling

By Julia Duin
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

It looked like a sure sell: a book on abortion recovery by two pro-choice psychotherapists out of Los Angeles.

But two years after Candace De Puy and Dana Dovitch wrote "The Healing Choice," a 237-page paperback published by Simon & Schuster, the women say their book bombed because media and bookstores won't touch it.

Abortion, they say, remains the elephant-in-the-middle-of-the-living-room topic of the 1990s, even though it was legalized 26 years ago today in the landmark Supreme Court cases Roe vs. Wade and Doe vs. Bolton.

"We were turned down by [ABC's] '20-20' because it 'wasn't their audience culture,'" Ms. Dovitch says. "Forty-three percent of all women by the age of 45 have had at least one abortion, but no one, no one, no one will touch it. It is unbelievable. We are losing our minds."

The authors say they've spent "at least" \$100,000 of their own money marketing 30,000 copies of a book that promises "emotional recovery" from abortion.

"But Leeza [of the Leeza Gibbons talk show] told us directly the networks don't want people to say 'abortion' or 'suicide,'" Ms. De Puy says. "It's our understanding that [conservative groups] don't want it to be spoken about on the air. A lot of people who produce these shows are afraid of getting picketed."

"Again and again and again the networks don't want to touch this."

Conservatives have encountered similar problems. A year ago, Gary Bauer's Campaign for Working Families had its TV ad slamming partial-birth abortions turned down by three stations in Santa Barbara, Calif. Affiliates of ABC, CBS and NBC said the language was too offensive, forcing Mr. Bauer's group to rewrite the ads.

"Bookstore after bookstore didn't want our book in display windows," Ms. De Puy said. "Managers didn't want a book in the window that was pro- or anti-abortion."

But when the authors held a congressional briefing on abortion recovery, representatives from

"Managers didn't want a book in the window that was pro- or anti-abortion."

—Candace De Puy

Feminists for Life and the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League attended.

"They both came up to us and congratulated us for putting out the book," Ms. De Puy says. "Behind closed doors, some pro-choice groups would tell us, 'Thank God someone's talking about this. We have to continue fighting for abortion rights so we can never mention the shadow side of the issue.'"

"Then we got two letters, one from Gloria Steinem and one from [Planned Parenthood President] Gloria Feldt, and we thought they'd be behind the book. Both of them sent us letters quite upset the book was coming out. They said women shouldn't be upset about abortion; it's just a procedure.

"And the anti-choice groups told us it was a murder."

"Women don't talk about their abortion experiences because all they hear is this hysterical anger," Ms. Dovitch says. "Why would any woman in her right mind come out of the closet and say they've had an abortion? What is stunning to me is the media doesn't want to deal with it."

The conflicted attitudes they have encountered appear in their underpublicized book, too.

"When we spoke to pro-choice women, the moment they say they're pregnant, they say it's a baby. But if they want an abortion, they call it a tissue," Ms. Dovitch says.

"Women bond in all their relationships," she says. "Women bond with their fetus in a pregnancy. If they have an abortion, they have to disassociate from it."

"Many of the doctors we spoke with say there is burnout because you know what you are doing. They feel very committed to the cause because they want women to choose. Some women have said they would rather regret an abortion than a pregnancy."

CULTURE, et cetera