

E. J. Dionne Jr.

Stop the Roberts Bombing

Can we please come up with a better way of arguing about Supreme Court nominees?

Fellow liberals, face it: The advertisement created by NARAL, the abortion rights group that opposes John Roberts's nomination to the Supreme Court, is outrageous. It ties Roberts to people who bombed abortion clinics. If this isn't guilt by association, I don't know what is.

Here's what the ad says: "Seven years ago, a bomb destroyed a woman's health clinic in Birmingham, Alabama." The ad then quotes Emily Lyons, whose clinic was bombed in January 1998: "When a bomb ripped through my clinic, I almost lost my life. I will never be the same." The announcer returns: "Supreme Court nominee John Roberts filed court briefs supporting violent fringe groups and a convicted clinic bomber." Text on screen: "Roberts filed court brief supporting clinic protestors." Lyons again: "I'm determined to stop this violence so I'm speaking out." The announcer: "Call your senators. Tell them to oppose John Roberts. America can't afford a justice whose ideology leads him to excuse violence against other Americans."

You can consult FactCheck.org, a Web site run by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania — not a haven for the right-wing conspiracy — to find out all that is wrong with the ad. Just consider: Roberts filed the brief in question on behalf of the United States government (i.e., the administration of President Bush's father) in

The Washington Post

August 12, 2005

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