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# Operation Rescue

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**OPERATION RESCUE**, founded in 1986, became known as one of the most militant groups opposing a woman's right to abortion as established in the 1973 Supreme Court case *ROE v. WADE*. Like other antiabortion groups, Operation Rescue asserted that life begins at conception, and therefore, abortion is murder of a living being. The founder, Randall Terry, became a national icon in 1988 when he organized 1,200 demonstrators to "rescue" babies by blocking access to abortion clinics in Atlanta, Georgia, during the Democratic National Convention. Insisting that the PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT needed to become more active in halting abortions, Terry also inspired violent crimes by antiabortionists. Though Operation Rescue was not directly linked to major crimes, in the early 1990s, its radicalization of the movement led to the murders of doctors who performed abortions in Florida, Kansas, and Massachusetts. Another antiabortion organization, the National Right to Life Committee, disavowed use of direct-action tactics, underscoring that the vast majority of people opposing abortion did not subscribe to Operation Rescue's methods.

By the 1990s, Operation Rescue had become associated with fundamentalist Christian religiosity and conservative social values. The group had branches across the country. In 1999, the national umbrella organization changed its name to Operation Save America and was led by Reverend Philip "Flip" Benham after 1994. Also in 1994, Congress passed the Freedom of Access to Clinic

Entrances Act, which protects people offering or seeking reproductive health service from violence, threats, or intimidation. The act was used against Operation Rescue in numerous federal civil lawsuits that the organization continued to fight in the early 2000s.

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*See also* **Abortion**.