

Rick Santorum's War on Pornography Stirs Up the Same Tired Arguments

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Waving the same tired 'research' that proves nothing, Santorum wades into the pornography war.

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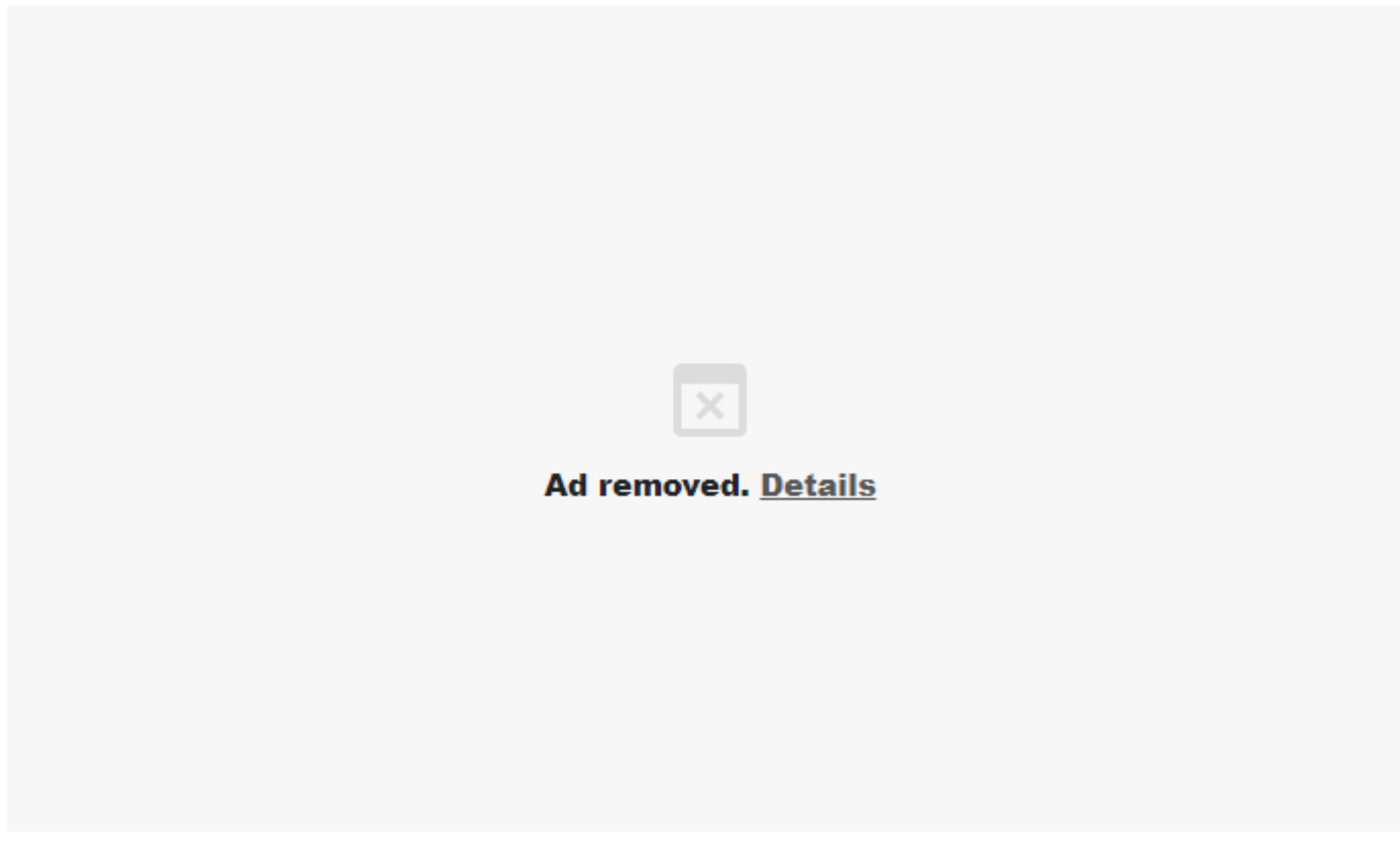
Whitney Curtis / Getty Images (left), wikipedia



Rick Santorum's [crusade](#) to save America from the pandemic of pornography may seem like an out-of-the-blue call to action against smut—the kind of campaign rhetoric that supplies comedians and late-night talk-show hosts with good material—but for the last 40 years my family has lived this culture war. In the 1970s my father was prosecuted by the federal government for distributing *Deep Throat*, and today owns adult erotic retail stores. Over the years, this discussion about porn has been loud and it has been quiet, but I know from personal experience that it certainly has been never-ending.

Santorum is just one of a long line of social conservatives who have asserted their righteousness by railing against widespread access to porn. Like his predecessors, Santorum points to a “wealth of research” that supposedly proves how porn is responsible for a variety of societal ills: misogyny, violence against women, prostitution, sex trafficking, addiction to pornography, and the destruction of marriage and relationships. Blaming pornography is not the answer. A realistic look at the causes of addiction, more support in prosecuting rape cases, and stopping the perpetuation of misogynist views on birth control will be a start to solve these problems. I have said this before on [my blog](#) and I'll say it again—if there were conclusive evidence of porn's harmful effects, it would have been codified through valid scientific research many years ago.

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I am living proof that Santorum's theory that pornography damages marriage and relationships is just not true. Although my father has worked in the porn industry for more than 35 years, I have had a successful and happy life. My parents raised me like many other good parents in America. They had serious concerns about my access to pornography while I was growing up and they were mindful about how porn could shape my life and growing up and they were mindful about how porn could shape my life and our society. Given my parents' experience withstanding the prosecution of obscenity cases against my father, I also learned that narrow-minded, judgmental views that try to limit our freedoms—whether sexual, artistic, or religious—are dangerous.



Some people, especially conservatives, have a misconception that everyone in the adult-entertainment industry is a misogynist who wants to control and exploit women. My father expected me to go to college, and he was thrilled when I earned my [Master's of Social Work](#) degree. First and foremost he wanted me to be an independent woman. In many ways the porn industry inspired my parents to raise a daughter like me. I have been happily married for 14 years, I'm a mom, and I have a great career as a marketing professional. I'm proudly a pornographer's daughter.

Santorum's views have not only fueled discussion about porn's effects on society but also speculation about the possibility that pornography could be banned. Many have stated that if the government wanted to shut down porn it could do so, but since the 70s there have been many unsuccessful attempts by local, state, and federal government to prosecute adult businesses. The 1973 *Miller v. California Supreme Court* decision, which granted local governments the right to deem what is obscene within their community, has been the basis for many legal actions against porn. But it has been almost 39 years since this community-standards law has been in place and it has not succeeded in stopping pornography. And today, the Internet has blurred the boundaries of community which makes prosecution of pornography under this law very difficult. As a result, the pornography business has grown over the years, only slowing in hard economic times and not because of the moral uprising of a community.

We also shouldn't be under the impression that Santorum's views on porn are isolated either. His Republican opponents have also [spoken out against pornography](#) in pledges to the group Morality in Media that they too will more vigorously enforce federal obscenity laws if elected president. Newt Gingrich, along with Santorum, signed a pledge by the conservative-Christian group The Family Leader to protect women and children from pornography. Although Romney refused to sign this pledge, he has stated it was, “imperative that we cultivate the promotion of fundamental family values,” and he is supportive of strict enforcement of obscenity laws and parental software that controls children's access to pornography on the Internet.

Santorum also paints the Obama administration as lackadaisical on protecting children from pornography stating on [CNN's State of the Union](#), “In the Bush administration, pornographers were prosecuted much more rigorously than they are ... under the Obama administration. ... They have not put a priority on prosecuting these cases and in doing so they are exposing children to a tremendous amount of harm, and ... putting children at risk as a result of that.” But in fact the Justice Department in August 2010 launched the National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction and directed more of their efforts in prosecuting for possession of child pornography.

While I disagree with 99 percent of what Santorum and others say about pornography, I believe they have as much right to their opinions as anyone else. I truly hope the debate about pornography will not be fueled by misinformation or sweeping judgments about the people in the adult-entertainment industry or those who watch porn. Pornography is here to stay—a consequence of living in a free country. We should be able to handle this without violating the freedoms that make living in America so unique and special.

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