

BLATANT INJUSTICES

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

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Some of the worst expressions of injustice occur between family and friends, outside the purview of others. Public forms of injustice, such as criminal behavior, are dealt with in the courts. Sometimes they mesh, such as when Ponzi schemes involving friends become front-page news. Worse still are examples of injustice that are right out in the open for everyone to see, and nothing is done about it. Lately, the Catholic community has certainly endured its fair share of blatant injustices. Here are a few examples.

Scores of Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn have been arrested in the past two years on charges of sexually abusing a minor, and many of the offenders are rabbis. Yet the Brooklyn District Attorney, Charles Hynes, refuses to release their names, *including the names of the convicted!* He says to do so would lead to intimidation. Unfortunately, in this insular community, those who report such crimes—including in many cases the victims themselves—are punished for doing so.

Hynes was asked on CNN why he doesn't release the names of accused orthodox Jewish suspects. "Because in releasing the names, within days," he said, "magically, they find the name of the victim. And then the intimidation starts." When asked if he treats the Roman Catholic community the same way, Hynes replied, "No, there's never been any allegations of intimidation by Catholic priests." In other words, because we are civil, we are treated unjustly. The message is sick.

This reminds me of what happened in 2006 when virtually every media outlet refused to run the Danish cartoons that so upset Muslims. One newspaper after another said it was "insensitive" to offend Muslims. So why do these same newspapers regularly

run cartoons that offend Catholics? Only one among them, the *Boston Phoenix*, had the guts to admit that the real reason why it didn't print the Danish cartoons was fear of death. The others lied.

Just as sick is what happened this spring in Hawaii. Last year, a bill was submitted to Gov. Neil Abercrombie that would have eliminated the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse. He vetoed it. But he signed one this year. What changed? The one last year applied to the public schools, as well as to private entities like the Catholic Church. The one this year gave the public schools a pass.

In other words, Abercrombie favored the bill that discriminated against the Catholic Church. He likes that. His lawyers made the pathetic argument that the state deals with thousands of people on an annual basis and often faces staff changes, making it difficult to find witnesses. To put it differently, it's a hassle. But it is quite convenient to nail the Catholic Church. That such blatant injustice can take place in broad daylight is highly disturbing.

The trial in Philadelphia of Catholic priests that has commanded such media attention is another example of blatant injustice. Indeed, it has been a witch-hunt from the very beginning. Why? Because the District Attorney in 2001 who got the first grand jury going, Lynne Abraham, was charged at the time with investigating the sexual abuse of minors "by individuals associated with religious organizations and denominations." But she chose to ignore her mandate and instead investigated only one religious organizations—ours. Imagine being authorized to investigate muggings in every racial and ethnic community, and deciding to just target blacks!

We recently took National Public Radio (NPR) to task when its religious correspondent who was covering the Philadelphia trial said that one of the priests was "accused of trying to

rape a minor, which is not that unusual.” Let’s get this straight—it’s “not that unusual” to find child-raping priests? When we complained, the reporter blithely replied that her remark was “inartfully written.” So if another journalist says it is “not that unusual” to find machete-wielding Muslims, are we to believe that the best NPR would do is to say that the wording was “inartful”? It hardly needs to be said that it would never make such a comment in the first place. Fear has a way of keeping people honest.

What made the NPR incident so incredible was the way it responded to me—it went on the attack. To be specific, it objected to my use of the words, “doubly despicable,” “unconscionable,” and “bigoted,” calling me out for the “slashing tone” of my response. But apparently there was nothing “slashing,” or anything like it, when the reporter libeled over 40,000 priests. It even chided me for not recognizing that the reporter “is widely recognized for her sensitivity to religious beliefs and institutions.” Among whom? Those who listen to NPR? No matter, her purported “sensitivity” obviously broke down this time. That is why it won’t do to brush off her outrageous remark, much less attack the complainant.

The sad fact of the matter is that these examples do not exhaust the instances of blatant injustice that have come across my desk recently. Don’t kid yourself: those who offend us know exactly what they are doing, but unless they pay a price for their offenses, they will continue. Their bill is overdue.