

# KERRY'S "RELIGION OUTREACH" DIRECTOR QUICKLY SILENCED

It took less than a week for the Kerry camp to silence Mara Vanderslice, its Director of Religion Outreach.

This intriguing story began when the Catholic League broke a news story on June 14. The following statement by the league explains how the process unfolded:

"Here's what we know about John Kerry's religious outreach person. Mara Vanderslice was raised without any faith and didn't become an evangelical Christian until she attended Earlham College, a Quaker school known for its adherence to pacifism. When in college, Mara was active in the Earlham Socialist Alliance, a group that supports the convicted cop killer Mumia Abu-Jamal and openly embraces Marxism-Leninism. After graduating, Mara spoke at rallies held by ACT-UP, the anti-Catholic group that disrupted Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1989 by spitting the Eucharist on the floor. In 2000, she practiced civil disobedience when she took to the streets of Seattle in a protest against the World Trade Organization. In 2002, she tried to shut down Washington, D.C. in a protest against the IMF and the World Bank.

"At first, John Kerry was considered too moderate for Mara, which is why she became Howard Dean's Religion Outreach Director. She admits that she was a freak in the Dean campaign: her colleagues dubbed her the 'church lady,' informing her that Dean was liked precisely because he didn't talk about religion. 'How in the world did you get hired?' is how one staffer put it. Unfazed, Mara contends we have a 'collective commitment to protect the integrity of God's creation,' specifically citing the needs of the 'least of these.' Yet she supports John Kerry, a man who has never learned of an abortion he couldn't justify.

"All the polls show Kerry getting whipped badly by Bush among practicing Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Moreover, the latest edition of *Time* magazine reports that only 7 percent of likely voters think Kerry is a man of strong religious faith. Given all this, his choice of Mara Vanderslice as his religious point woman is confounding. Her resume is that of a person looking for a job working for Fidel Castro, not John Kerry. Just wait until Catholics and Protestants learn who this lady really is."

Immediately, reporters called William Donohue asking him to verify his claims. This was no problem as we always double check our sources and would never make a statement of this magnitude unless we had the evidence to back up our assertions. Interestingly, some in the media seemed genuinely disappointed that Donohue had all the goods on Vanderslice; some even refused to write a promised piece on her.

It was the June 18 article in the *Washington Times* by Julia Duin that detailed exactly how the Kerry camp reacted to the league's news release. Duin reported that Vanderslice was no longer permitted to talk to the press. The Kerry campaign, she learned, was now in a "panic mode" over Vanderslice's role. In another release to the media, Donohue remarked as follows:

"It is disingenuous of the Kerry campaign to blame me for simply disclosing who Mara Vanderslice is. But that's how Kerry spokeswoman Allison Dobson is spinning it: 'It is extremely unfortunate and regretful,' she says, 'that John Kerry's political opponents would attack a person of faith in this way.' They just don't get it. The Kerry campaign hires a 29 year-old ultra-leftist who consorts with anti-Catholic bigots and the Catholic League is supposed to take this lying down? And if Vanderslice is so innocent, why have they gagged her? How is a director of outreach supposed to function if he or she is being muzzled?

"The larger issue remains: the Kerry campaign is treating

religion the way a sick kid treats lousy-tasting medicine—as something that simply must be swallowed. Why is it that this Catholic senator has no problem with ‘gay speech’—he knows how to talk the talk with transgender types—but stutters every time he engages in ‘religion speech’? Are people of faith so distant from him as to be virtual pariahs?

“To top it off, Kerry is now taking advice from the discredited priest, Father Robert Drinan. Drinan, who says he is part of Kerry’s ‘kitchen Cabinet’ on religious matters, was forced in 1997 to retract an outrageous *New York Times* op-ed column he wrote the year before supporting President Clinton’s veto of a ban on partial-birth abortion. If this is the kind of Catholic Kerry is listening to, he’s in deep trouble.”

Internet blog sites were chock full of commentary over this controversy. There is no doubt that the issue of politics and religion is proving to be a big one in the presidential election.

The Catholic League welcomes religion outreach efforts by both Republicans and Democrats, choosing not to align itself with either party. What interests us are the life issues and policies governing religious liberty.