

NO ONE CALLED THEM CENSORS

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For the past five-and-a-half years, I have had to reason by analogy with the media, educators, activists, artists and others, just to get my basic point across. Unfazed by anti-Catholicism, our adversaries generally respect the rights of gays, blacks and Jews. Even when they don't, they generally know enough to keep their mouths shut. I only wish they thought of us the same way, and this is especially the case when the subject switches from individual Catholics to the institutional Church.

It is not just that gays, blacks and Jews are less dumped on culturally, when they fight back against the bigots in their midst, they are treated differently than Catholics. For example, when they complain about unfair treatment in the media, they are almost never called censors; they are generally seen as exercising free speech in defense of their civil rights. Not so with Catholics. Here are some recent examples of what I mean.

When Coral Ridge Ministries recently posted TV ads announcing that gays could "convert" to the straight lifestyle, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLADD) went on the warpath. Joan Garry, the group's executive director, said she would fight the new commercials. No one called her a censor.

When a Chicago TV station, WGN, recently decided to renege on an agreement to run ads sponsored by a gay group, the matter wound up in court. The Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, the nation's largest gay and lesbian church, filed suit trying to force the station to broadcast their gay message. No one called them censors.

When African Americans recently protested the UPN show, "The Secret Diary of Desmond Pfeiffer," everyone listened. The

program, a Civil War sitcom about a black butler in the Lincoln White House, was blasted by the Rev. Jesse Jackson and many other black leaders as racist. Then government got involved.

The Los Angeles City Council actually asked the city's Human Relations Commission and the Days of Dialogue on Race Relations Project to screen upcoming episodes of the series; it later changed its mind and canceled the screening. The best the ACLU could do was to refuse to participate in the scheduled screening, saying that it was indicative of censorship (note: it neither charged censorship nor threatened to sue). In any event, UPN has put the show on ice. No one called them censors.

When Louis Farrakhan appeared on "Meet the Press" in October, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* blasting NBC president Bob Wright for extending the invitation. No one called them censors.

When the ADL recently dispatched one of its officials to Oberammergau, Germany, to work with government officials in providing recommendations for the historic Passion play's Year 2000 presentation (to suit ADL's tastes), the script was rewritten. No one called them censors.

When Nickelodeon ran a *Rugrats* comic strip that portrayed a Jewish character in a way that was reminiscent of stereotypical Nazi-era depictions of Jews, ADL complained and the network granted assurances that it would never run a particular edition of a comic strip that was offensive to Jews. No one called them censors.

When Marvel Comics ran a *Wolverine* comic book that mistakenly described its new character as "a kike known as Sabretooth," the ADL pressured the company and Marvel recalled 250,000 copies. No one called them censors.

When a comic strip that showed Superman fighting Nazis didn't

mention that he was fighting to save Jews, ADL went public with its criticisms. No one called them censors.

When the Catholic League complained about "Nothing Sacred" and "Corpus Christi," virtually everyone called us censors.

Sometimes the labels are discreet. For example, reporters often refer to us as a group which "says it is the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization." Or we get, it "*describes itself as* the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization." Never have we once seen the NAACP, ADL, NOW or GLADD characterized as a black, Jewish, feminist or gay organization that *says, or describes itself as,* the nation's largest civil rights organization of its kind.

Nor have we ever heard of these groups referred to as a *left-wing* or *liberal* watchdog group. But it hardly ever fails that we are mentioned by our critics as a *right-wing* or *conservative* watchdog group, even though we evince no party line and go after conservatives (*Washington Times*) as well as liberals (*New York Times*).

So the double standard never ends. All we can do is continue to do what we are doing and not let these hurdles disable us. At this point, let me make a New Year's pledge: we will never be disabled, no matter how hard they try. It's simply too much fun beating them at their own game. Merry Christmas.