

NYPD TRIES TO CENSOR CHRISTIAN OFFICERS

A Christian group of New York City police officers has been denied the right to exhibit its wares at Police headquarters, this despite the fact that Jewish, Asian and other groups—including gays—have been allotted space. As a result, Police Officers for Christ has promised a lawsuit if the department does not reverse its decision by July 6th. NYPD maintains that the exhibition would violate church and state grounds if it yields to the Christian group. Dr. William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, addressed the issue as follows:

‘The decision to ban a display by the Police Officers for Christ is wrong on two counts. Legally, the Christian group has a First Amendment right to freedom of expression that cannot be overruled on the spurious grounds that some of the expression in question is religious in nature. Artifacts that are sponsored by a private organization do not become contraband simply because they are religious.

“Morally, it is objectionable to single out Christians for censorship. The effect, if not the intent, of the NYPD decision is to further marginalize religious expression and to stigmatize Christians. It is ironic that the same police department that celebrates the achievements of homosexuals is actively trying to punish Christians for celebrating their heritage.

“It is no secret that Catholics constitute the lion’s share of the New York City Police Department. Therefore, the decision to prohibit a group of Christians from lawfully expressing itself cannot be taken lightly. If the decision stands, it will only pave the way for further abuse, relegating Christians to a second-class status. That is not something the

Catholic League is prepared to accept and that is why its legal advisory board is presently considering whether to file an amicus brief in this case if it goes to court.”

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.

CATHOLIC-BASHING MARKS ILLEGAL GAY MARCH

Two gay rights marches took place on June 26th. The legal march on First Avenue was festive and without incident. When the marchers passed in front of the Catholic Center on 55th St., there were no anti-Catholic gestures or catcalls. The same was not true of the illegal march on Fifth Avenue.

The demonstrators on Fifth Avenue were vulgar, both in word and in deed. In front of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, they bellowed four letter words, pointed their middle finger at the Cathedral and laid down in the street. Amidst the vulgar chants were dozens of bare breasted women, as well as a dozen or more fully naked men and women. Some were dressed as cardinals, priests and nuns, while others wore satanic dress. Almost all showed some sign of disrespect as they passed the Cathedral, especially the contingents from Act Up and Pagans and Witches.

Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, had this to say about the event.

"What happened on Fifth Avenue on June 26th was in stark contrast to the respectful and legal demonstration on First Avenue. Those who marched on Fifth Avenue showed no respect for the law, engaged in the most vile anti-Catholic behavior and jeopardized the public safety of all New Yorkers. Led by Act Up, the gay radicals once again showed their anarchists' stripes by flaunting a court order not to march. As a result, those who may have needed the services of an ambulance, fire truck or police car were unnecessarily placed at risk. But none of this seemed to matter, not even to those normally accustomed to editorializing about health and safety issues.

"The degree of anti-Catholic bigotry that was vented in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral could not have been outdone by the Ku Klux Klan. Filled with hate, the demonstrators conducted themselves in a manner that gives new meaning to the term blasphemous. They also showed how very different they really are from all other protesters: only gay events inspire marchers to undress. And their mockery of the one institution that has done more to service AIDS patients than any other in the city of New York shows how irrational this segment of the gay population is.

"In addition to the vengeful Fifth Avenue protesters, criticism must also be made of Mayor Giuliani, Police Commissioner Bratton and the media. The mayor and police commissioner allowed a court order to be disobeyed, thus signaling a collapse of authority. The media failed to report the Catholic-bashing that took place outside of St. Patrick's Cathedral. If the identical behavior had taken place outside an Orthodox Jewish synagogue, it is doubtful that the disrespect would have gone unreported."

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ACT UP DEFACES CATHOLIC LEAGUE ADS

On June 1, the MTA posted 2500 anti-condom ads sponsored by the Catholic League. The ad said: "Want to Know a Dirty Little Secret? CONDOMS DON'T SAVE LIVES. But restraint does. Only fools think condoms are foolproof. Remember, better safe than sorry."

Even before the Catholic League's ads were posted, there were calls to censor it. The most prominent person calling for censorship was New York City Councilman Thomas Duane. But the reaction since the ads have been posted has moved from threat to action. In addition to seeing first-hand the defacement of many Catholic League ads, employees of the League have received dozens of phone calls from New Yorkers describing the mutilation of the ads. But now Act Up has actually organized a campaign to censor the ads.

As reported in the June 22nd edition of the New York Times (and as verified by calls from League supporters), the Youth Education League of Act Up has pasted its own handbills on the Catholic League ad. The commentary includes a sentence on the benefits of condoms preceded by the following: "It is no secret the Catholic League would sooner see you die than use a condom."

In a statement released today, Dr. William A. Donohue, President of the Catholic League, offered the following comment:

"When the Gay Men's Health Crisis put their offensive ads in the subways this past winter, the response from the Catholic League was to criticize the ads. It did not deface or remove

them. Nor did it learn of any such attempts to do so from any segment of the Catholic population. But the situation of the Catholic League's ads is different. Gays have phoned the Catholic League taking credit for vandalizing the ads and the Youth Education League of Act Up has engaged in a concerted effort to censor the ads throughout the subway system.

"That a contingent of Act Up would engage in fascistic maneuvers is hardly surprising. It was Act Up, after all, that previously busted into St. Patrick's Cathedral and desecrated the Host by spitting it on the floor. Anti-Catholic bigotry, then, is a defining characteristic of this gay group.

"The purpose of the Catholic League's ad was to challenge the reigning orthodoxy on the wonders of condoms. It was not promoting the idea that death is preferable to condom use. Only that restraint makes more sense than the mindless distribution of condoms to youngsters. The Catholic League is willing to debate this point with all responsible parties.

"The Catholic League has contacted the MTA about this problem and they have ordered an immediate clean-up of its ads. The League is grateful for this response and expects that the more than 1200 reserve ads that it paid for will be used to replace the defaced ads."

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