

BIGOTRY ERUPTS AT COLORADO STATE UNIV.

A recent, and ugly, display of anti-Catholicism on the campus of Colorado State University (CSU) prompted an exchange of letters between Bill Donohue and CSU Dean of Students Dr. Jody Donovan.

The controversy arose, Donohue explained, when a “diversity bill” was proposed in the CSU student senate. The bill granted senate seats to select organizations on campus: those representing adult learning, veterans, the disabled, LGBT students, women’s groups, as well as various racial and ethnic groups.

A Jewish student senator, Lawrence Horowitz, offered an amendment that would have included seats representing Jewish, Catholic and Muslim students in the diversity bill. He was supported by Catholic student senator Sarah Bruce.

“Inexplicably,” Donohue wrote, “the amendment was rejected, sending a message to students of faith.” When Horowitz and Bruce then joined eight other senators in defeating the original bill, Donohue recounted, “The scene got ugly: the proponents of the original bill exploded in anger. ‘I haven’t ever experienced hate like this, ever,’ is how Ms. Bruce put it.”

Supporters of the original bill then organized demonstrations, a petition, threats of impeachment and threats to “shut the senate down” if they did not get their way. Tellingly, the leader of this intimidation effort, Kwan Atlas, was himself impeached from the student senate last year for “harassment and intimidation.” These tactics worked, as the original bill subsequently passed when one senator changed her vote under threat of impeachment.

“What happened is disturbing enough,” Donohue observed—“excluding students of faith in an ‘inclusion’ bill, and rank abuse of the impeachment process to silence these students—but what makes this even worse is what happened next:

“Bruce tried to reason with students who disagreed with her, but the dialogue broke down when she was told that ‘the Catholic Church does not need to be represented because you are the ‘oppressors’ of the LGBTQ communities and others.’ When she said that she has Catholic constituents who agree with her, she was mocked by the directors of the Black/African American Cultural Center. None of this can be contested: voice recordings were taken.”

Donohue then cited the University’s own official policy on diversity to demonstrate its hypocrisy:

“The Diversity Office on campus says it is ‘committed to enhancing its diversity through the inclusion of individuals reflective of characteristics such as...religious and spiritual beliefs...’ By any measure, this tenet has been violated; injustice has certainly been done to Catholic students, and quite possibly Jewish students, as well.”

Donohue asked Dr. Donovan to respond, and to indicate “what steps might be taken to remedy this situation.” Dr. Donovan’s reply, while respectful, was vague and unsatisfactory:

“Colorado State University strongly supports students and their right to self-govern through their elected body, the Associated Students of Colorado State University. This self-governance includes the right of students on all sides to disagree and to protest against the decisions of their student government. “

She said nothing about the blatant attempts to deny that right to students of faith by threatening to impeach them simply because they voted their consciences. Instead, she portrayed “the initial incidents you describe” as simply “an example of

opposing and disparate voices all being included in a contentious conversation, which, while stressful, was an opportunity for learning and growth as appropriate to an academic community.”

Dr. Donovan wrote that “we don’t condone a variety of student actions that took place around these recent events.” This carefully avoids identifying what those student actions were—threats, intimidation, and expressions of anti-Catholic bigotry—and who they were directed against—students of faith. Instead, she simply wrote that “the University has worked to support and counsel all our students—on all sides of the issue”—as though there is a moral equivalence between those perpetrating bigotry and intolerance and those on the receiving end of it.

The Catholic League will continue to monitor this situation to see whether students of faith are to be included in Colorado State University’s diversity enhancement policies.

PENNSYLVANIA LAWMAKER’S GRANDSTANDING

Pennsylvania lawmaker Mark Rozzi’s colleagues ought to call him out immediately for his demagoguery: he wants to use the taxpayer’s money to investigate every diocese in the state for possible sexual abuse crimes. He does not want to target any other institution—just the Catholic Church. If he were seriously concerned about the issue of sexual abuse, he would call for an investigation of all public and private institutions. His real interest, however, is sticking it to the Catholic Church, not protecting minors.

Rep. Rozzi's grandstanding is inspired by a grand jury's revelation that the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown improperly dealt with past cases of priestly sexual abuse. Not surprisingly, this expedition started because of alleged abuse at a Catholic high school in that diocese. This alone merited a sweeping look at abuse dating back to World War II.

Anyone who knows anything about the subject of the sexual abuse of minors knows that there is not a single demographic group, or institution, that has not had a lousy record of dealing with this problem. Swimming coaches, camp counselors, Boy Scouts, psychologists, public school teachers, rabbis, ministers, Hollywood producers—all have a sordid past. So why is it that only the Catholic Church is fingered?

To take just one example, when it comes to teachers raping students, Pennsylvania has the second worst record in the nation. Terry Abbott is chairman of the Houston-based Drive West Communications, and his organization tracks this issue nationwide. In 2014, he concluded that "It's an enormous problem all across the country, and Pennsylvania's at the top of it. This isn't a list you want to lead." Indeed, a review by the *Tribune-Review*, a Pittsburgh daily, found that between 2004 and 2014, disciplinary actions against teachers more than quadrupled, and that 50 to 60 percent involved sexual misconduct.

The cherry picking, and the rank hypocrisy, must end. We contacted all lawmakers in the Keystone state.

MORAL

PANIC

GRIPS

PENNSYLVANIA

Moral panic is the term used by sociologists to describe what happens when social problems become highly exaggerated, often by the media. Setting off the alarms, without due cause, not only distorts the truth about existing conditions, it triggers an overreaction. This is what a moral panic does, and it is going on right now in Pennsylvania. But it is not reporters who are arousing unnecessary fears, it is lawmakers and activists. Worse, they are acting like bigots.

Consider the following. Alleged cases of sexual abuse at a Catholic high school in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown were referred by the local D.A.'s office to the state Attorney General's office. Let's stop right there. How often is the state AG's office asked to accept cases involving one high school, and how often does it comply? How common is it for the plaintiffs' lawyer to come from out-of-state to handle the case, especially when it is known that the Church-suing millionaire attorney has a tainted record?

It gets worse. How often does such a lawsuit extend to a grand jury investigation of the entire organization, involving persons wholly unconnected to the original case? How common is it that such a probe would extend back to World War II? Most important, why is it that no other organization in the state has been subjected to such an investigation, especially when the problem is raging elsewhere? To be exact, why is there no probe of sexual misconduct by public school teachers, rabbis, ministers, et al.?

Bad as this is, nothing tops the response of lawmakers. Leading the way is Rep. Mark Rozzi, a moral panic practitioner par excellence. "We are talking about an epidemic here in the state of Pennsylvania," he says. Not only is this irresponsible hyperbole, he, and his allies, are phonies: They do not want to go to the heart of the "epidemic"—they only

want dioceses to be investigated! The public schools, they say, should get a pass.

Stay tuned. The Catholic League will have much more to say about this issue, and we won't limit ourselves to news releases.

The following ad appeared on the op-ed page of the New York Times on February 29:

To read our *New York Times* op-ed page February 29, 2016, click [here](#).

The Following Ad was rejected by the New York Times:

To read the ad we initially submitted to the *Times*, but was rejected, click [here](#).

THE POLITICIZATION OF “SPOTLIGHT”

The movie “Spotlight” was being politicized before it even hit theaters. That, not the movie itself, was always our concern, and that politicization has continued. On the day of the Oscars several weeks ago, actor Mark Ruffalo, one of the stars in the movie, led a rally outside the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in downtown Los Angeles. Only 20 people attended the protest, which Ruffalo organized with the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). During the rally, Ruffalo told protesters “I’m here to stand with the survivors and the victims and the people we’ve lost from Catholic priesthood sex abuse.” Ruffalo also posted on his Twitter page, “Standing with the survivors of Priest sexual abuse!” Ruffalo was joined by “Spotlight” director Tom McCarthy and screenwriter Josh Singer during the protest.

When “Spotlight” won an Oscar, producer Michael Sugar took advantage of his appearance on stage to lecture the Church on the abuse scandal that took place almost a half century ago. “This film gave a voice to survivors, and this Oscar amplifies that voice, which we hope will become a choir that will resonate all the way to the Vatican,” he said. He went on to criticize the pope, stating “Pope Francis, it’s time to protect the children and restore the faith.” Backstage, Sugar continued his rant. “I hope that you journalists in here and throughout the world will help resonate our message all the way to the Vatican, and maybe we can have some real change,” he said. “That’s what we hope to accomplish. That’s what this is really about—for all of us is to talk about this film and what happened and because these things are still happening. The story of ‘Spotlight’ has really just begun.”

Afterward Walter Robinson, who led the *Globe* Spotlight team that investigated the scandal in 2002, piled on in claiming

the Church has not addressed the scandal. "We're at a moment now where bishops around the world are praising the film ... signals that perhaps the church will become more serious about dealing with a problem that still continues," he said. And the *National Catholic Reporter* declared in an editorial headline, "Best picture win for 'Spotlight' is fitting humiliation for church."