

TROUBLE IN PROVINCETOWN

Provincetown, Massachusetts, a small resort town on the tip of Cape Cod, was once a sleepy Portuguese fishing village. In recent years, it has become popular with homosexuals, both for year-round dwelling and as a summer vacation spot. Gays say they feel comfortable in Provincetown, which was honored by the Anti-Defamation League as worthy of the title "No Place for Hate."

Though Provincetown's police chief says they haven't seen an incident of a hate crime in over 10 years, all is not well in this supposed bastion of tolerance. While Provincetown's gays may enjoy freedom from harassment, some of the town's Catholics have recently come under attack for their stance on upholding traditional marriage.

Massachusetts petition #05-02 is called the Constitutional Amendment to Define Marriage. The petition states: "When recognizing marriages entered into after the adoption of this amendment by the people, the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions shall define marriage only as the union of one man and one woman."

A website found at the address KnowThyNeighbor.org has published the names and addresses of the petition's signers. (The site also lists the names and addresses of those who signed a similar petition in Florida.) Most of the Provincetown residents who signed the petition are also members of Saint Peter's, the local Catholic church. Some of those who supported the petition say they have since been subjected to insults and accusations from fellow townspeople.

One woman who signed stated that a copy of the list posted on KnowThyNeighbor was left on her windshield. Another parishioner reported that the publisher of *Provincetown Magazine* saw her shopping and shouted that she was a bigot.

The publisher, Rick Hines, admitted he confronted her, saying "you run into someone you know sees you as a second-class citizen and it's human to respond." Heterosexual visitors to Provincetown cited instances of being sneeringly labeled "breeders" by local gays. In addition, seasonal workers from Jamaica and Eastern Europe have complained of hearing racist and bigoted comments from both tourists and residents.

After the media began reporting on these accusations, many of those who live in Provincetown said that the supposed tension is little more than media hype. However, the situation was certainly troublesome enough for the police chief to hold a town meeting to address the need for civility and respect. Furthermore, it is apparent that for some homosexuals in Provincetown, supporting traditional marriage is synonymous with bigotry: the president of the Provincetown Business Guild, Steve Tait, described the circulation of the petition by St. Peter's Church as "the first act of hate."

The Catholic League believes that the situation in Provincetown is certainly worthy of attention. Indeed, after a league member who attended the police chief's meeting contacted us, we were even more certain. The member reported that at the meeting, he brought up a popular local T-shirt store called Don't Panic! He questioned why the store, located in a town that is supposedly "No Place for Hate," sells shirts reading "Catholic School Survivor," "Catholic Boy Gone Bad," and "Jesus is Coming. Hide the Porn." No one could answer him.

Bill Donohue wrote to the store's owner, Skylar Hynes, and asked him to do his part to end the current problems by removing the offending shirts from his Provincetown location. If Provincetown is truly a village without bigotry, locals will be making the same request of him.