

The Vigilance Blog: Sample Posts

Introduction The *Vigilance* blog began back in December, even before the TeachTheFacts.org web site was established. It was moved into the web site as soon as that was set up, with the first post at the new site dated December 21st, 2004. Since then there have been hundreds of posts, documenting and discussing the unfolding controversy over the MCSP sex education curriculum. Blog articles are typically published as soon as they are written, without editorial review, and they tend to have a sense of informality to them. This document presents a very small percentage of posts from that 10-month period.

Read the rest at <http://www.teachthefacts.org/vigilance.html> .

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Extry, Extry! James Dobson Did Not Criticize SpongeBob SquarePants

This just in. The Focus on the Family website www.family.org has announced that their leader, James Dobson, did not -- I repeat, *did not* "criticize a cartoon character, as has been widely reported."

Please update your records. James Dobson did not criticize SpongeBob SquarePants.

Dobson, his eyes glazed from lack of sleep, suit wrinkled and stained, hair uncombed, mumbled to reporters:

"I've been in the public eye for thirty-something years and I have never had my words more misrepresented than they were in this instance," Dobson said on today's installment of his internationally syndicated radio program. "I was said to be on the warpath for my dislike for SpongeBob — who supposedly has homosexual characteristics.

"I said no such thing."

Y'know, I wonder how this whole thing got started. It's such a doggone shame that people would think he said something bad about SpongeBob SquarePants, just out of the blue like that.

According to his website:

What Dobson did say, in a speech last week in Washington during an event sponsored by the Family Research Council, was that SpongeBob is one of 100 popular animated characters that may have been co-opted by an innocuous-sounding group to promote acceptance of homosexuality to children.

Uh. Oh, OK, that's, like, *so much* better.

He didn't just call SpongeBob SquarePants a sodomite, he also implicated a hundred or so other cartoon characters.

Dobson, what can I say? *You're a nut.*

You know what his evidence is for this, right? There is a video with SpongeBob and all these other cartoon guys in it, and they ask kids to go to a web site and sign a "Tolerance Pledge." And one of the things the pledge says is:

I pledge to have respect for people whose abilities, beliefs, culture, race, sexual identity or other characteristics are different from my own.

You got that, right? It said "sexual identity."

While words like “diversity” and “unity” sound harmless — even noble — enough, the reality is they are often used by gay activists as cover for teaching children that homosexuality is the moral and biological equivalent to heterosexuality. And there is ample evidence that the We Are Family Foundation shares — and promotes — that view.

“Unfortunately,” Dobson explained, “the We Are Family foundation has very strong homosexual advocacy roots and biases.”

Diversity, unity, wow, I never would have realized that people who believe in that are devil-worshipping perverts.

There’s another word the sodomites use, too. Reported in New Zealand’s National Business Review:

A “homosexuality detection expert” at the ... conservative Family Research Council told the NY Times that words like “tolerance” and “diversity” are part of a “coded language that is regularly used by the homosexual community.”

OK, so there’s diversity, unity, tolerance...

It turns out the American Family Association is against everything that is decent. They are opposed to goodness itself.

And, somebody tell me, where do you apply for the job of “homosexuality detection expert”? What is the training for that? Is that, like, a hateful guy with good gay-dar?

Look, let me get to the point here. Dobson is a nut. These people are foaming at the mouth over some cartoon characters who represent everything that is good in human nature -- kindness, collegiality, love, innocence, tolerance.

These same people are trying to influence the school board’s decisions about the education of our children.

We need to keep this kind of poison out of our community.
POSTED BY JIMK AT 2:40 PM 2 COMMENTS

Thursday, January 20, 2005

Bias Against Ex-Gays

Now that the “ex-gays” have established their billboard outside MCPS offices, somebody pointed me to an interesting post from a few months ago at a lesbian blog, written when the same billboard was put up down in Virginia. They make an interesting point.

Ex-gays and the people they allow to guide and advise them all say that homosexuals can become heterosexuals if we simply choose to become heterosexuals. Perhaps I shouldn’t simplify the issue, but really that’s the premise of their argument. We have a choice. We can choose to become heterosexuals and live a life that society views as “acceptable.”

We can argue all day about choice. If homosexuals can choose to be heterosexuals, then that means homosexuals chose to be homosexuals to begin with. Yes? No? Does that mean straight men can decide at any moment to become gay men? Is it really that simple? If it is that simple, then ex-gays have minimized sexuality to nothing more than a sexual act. SistersTalk: Oh, I wish I could be an ex-gay

Great point: they have minimized sexuality to nothing more than a sexual act.

In recent years, the big debate has been about marriage -- the government wanting to choose what kind of partner you’re allowed. It’s not about hooking up in a public restroom, it’s about establishing long-term, stable relationships. And the religious right thinks that is evil and wrong -- they’ve said it many, many times.

There is no doubt that a gay man can manage to perform sexually with a woman, in the physical sense. Look, the multigazillion-dollar sex-toy industry shows you that people can enjoy having sex with inanimate objects! A little friction, a little fantasy, and there you go.

And that seems to be all the PFOX types want. They don't care if Christopher Delaney (the guy on the billboard) and his re-closeted colleagues have warm, fulfilling, loving relationships. They *only* care who they have sex with. If a guy is dreaming about Steve while he's with Eve it doesn't matter, as long as he's actually *with Eve*, physically.

They want you to think this is a great accomplishment, having sex with someone you're not really attracted to. They complain that we won't teach our kids, in the public schools, how to do this. It's unbalanced, they say. Some of us don't see the sense in teaching our kids how to have sex with a socially acceptable partner that they are not attracted to -- and so we're bigots, discriminating against those who do that. Strange how that works.

I think the SistersTalk blogger is right. They have minimized sexuality to nothing more than a sexual act.

There's nothing really wrong with that, of course, we are more or less surrounded by pornographic images that do the same thing, sexy TV shows and ads that have the same effect, sex without love is something America has accepted. What is wrong is explicitly teaching it to schoolchildren, especially in the public schools, teaching kids to deny their real feelings in selecting a love partner, and choose someone that some authority has decided is acceptable for you.

Go to the PFOX website and click on some of their testimonials. See if you can find one -- I couldn't -- that says that the person has actually learned to prefer the opposite sex. There might be one in there, but most say they're "still trying." The history of the "movement" is a sad tale of people falling off the bandwagon, switching back again to what's natural for them.

It isn't discrimination or bigotry to ignore the tiny, mostly failed "ex-gay movement." People who hold a certain weird belief need them, because if there were "used-to-be" gays it would mean you could change, it might even mean it's a choice. That's why James Dobson's Christian ministries started PFOX in the first place, so they could point to them as support for their anti-gay beliefs. But this is a very, very weak point to make. It doesn't need to be in the school's curriculum, kids don't need to hear this junk.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 9:37 AM 0 COMMENTS

Tuesday, February 01, 2005

Unraveling the "Argument from Discomfort"

[Note: This post may be a kind of rambling monologue, trying to untangle some of the relevant dimensions to this issue. --I speak for no one but myself here.]

I had mixed feelings as I read this editorial in the *Post* on Sunday. The author of the editorial, Ruth Marcus, conveys the impression that she has been basically a shoulder-shrugging liberal when it comes to gay and transgender issues, she's been accepting, tolerant, but not exactly excited about some of these things; and now she's getting a creepy feeling. Talking about evangelist James Dobson's recent self-satirizing attack on SpongeBob SquarePants and Co., she says:

For if you peel away his repulsive prejudice against gays and his overheated paranoia, Dobson's stated problems with the video echo the worries of many ordinary parents, even liberal ones, that they are the losers in the culture wars and that they have been supplanted in their role by outside forces. Ready to Throw In The Sponge?

Well, I don't quite see that. She puts it in such a nice way that you sympathize, but really, I don't think most of us mind if the school teaches our kids some of the facts of life. And she's not *really* agreeing with Dobson that "tolerance", "unity", and "diversity" are coded language for homosexuals trying to take over the world, is she?

Her kids go to a private school -- please keep that in mind as she tells her story: this is a school she chose and paid for, not a public school.

Seems this private elementary school really got into this sexual orientation thing. The school put up a photography exhibit of families with gay parents.

I don't quite get this, but she says:

What discomfited some of us -- many of us, in fact -- was the explicitness of the accompanying text describing families with bisexual and transgender parents and families with a history of incest.

Well, I wanna know -- *what did it say?* Was it really "explicit?" I am imagining a picture of Bruce I in a tutu, open-mouth kissing with Bruce II in a bra and panties, with some text like, "... Again and again his calloused hand swept along the firm length of my silky thighs, driving me to new peaks of excitement with every stroke ..."

Um, somehow, I don't think so. But we don't know what it said, because she doesn't say.

And what did "incest" have to do with it? I really think she left out something important.

Her story builds up to this climax:

One day that week, I was driving the kids home and asked the innocuous question of what they had done in school. "We went up to see the exhibit and learned about transgender families," my 9-year-old answered brightly. "Will was a little confused about how the woman had the baby if she is a man." I held my breath, waiting for the 7-year-old to follow up.

She doesn't say that the 7-year-old ever did follow up, so we assume he didn't.

It appears that the trauma here was that the mother may have had to answer a hard question. She might have had to say, "Maybe they adopted the baby." Seems to me that if a kid's young enough to believe in Santa Claus, an adult ought to be able to derail a hard train of questioning about where babies come from in a particular case.

I draw two conclusions from this editorial. The first is: *discomfort is not a moral standard*. Straight people are often uncomfortable seeing gay people, and that's not hard to figure out. We simply can't imagine being sexually aroused by someone of our own sex. Can't imagine it, not comfortable with it, kinda creepy. That's just how people are -- like, I can't imagine eating baked blood-clots, but when I was in Portugal I saw people doing it. They liked it, I didn't try it, thank you. The fact that baked blood-clots do not sound appetizing to me *has nothing to do* with the morality of eating blood. You see where I'm going with this? You don't have to *like* same-sex relationships, but an intelligent person should be able to distinguish between their own uncomfortable feeling and a judgment of whether something is morally wrong.

There is a certain kind of higher thinking that says we should face those things that frighten us, and deal with them directly. A diplomat, for instance, has to take the high road and eat the exotic food. A parent who is concerned about the inclusion of gay-parent families in the school's definition of families might want to understand exactly what it is about the idea that bothers them. Is it really a threat to them or their own family? Is there really something evil about two people of the same sex loving one another? Or is it simply something you don't understand and have never thought about? This is the superior way, but sadly we can't expect it of everyone.

Second thing. Here's where I'm willing to empathize with this lady a little bit. There are gay, bisexual, transgendered people in the world, but not very many of them. Estimates vary from a low of one or two percent given by the wishful-thinking religious right to ten or fifteen percent coming out of Kinsey's studies, decades ago, and embraced by wishful-thinking people from the other side of the discussion. The truth is probably in the low-to-middle part of that range, but nobody really knows. Anyway, the exact proportion doesn't matter. The fact is, there are gay people, and it is perfectly reasonable to teach kids that fact, and give them some context for understanding it. It's not a sickness, it's not a choice, and it's not *that* rare, but it's not very common.

It sounds like this lady's private school got a little obsessed with this. I don't think there needs to be a photography gallery of pictures of gay families in the school. If there was a gallery of *families*, then by all means, go ahead and put some same-sex parents in there, let kids get used to the fact. But life isn't *about* gay people, and it is not

especially educational, it seems to me, to overemphasize it in the schools. How about we teach kids that gay people are just people? You OK with that? I am.

Now that I've probably alienated just about everybody ...

The new MCPS curriculum does an excellent job of walking this fine line. Nobody is proposing photography exhibits of gay families with "explicit" (I still wonder what that was) text, or field trips to gay bars, or anything like that. The curriculum is not obsessed or enamored with homosexuality, it simply teaches it as a fact of life. And that's what it is.

This kind of debate is not easily condensed into either/or, black or white propositions. The whole discussion requires sensitivity and subtlety: nuance. To talk about this, we need to be grown-ups. We need to accept what the facts are, and we need to understand that various parties have their own reasons for wanting one or another outcome, and we need to understand that probably nobody will get everything they want.

The Montgomery County curriculum is the result of years -- literally, years -- of negotiating and discussing many different points of view. Leaders of the recall group were members of the citizen's committee that discussed this -- they want you to believe now that the discussion wasn't fair, but it was as fair as it gets. There were lots of conservative, anti-gay folks on the committee, and they moved the curriculum toward the center, but they didn't get their way a hundred per cent. The curriculum now teaches that there are gay people, and they're just people. It's not obsessed with homosexuality, just presents it as a fact of life.

You OK with that? I am.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 1:23 PM 4 COMMENTS

Thursday, March 10, 2005

Higher ground

As I mentioned in my previous post, the sex-ed discussions have provided our community with incredible opportunities—we've been given the opportunity to think more deeply about the many issues being raised, and to get clearer on what exactly we believe about tolerance, fairness, and justice. We have the opportunity to decide what kind of community we really want to live in, and how we want the many different faiths represented in our community to interact with our childrens' education.

Not all of us believe in God, but for those of us who do, that belief is often a primary force in determining perspectives on just about everything. It can be very difficult to separate a person's religious or spiritual beliefs from the more mundane aspects of life, because God is seen as a part of it all. Many of us believe that God is there when we are born, when we grow, when we learn and struggle, when we're happy and sad—many of us believe that God is there through everything we go through, and is as close to us as our breath. No relationship is more intimate, or more powerful in shaping who we are, and how we see the world.

And it can therefore be extremely difficult for any community to decide the right balance between respecting individual religious beliefs, and creating enough of a separation between them and our institutions to not infringe on the rights of others who believe differently.

Schools should not be in the business of telling any child what their religious beliefs should be. But, there are times, when the best scientific data available conflicts with specific religious beliefs...so how should schools handle that? We need to be sensitive to the many different beliefs in our community, and where possible, children should be given alternatives.

But the onus is not only on the schools, but also on religious people. I don't believe that my views about God should be given precedence over other peoples' views in a public institution. I can't limit myself to just thinking about my child, or the children of people who believe like me. As a member of any community, I have to also be concerned with people who aren't like me, and who don't think like me.

Regardless of whether God is seen as immanent or transcendent, the belief in God is about believing in a being

higher than us, and more filled with all of the higher qualities of humanity—more love, more understanding, more forgiveness, more peacefulness. So those of us who see God as a reality are called to manifest more of those qualities, not less. We will never all agree on whether Jesus actually lived, or whether or not he's the messiah. The many faiths and denominations in our community will never agree on every aspect of theology.

Since we know we will never resolve all of our community's theological differences, we need to find a place where all people have the opportunity to come together, regardless of faith, denomination, or culture.

We need to find a common ground, and as Jim Wallis said "higher ground is always the common ground."

The place where we all have a chance to come together is through an absolute and unwavering commitment to valuing every human being in our midst.

We can argue all day about sexual orientation—what its origins are, and whether or not gay people can change to straight. But regardless of what anyone believes about that, to view a human being only through the prism of sexuality, is to diminish that person based on one aspect of his or her existence. None of us are that small, and as a community, we can't be so small that we casually gloss over the reality of *who our neighbors really are*—and focus on nothing more than sexuality.

The belief in God invites us to a higher ground. Those of us who share that belief are asked to be bigger than squabbling with our neighbors. We're asked to listen more, learn more, and speak less. We're asked to connect more deeply with other people, and not to separate ourselves through the wall of judgment.

Judgment, closes doors.

We have a huge opportunity. Through learning about and discussing these issues, we have a chance to become a healthier, wiser, and stronger community.

POSTED BY MARYAM AT 1:09 PM

Wednesday, February 02, 2005

Hard Problems Easily Solved

We live in amazing and wonderful times, when the solutions to very difficult world problems are right at our fingertips. Take the problem of teen pregnancy. The world is scratching its head trying to figure out what to do, but the answer is simple: tell teenagers to stop having sex.

Another problem: sexually-transmitted infections, like AIDS and syphilis. What to do? Simple: tell teenagers to stop having sex.

See how easy? No sex, the problems just ... go away. Just like that. Poof.

Because, as you know, teenagers are very good about doing what they're told. Especially when it comes to self-control, teenagers have more self-control than anybody. If you tell them not to have sex, why, it won't even cross their minds. They'll act like it doesn't even exist.

At least that's the theory that the federal government is spending your money on. There's tons of funding for (oxy)moronic "sex education" programs that teach nothing about sex except that you shouldn't do it.

Abstinence-only programs like those promoted by the Bush administration don't seem to be working on teenagers in the president's home state, according to a state-sponsored study by Texas A&M University researchers.

The ongoing study, the first evaluation of the abstinence programs across the state, found that students in almost all high school grades were more sexually active after undergoing abstinence education.

Researchers don't believe the programs encouraged teenagers to have sex, only that the abstinence messages did not interfere with customary trends among adolescents. Study: Texas abstinence plan not working

This is so obvious, I'm almost embarrassed to report it. Did anybody really believe this would work, or is this some kind of weird game, a prank somebody is playing on the whole United States?

Among the findings in the Texas study: About 23 percent of the ninth-grade girls in the study already had sexual intercourse before they received any abstinence education, a figure below the national average.

After taking an abstinence course, the number among those same girls rose to 28 percent, a level closer to that of their peers across the state.

Among ninth-grade boys, the percentage who reported sexual intercourse before and after abstinence education remained relatively unchanged. In 10th grade, the percentage of boys who had ever had sexual intercourse jumped from 24 percent to 39 percent after participating in an abstinence program.

Realize -- this isn't some local-yokel group of "concerned parents" trying to impose their puritanical "values" on some ignorant local-yokel kids. These programs are mandated at the highest levels of government -- your Congress and your President passed these bills. You voted for these clowns, you're paying for it.

To be funded as abstinence education, programs cannot provide instruction in birth control, outside "factual information about contraceptive methods, such as the failure rates that are associated with the different methods," according to documents from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Among other things, the law also dictates that an abstinence program must have "as its exclusive purpose, teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity."

And watch out -- there are people here in Montgomery County who would like us to downgrade our educational system to this.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 10:52 AM 4 COMMENTS

Saturday, March 19, 2005

The Town Hall Meeting: Personal Aftermath

A number of us attended the CRC's "town hall" meeting today. Afterwards, I went for a long drive with my daughter. We went out to the lake and all around, looked for fish in the water, got a soda, talked.

Hearing the speakers at that meeting made me really, really glad to be who I am. It made me appreciate my family, and the good people of teachthefacts.org who had the stamina, and yes the courage, to sit and listen attentively through the hatred and the self-righteous venom.

I think all of us who went will want to spend the rest of the day with our families and with good friends. What is happening here is so awfully negative, so coldly evil, that none of us will want to think about it for now.

I'll blog some details later, maybe tomorrow.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 5:24 PM 3 COMMENTS

Tuesday, March 22, 2005

The Conservative Curriculum

We realized when we first saw the Board of Education's report that we were going to have a problem. And we immediately realized what the problem was going to be. And we understood, from that first gloomy moment, that there was no easy solution.

The problem has to do with the word *conservative*.

In its usual usage, "conservative" means something like "avoiding excess." A conservative suit does not call attention to itself. Conservative behavior conforms to expectations, doesn't stand out.

The new curriculum proposed by the MCPS Board of Education is conservative. By that definition.

Sadly, the word *conservative* has another meaning, though. It has a political meaning. I'm not sure what it means any more, I think the definition has changed, but suffice it to say: the people who oppose this curriculum are people who would be called, in this day and age, politically "conservative."

So it's hard to say the curriculum is "conservative" when "conservatives" oppose it. See the problem?

Another word might do. Like, "modest." But no, it's not really a modest curriculum, it is comprehensive so it's not modest in the sense of being small and unimposing, and it doesn't address the question of modesty.

"Moderate?" How does that work? "A moderate curriculum." No, unfortunately that sounds like it means "not very good." Like, "He was a moderate student." See what I mean?

"Restrained?" Naw, restraint has nothing to do with it. I mean, it's quite low-key, but it's really just another health class. You know, like it's no more restrained than your average precalculus class.

Hey -- how about "low-key?" Mmm, a low-key curriculum. No, I don't think that's going to do it. It doesn't matter how intense it is, that's not the issue.

So ... you see the problem, right? In fact, the curriculum is very conservative, but we can't call it that, because those other guys own the word. It's basically the same old curriculum, but with a little bit of new stuff added about sexual identity and sexual orientation, and a new video. Kind of bringing it up to the Eighties, it seems to me. Never mind the twenty-first century, with "Queer Eye" and "Will and Grace," where gay is just part of reality -- this curriculum very ... conservatively ... brings up a subject that some student's parents are uptight about, and deals with it very ... conservatively.

You see the problem?

POSTED BY JIMK AT 3:24 PM 6 COMMENTS

Thursday, March 24, 2005

Thanks for Paying for the Postage

I was starting to worry.

See, TeachTheFacts.org doesn't have anything like a treasury. The only money we have is what comes out of our pockets. And that's fine for setting up a web site and occasionally making some copies, renting a room occasionally, and so on. We chip in -- well, it's important to us.

But then we hear that some "group" called "Parents Against X-Rated Curriculum in MCPS" is spending money mailing stuff to people who have kids in the schools where the new curriculum will be piloted. They're sending people a letter, and they're enclosing *stamped* postcards -- two of 'em, one addressed to the Board of Education, and one addressed to the MCPS Health Education Coordinator, so people can complain and withdraw their kids from the curriculum.

Man, that's a lot of money on stamps. Three of 'em for every house they write to. How in the world can we compete with something like that?

Well, people have been sending in those postcards, yes they have.

From the Montgomery County Public Schools front office we have learned that people are crossing out all the stupid stuff, and writing in statements of support for the new curriculum. Of course it's early yet, but so far positive comments outnumber negative ones by *more than six to one*. People overwhelmingly want these changes made to the MCPS curriculum, and they're using the Parents Against Blah-blah-blah's postage to tell the school district.

It appears that someone has mistaken Montgomery County, Maryland, for Montgomery, Alabama.

Well what can I say? Thanks for covering the postage expense for us.
POSTED BY JIMK AT 12:19 PM 0 COMMENTS

Thursday, April 14, 2005

CRC Submits Signatures

The Ex-Recall group got a little publicity yesterday when they brought petitions with 3,500 signatures to the Board of Education meeting. As *The Times* put it:

The signatures “represent a growing concern over your recent decisions to introduce materials and topics to our schoolchildren that many families find objectionable, with no reasonable or acceptable alternative,” said Michelle Turner, president of Citizens for Responsible Curriculum (CRC).

She said many signatures were collected at Catholic and evangelical Christian churches and that the group also is working with area Hindus and Muslims. Petition opposes sex-ed program.

I was imagining how that happens. You’re at church. A nice lady gets a chance to speak. She says, “MCPS wants to put a new sex education curriculum in place. It encourages sexual experimentation among minors, it encourages students, beginning in 8th grade, to “develop your individual sexual identity,” it’s an invitation for students to begin sexual exploration. Why, this curriculum suggests to adolescents as young as 13 that a sex life is necessary for a good self-image, virtually inviting them to engage in premature sexual behavior!

“Brothers and sisters, this curriculum normalizes homosexuality and presents it as morally equivalent to heterosexuality! It is designed to impress on teens that homosexuality is normal, healthy, and inborn! Under this curriculum, students and teachers are taught how to change the school environment to affirm homosexuality by explicitly discussing sexual behaviors, prohibiting any talk of abstinence until marriage, posting “safe zone” stickers for gay youth, and inviting homosexual speakers to address students.

“It violates the moral and religious convictions of many families -- in effect, it leads students to play Russian roulette with sexual practices that dramatically increase the likelihood of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases...”

Yeah, man, who wouldn’t jump up and sign one of those petitions? *I* sure wouldn’t want something like that in my schools! By the way, those were all direct quotes of Ex-Recall president Michelle Turner, this is actually what they do tell people this curriculum is about. I very much doubt they actually pass out the school district’s materials, which can be found **HERE**. Because ... it would be very much harder to get signatures of people who find the *actual curriculum* offensive.

So Tuesday they brought in petition signatures gathered all over the state, not just in our county, at churches and mosques. Those petitions show that the Ex-Recall group was able to find a number of people equalling four tenths of one percent of the population of Montgomery County who felt strongly enough about this curriculum to sign a petition at church.

For that, they earn a great big tally-mark on the scoreboard next to their name. As David Letterman always says, “Good job, kids.”

POSTED BY JIMK AT 9:18 AM 17 COMMENTS

Tuesday, April 26, 2005

Phobes Phinest Sneak Preview

The Ex-Recall town hall meeting last month, I am realizing, actually did us a service. Yes, it turns out the Ex-Recall concert featured up-and-coming artists who would have some of the biggest hits on the Maryland Homophobe Top Ten. Artists like Tres Kerns, whose “Cant’ Get Enuuff (of that Gay Porn Stuff)” has rocked the house all over the state, and Peter Sprigg -- who would’ve guessed his “Everybody Was Wrong About the Gay Boys” would be such a monster hit in the Phobe crew countdown?

I'd have to say Don Dwyer actually made his name at the Ex-Recall gig, bringing the place *down*, baby, *down*, with his remake of "Baby, I Bring You All My Hate and Fear." And, though it wasn't exactly new, we were all glad to hear the smooth, familiar sound of Bobby Knight's "People Dig It, I Ain't No Bigot."

Some of these artists are teaming up again in a concert in Annapolis: Petition-alooza.

ANNAPOLIS (AP) -- Conservative and Christian groups are mounting a wide effort against bills passed in the recent General Assembly session that they say promote a homosexual agenda.

The legislation would add homosexuals to the categories of people protected under Maryland's hate-crime laws, allow unmarried couples to make property transfers without paying state or local transfer taxes, and require schools to report bullying incidents.

Tres Kerns, executive director of VoteMarriage.org and Take Back Maryland, filed petition requests last week with the Maryland State Board of Elections to repeal the bills through voter referendums.

...

Mr. Kerns' groups, with the Christian Coalition of Maryland, Defend Maryland Marriage and the Family Protection Lobby, also support petition efforts by Delegate Don Dwyer Jr., Anne Arundel Republican, to repeal a bill that would give unmarried couples medical decision-making rights. Groups target bills on gay rights

Oh, yes, each one of them is a-true-Looza, fer real, man.

And did you catch Peter Sprigg singing "The CRC Say It (So It Must Be So)" on MSNBC the other day? He wowed the audience by bringing back the old James Brown "cape" routine -- shouting "Wait! Wait! Let me interject something!" and returning to the stage, still alive but pitiable. (Some people say he looks just like Elton John, what do you think?)

And Concerned Woman Bobby Knight has been stirring things up, too. Inspired by the USGA's decision to allow transgender athletes to compete in their golf tournaments, Knight wrote what may be his most powerful piece yet, "Can't Swing The Lady's Club (If You Were Ever a Man)." Here are some lyrics to that one, which I believe will be his biggest evah -- *evah, baby*:

"The USGA has now surrendered to the decadence and political correctness that is sweeping over Europe. One would have thought that the USGA would have had more backbone. The women's golf tour should be about women, not castrated males." USGA to allow Transgender Athletes

Oh yeah! Just seeing the words written down -- jus' layin' there, if you know what I mean -- makes ya want to git up and shake it! Oh yeah: *Decadence and political correctness!* I can get wid dat.

A big shout-out and tHaNkZ to Ex-Recall for assembling some of the Phobes' Phinest for a sneak preview of the HomoHaterHits of 2005. Now when we read the news, we feel like we've actually been there.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 9:27 AM 1 COMMENTS

Thursday, May 05, 2005

Hold Granted

Early word is that the judge *did* grant a ten-day hold on the sex-ed curriculum. Pilot testing was supposed to start tomorrow in six schools, but apparently it'll be put off a couple of weeks.

See how it is with those those liberal activist judges? -- They're never there when you need one.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 4:26 PM 12 COMMENTS

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Da Noive a Some People

The school board has apparently hired a law firm to represent them in the suit over the sex-ed curriculum. OK, that's encouraging, they're not just laying down and giving up, we approve of that.

But sometimes you just gotta blink and look twice.

The CRC, who sued the board in the first place, has posted a message on their web site, bold and italicized:

CRC: 'It's a Complete Waste of Taxpayer Money' ...
Imagine suing the county and then complaining when they have to spend money defending themselves.

<shakes_head_in_wonder>

Now, *this* makes sense:

TTF: 'It's a Complete Waste of Taxpayer Money' ...

POSTED BY JIMK AT 4:50 PM 4 COMMENTS

Wednesday, June 01, 2005

The Holier-Than-Thou Crowd Propagates Nasty Stuff

I spend some time looking around the Internet at news and commentary regarding sex-ed topics, not only here in Montgomery County -- which has generated a lot of discussion across the country -- but in other places.

Recently there was an event up in Massachusetts that the holier than thou crowd just *loves* to write about. It was a lapse of good judgment, without a doubt (like that never happens on their side).

The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) sponsored a workshop in Brookline, Mass. They rented a middle school for their conference, and various groups exhibited products and topics for discussion and education.

Well, one of the groups brought some copies of *The Little Black Book - Queer in the 21st Century*. This book is written for adult gays by gays, in a sort of, well, I think it's a sort of dumb-sounding slang, using usually the least socially-acceptable term possible for body parts and activities. Fact is, most adults will know what most of these words are, which is kind of interesting in its own right ... The book definitely doesn't have a glossary in the back, in fact in the back there is a list of bars with names like "Jacques" and "Manray" and "Ramrod."

A group brought these books to the conference, and when they packed up and left, they left the books on the table for anybody to pick up. As history would have it, one person who picked up a copy was a 73-year-old lady from an organization called Article 8 Alliance. Click on the link and I think you'll pretty quickly get the gist of this group.

When this little old lady got home and looked in her paisley shopping-bag, she realized she'd struck gold. Her trembling hands dialed the Home Office to tell them that she'd found it, the Proof of the Gay Agenda that they'd always dreamed of but had never seen.

The part that's interesting to me is the role that the dirty-minded puritans have in propagating something like *The Little Black Book*. Had you ever heard of that book? Me neither. What are the chances that John and Susie Q. Public would ever come across a book that gave explicit, foul-mouthed instructions on things like the hygiene of anal sex?

Well, they will now.

Google for *Little Black Book* and the word "gay" (without "gay" you get a lot of unrelated stuff) and see who has this story:

- WorldNet Daily
- NARTH
- Free Republic
- Exodus
- Liberty Post (Direct link to the book)
- Right Nation (Direct link)
- Agape Press
- Concerned Women for America
- Traditional Values Coalition (Direct link)
- Sean Hannity forum
- Dr. Warren Throckmorton (Direct link)
- Stephen Bennet Ministries (Direct link) (FYI, see Stephen's family portrait on the right)
- The Chalcedon Foundation (Direct link)

... you get the idea. This explicit, crude, graphic how-to book of gay sex is linked by a whole bunch of conservative and religious web sites, a whole bunch of them. Most of the main ones, in fact.

Now, it's funny, a lot of times when we're talking to reporters about sex-ed in Montgomery County public schools, they ask us, "What do you think motivates the people who oppose the curriculum?" I was stupid enough to attempt to answer the question back when I was younger, say, in January or February. Now, I've got nothing to say. I used to say I thought they were motivated by hate, but I haven't said that for a while.

Privately, we do wonder among ourselves why somebody decides to devote his or her life to proving that homosexuality is a menace, and that gay people with their notorious "agenda" are busily working to take over the world. Every once in a while they'll drop you a clue.

OK, the religion thing, there are a couple of verses in the Bible about it. But that's too easy -- everybody knows there are verses about everything, like letting your dairy products touch your meat, or coveting your neighbor's stuff. But these guys don't get upset about food, or coveting -- they are obsessed by gay people. It can't be that gay people are just people, somehow these characters have to make it all out to be an Evil Plan. And why? Mmm, I wouldn't know.

This "little black book." How many people would have seen it, sitting on the table at a conference? They say there were ten copies out there. Let's imagine then that ten people could have picked it up. Half would throw it in their bag and never look at it again, and half would go, wow man, look at this, and show it to a friend, and then throw it out.

But now, thanks to the Dirty-Minded Puritan Network on the Internet, probably tens of thousands of people have clicked on that link. Tens of thousands of them have sat at their computers, reading about the details of gay sex in graphic, four-letter pornocolor.

Is it just me, or does that strike you as a little weird?

POSTED BY JIMK AT 5:08 PM 13 COMMENTS

Monday, June 27, 2005

Board Settles: CRC/PFOX Give Up: Taxpayers to Pay Lawyers

We just returned from a school board meeting where, before public comments, Dr. Weast and the board announced that they had come to an agreement with the lawyers that sued them over the sex-ed curriculum. Dr. Weast read a statement, but didn't say what was in the agreement.

After public comments, some copies of the agreement were handed out. There was ... nothing to it. Two things that might be worth mentioning. 1. CRC and PFOX will each have one member on the new citizens committee. OK, they had more than that on the *old* citizens committee, they didn't gain any ground there. 2. "MCPS agrees to reimburse Plaintiffs in the amount of \$36,000, representing attorneys' fees incurred in connection with the proceedings on the

temporary restraining order.” In other words, you the taxpayer get the bill for this prank. The far-right extremist law firm Liberty Counsel, it turns out, weren’t working out of the goodness of their little hearts; their clients end up winning nothing, and Montgomery County residents pay the bill.

There is nothing else in the agreement but some legal stuff. I imagine it’ll be on the MCPS web site by morning.
[Later: HERE IT IS]

So -- work can now start ... all over again ... on a new sex-ed curriculum. As Dr. Weast reminded the group, the only section under contention is two 45-minute classes. It was also announced during the meeting that the Board plans to begin discussion at their July 6th meeting to reconstitute the citizens advisory committee.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 10:16 PM 20 COMMENTS

Tuesday, June 28, 2005

We Make Our Presence Felt

The Board of Education meeting last night was just plain goose-bumpy. The room was packed, literally standing-room only, with dozens of people holding up signs saying “Teach The Facts,” and occasionally other mottoes, like -- “Dude, Where’s My Education?”

I can’t say enough about all the speakers that sat at the table, one after the other, mostly students or recent MCPS graduates, including some gay students and former students, their young voices telling the board what no ideology-driven adult can explain: they want the facts, they want to be treated with respect. The applause rang through the room after each one, and the board listened intently as these young people -- you can’t call anybody this brave a “kid” -- spoke with wit, with sorrow, with passion. The adults who spoke -- Chris, Karen, Tish -- were forceful and composed, and the students were steady and sure, funny, articulate, passionate.

Speakers for the evening included:

- Jason Tseng, (MCPS Churchill alumni)
- Karen Troccoli (former CAC member)
- Jeff Rezmovic (MCPS Churchill alumni)
- Christine Grewell (TTF.org)
- Alex Kovalchuk (Churchill student)
- Matilda Young (MCPS Churchill alumni)
- Jordan Barker (MCPS Churchill student)
- Tish Hall (TTF.org)
- Andrew Bennet (MCPS Whitman alumni, former CAC student rep)

That’s nine people speaking in support of a comprehensive sex-ed curriculum! Beautiful. I could fill ten pages with quotes, it was just so nice. Totally positive -- board member Gabriel Romero thanked us publicly afterwards and said the comments were “very well done,” and Nancy Navarro also said during the meeting that the board appreciated our participation and that they were listening.

Here’s how Ex-Recall try to spin it on their website tonight (they keep revising it, it gets worse every couple of hours):

MCPS BOE observers remark; “Monday night’s BOE public comment time was a well orchestrated anti-CRC (anti-4,500+ citizenry...) campaign, complete with sycophantic sign wavers and speakers intimating views to the CRC that the CRC has never avowed to.” and, “One wonders if the BOE knew they were coming?” and, “Boos and hisses from curriculum supporters were permitted in the room when differing viewpoints were espoused. Where was the BOE on this anti-tolerance? Is this a sign that the new curriculum will again be biased and not reflective of all views??”

Nice, "well orchestrated." OK, we'll take that. The rest of this is the usual bull-ony.

We have reviewed the videotape and there was no booing. I think somebody did hiss softly when one ... despicable person ... talked about gay people being "abnormal." That was pretty good, really -- it would have been appropriate to throw a shoe at anyone who talks about other human beings in such a way, but everyone in the room showed great restraint. Most of their speakers were greeted with dead silence, in a room full to the rafters -- that may have felt like the equivalent of booing to them, but it wasn't. Even their own people wouldn't clap for some of them.

And I doubt that Mr. Romero and Ms. Navarro would have complimented us if we had been booing and, uh, being sycophantic.

CRC's reaction to recent developments has been interesting.

Their lawyers, Liberty Counsel, made out well in the deal, with the taxpayers giving them 36 thousand dollars, but we see this quote in *The Post* this morning: "*We wished we could have gotten more,*" said Rena Lindevaldsen, senior litigator with the Liberty Counsel, a Florida-based legal and education nonprofit group that argued on behalf of the two groups.

I understand -- how dya feed the kids on a lousy thirty-six grand, eh?

And the President of CRC? *The Times* quotes her: "*I'm quasi-satisfied,*" said Michelle Turner, CRC president. "*I don't like the way the board has gone about this.*"

Well, that's sad.

For some reason, the board called CRC's hometown lawyer, John Garza, first for public comments, and not in a group, just by himself.

His plea to the school board -- "We love you. Please allow us to be friends." -- followed his declaration that CRC had already won two thirds of the battle and was working on the last piece. It was very convincing. Really, I mean it.

He sat there by himself and pleaded with them to be nice, and then four more speakers were called, all from TeachTheFacts. I figured that was it. But no, they called four more people, and except for CRC's Retta Brown they were all students supporting their gay friends and the idea of getting a real education. Then they called four more, of which several were anti-gay speakers and one was Tish from TeachTheFacts, who gave an impassioned speech, including a good quote from CRC's web site that highlighted the attitude we are fighting against. Finally, the evening's comments ended with Andrew Bennet, a student who had been a member of the citizens committee, who extemporized about the importance of delivering an honest education to the students. The crowd went wild.

The details of the agreement between MCPS and the plaintiffs are almost entirely things that would have happened anyway. Nobody on either side, for instance, wants to discuss anyone's religious beliefs in the classroom. Never did, never will.

We presume that this order against teaching about religious beliefs means that religious ministries that try to transform gay people into heterosexuals will not be mentioned.

Summer is upon us, school is out, but let's not think that this controversy is settled. We have only come back to where we started.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 10:08 PM 11 COMMENTS

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

CRC Finds Out What They Agreed To

Yesterday the CRC web site had big, red, bolded headlines screaming the Big News (they've moved it down on the page since then):

FLASH!
DAYS OF FUTURE PAST AHEAD??

LESS THAN 48 HOURS after signing legally binding settlement agreement, MCPS Board of Education 'changing the procedures' for picking CRC and PFOX members of the new Sex-Ed Committee.

Says that PFOX and CRC may only submit 'nominees', and will not guarantee that any one person will be appointed.

What other 'changes' to the make-up of the committee will occur?

(Hey, what do you make of that Moody Blues allusion? What are they trying to tell us?)

CRC is crying because MCPS intends to uphold some standards in selecting people for the citizens advisory committee. I don't know what discussion they're citing, maybe they waltzed over to tell the Board who would be on the committee, and were told that the Board would choose. Somewhere though they were reminded that the Board was not going to accept just anybody.

That is, "reminded." Because, of course, this is in the agreement. That they signed.

They're complaining that the Board is changing the procedures by saying "that PFOX and CRC may only submit 'nominees'." But that's exactly what the agreement says.

They signed it. Didn't they read it? It says, plain as day:

MCPS agrees that the newly-constituted CAC, for the term during which the consultation on the Revisions contemplated by the Board's May 23, 2005 resolution will occur, will include a maximum of 15 members and will include one representative of PFOX and one representative of CRC, to be selected by the Board in accordance with Section C(2)(a)(3) of Board Policy BMA, provided such representatives are Montgomery County residents and are otherwise qualified and able to serve on the committee. PFOX and CRC will inform the Board of their nominees in writing by July 1, 2005.

To pick out a couple of things here:

- *to be selected by the Board* does not mean, "for Recall to force onto the committee no matter who they are"
- *otherwise qualified* is going to be a tough one. Oh no, this doesn't mean their, uh ... doctor ... ends up on this committee, does it?
- *nominees* Pretty clearly, this means they're "nominated," not necessarily chosen.

I'm trying to figure out how this happened.

Liberty Counsel lawyers came up here to Maryland and said they'd work for free, and pretty much pulled off a good one. Tricked the judge, got the ruling, left town. MCPS made a lot of adjustments, pretty soon it was clear that there was no case any more. No committee, no background resources, no curriculum ... no case. Then, I figure, MCPS said, OK, dudes, let's talk.

Then one of two things happened. One, maybe Liberty Counsel lawyers came back and negotiated a settlement, and made sure they got their money and didn't worry about the rest of it. Two, LC said they'd sign anything as long as they got their money, and let the local lawyer negotiate the agreement.

The first theory would explain why CRC seems so surprised to find out what's in the agreement, and the second one would explain why they gave away the farm in the first place.

I just don't know.

But they seem real unhappy about it.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 10:39 PM 3 COMMENTS

Sunday, July 03, 2005

That Money Could Have Been Spent on Something Useful

Here's *The Gazette* talking about last week's agreement ending the lawsuit:

"We were prepared for a good fight in court, if necessary, but it would have been costly in terms of both time and resources," he said in a statement.

"Many believe that we would have won, and I don't necessarily disagree with them," said Board President Patricia B. O'Neill (Dist. 3) of Bethesda, who also read aloud from prepared remarks Monday night. Sex ed agreement opens curriculum, broadens debate

Clearly, one big reason MCPS settled at all was to avoid the costs of fighting. Those costs are almost entirely legal expenses. CRC/PFOX had free lawyers, so they didn't care how long it dragged on, but MCPS had to pay their guys. So it *did* matter to them. So they settled.

The only thing the whiners, uh, complainants, got out of the agreement was \$36,000 to pay their lawyers. Everything else was going to happen anyway -- they were going to have members on the citizens committee, there wasn't going to be any religious discussion, the controversial materials had already been jettisoned, there was going to be public review of materials -- they didn't really win anything by all of this, except blocking a good curriculum for a year and getting money for some Florida lawyers. Those lawyers, Liberty Counsel, affiliated with Jerry Falwell's Liberty University law school, go around the country suing over these religious issues. And I guess when they win, they get paid.

I have two kids in the Montgomery County public schools. And I know these are among the best schools in the country, but still, for instance, my kid's math class didn't have textbooks. The teacher would xerox some problems and send them home, and they didn't even have any explanation on the page about how to solve them. You listened in class and took notes, and did the homework. Can you imagine a math class without textbooks? And that's just one thing -- we all hear lots of stories about classrooms without air conditioning, substitutes who don't know the subject area, lots of things.

Our CillyGoose wondered what we could have bought with that thirty-six thousand dollars. So she did a little shopping online.

With that \$36,000, the school district could have bought:

- 514,285 pencils at \$0.07 each
- 90,000 free containers of milk at \$0.40 each
- 45,569 composition notebooks at \$0.79 each
- 22,641 graph paper notebooks at \$1.59 each
- 19,459 free elementary lunches at \$1.85 each
- 19,354 free sets of colored pencils at \$1.86 each
- 3,600 hours of afterschool tutoring at \$10.00 an hour
- 1,440 private 30 minute music lessons at \$25.00 each
- 360 Biology text books at \$100.00 each
- 1 year salary for full time reading assistant at \$17.31 per hour

Instead, we the taxpayers end up funding the religious right's quest to eliminate the separation of church and state, which is Liberty Counsel's long-term goal. CRC and PFOX really didn't get anything out of the lawsuit except to postpone the inevitable, but now we've got a liberal county paying to promote a rightwing extremist agenda that

almost none of us support.

We can think of lots of better things that could've been done with that money.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 1:25 PM 5 COMMENTS

Tuesday, July 05, 2005

Anti-Gay Groups Regret Agreement, Want to Sue Again

This is incredible. It is really slap-yourself-in-the-forehead unbelievable.

The Montgomery County Public Schools were sued this spring by two groups, known by the acronyms CRC and PFOX. They won the suit and the school district cancelled the new sex-ed curriculum for the rest of the year. Then they disbanded the advisory committee. They announced that the controversial teachers' background materials would not be used. They threw out the new curriculum and announced they would start over again.

Then lawyers from the two sides, that is, the school district and the two groups, got together and wrote up an agreement. It was very carefully negotiated, neither side got everything they wanted, but it came out ok. Read the agreement [HERE](#). We didn't have a problem with it, except it didn't seem cool to pay the lawyers who had sued. CRC and PFOX seemed to get what they wanted, and we were glad to start moving forward again.

It appears that those groups thought they had agreed to take control of the process of developing a new curriculum. The agreement is very clear, and it does guarantee each of the groups membership on the new citizens committee, and it does promise to meet certain requirements that the groups specified.

But it does not say they get to put whoever they want on the committee. And it does not say that some other groups, like, uh, [teachthefacts.org](#), can't be on the committee, too.

This morning's *Washington Times* has the most amazing article: Schools incite feud with sex-ed advisers.

First of all, I would be remiss if I didn't point out that this is yet another biased *Times* headline. The "schools" didn't incite anything. Their lawyers negotiated with the other guys' lawyers, and they came to an agreement.

And now the other guys don't like the agreement they signed.

Citizens groups are feuding with Montgomery County Public Schools officials over how to appoint members to an advisory panel that will help create a new sex-education curriculum.

The groups -- Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX) and Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum (CRC) -- have each nominated one person to represent their interests on the panel.

But the schools' attorney has told the groups that they must submit a list of three nominees, and the school board will pick whom it wants. A resolution drafted by board President Patricia O'Neil, a Democrat, and scheduled for a vote tomorrow includes the provision.

PFOX and CRC are threatening to go back to court, after having signed an agreement with schools officials last week that ended the groups' previous lawsuit against the school system and guaranteed them two seats on the 15-member panel. Such a move could further delay the creation and implementation of the county's sex-education course.

Look, several posts below this one we went through the agreement and the CRC/PFLAG whining about it. It simply does not say they can put just anybody on the committee. Their lawyers wrote the agreement, we assume. How can they now complain that they don't like what it says?

Here's what one of their out-of-town Liberty Counsel lawyers said:

In her letter, Ms. Lindevaldsen said PFOX and CRC need to “place individuals on the [citizens advisory committee] who are well-versed in the subject matter and willing to speak out on the issue even though they are likely to be offering a viewpoint not accepted by the majority of the CAC members.”

“We insisted on language giving our clients control over who would fill those two seats,” she wrote.

OK, great, so they insisted, they got the language. Here is what the agreement says:

MCPS agrees that the newly-constituted CAC, for the term during which the consultation on the Revisions contemplated by the Board’s May 23, 2005 resolution will occur, will include a maximum of 15 members and will include one representative of PFOX and one representative of CRC, to be selected by the Board in accordance with Section C(2)(a)(3) of Board Policy BMA, provided such representatives are Montgomery County residents and are otherwise qualified and able to serve on the committee. PFOX and CRC will inform the Board of their nominees in writing by July 1, 2005.

They signed it, they knew what it said. It says they will be selected by the Board. It says the selection will follow MCPS policy. It says the groups will submit “nominees.” It says they have to be qualified.

These groups represent a tiny minority of Montgomery County residents, and they want to control this whole process. They disrupted the whole thing by taking the schools to court, and now they’re threatening to do it again, after signing a negotiated agreement.

I have only one favor to ask of the school district, pretty-please. If these nuts sue again, please send a real lawyer to court this time, OK? Maybe they could start preparing, like, *now*, not at the last minute. This just means too much to all of us.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 9:54 AM 6 COMMENTS

Thursday, July 21, 2005

“Frivolous Lawsuit” Defined

You remember that somebody recently sent us a link to a Google cache containing a bunch of internal communications among the leadership of the CRC (Citizens for Responsible Curriculum) back in January. They were already planning to sue the Montgomery County school district, which they did, finally, in May. But why?

Somebody today pointed out to me a section that I hadn’t noticed before -- really, there’s so much here I haven’t read it all.

Here’s the plan that was posted on the CRC leadership’s forum on January 13th:

This board is NOT going to recant anything because of “supplicant” appeals to listen to our position. The only thing that is going to get their complete attention is:

1. Continuing outrage streaming in to their castle headquarters
2. John Garza proceeding immediately with his lawsuit. (Lawsuits tend to get peoples attention - merit or no merit because it forces them to deal with their legal team on a continuing basis)
3. 50,000 plus signatures between the paper petition and the on-line petition.
4. Tabulation of all the outrageous things said about us and this issue, and posted on both web sites.
5. Massive email campaign to inform and INFLAME.

In other words, aggressive tactics.

That “both web sites” of course is CRC’s and the Recall site they claimed to have nothing to do with. And OK, they fell about 45,000 signatures short of their goal, even assuming they’re telling the truth about how many signatures they did get. The “inflaming” part I suppose they did pretty well. Oh, and tabulating things, I suppose that was what resulted in CRC President Michelle Turner’s tattling to the Board that somebody in our comments used a bad word to describe them.

It's that Number Two that jumps out at you. Sue to get their attention. Does it matter if the lawsuit has merit?

Nope.

There must be a real feeling of accomplishment when you do something like that, dontcha think?

POSTED BY JIMK AT 12:35 PM 5 COMMENTS

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Ms. O'Neill's Eloquent Comments

After public comments at a Board of Education meeting, the members of the board are given an opportunity to make statements, too. Most of the time they don't, but occasionally somebody will say something, make an announcement or something. Lots of times it's like filler space, when you can bring up little things that aren't on the agenda.

Last night, board President Pat O'Neill made an outstanding statement during that period. It appeared to be totally extemporaneous, but I found her words to be very deeply considered and well ordered.

This was after a bunch of people had spoken in favor of traditional families.

I just would like to comment that if nothing else, our journey into the family life curriculum has brought us new-found friends who come and give us public comment and I hope that their enthusiasm and their advocacy will carry forward. I heard some of them speaking about the need for more teachers to teach an alternative curriculum. I hope that those folks will continue to advocate for the resources for additional teachers because that is constantly a struggle of ours.

But I also would like to speak to our last speaker. Her statement reads, "Marriage is the bedrock of society. Don't discriminate against marriage in this curriculum." I'm proud to say I've been married for 33 years and I count my family as a traditional family. My sister was divorced and has a blended family. My sister-in-law, her husband passed away due to leukemia and she has been raising two very successful children.

If anything, I don't want to discriminate against any of our students for whatever their family circumstances may be because children can't control the circumstances in their home. We respect all of our children and we love all of the children in the Montgomery County Public School system.

And I certainly embrace traditional family values but I recognize that that is not what all of our children have. So I encourage our new friends to help us advocate for additional resources for the public school and remember that we do care for all of our children regardless of what their home circumstances are.

Everybody loves a nice snuggly mom-and-dad family. Nobody is against a traditional family. That doesn't mean it's for everyone. Even one of the people who spoke for traditional families, if I remember correctly, is raising her children on her own, without a father. Yet she considers hers a traditional family. The others defined the traditional family as a man and a woman raising children together. (I would be interested to hear why this lady thought her apparently-untraditional family counted. Or why she would want to be counted with those who go out and speak publicly against her and her children.)

Much as the Leave It To Beaver ideal warms the heart, some people just aren't cut out for it, and sometimes life just doesn't deal you the cards you need for that. I can think of a million reason that someone would not settle into a traditional nuclear family.

But listen, in the end, it's nobody's business how somebody else's family works. If there's abuse, poverty, sure, that's everybody's problem. But you don't like it that somebody is a single parent, somebody is a gay parent, somebody gets divorced, a kid runs away, somebody chooses not to have kids, somebody *can't* have kids, somebody works nights, grandparents move in, a couple argues, cousins move in, somebody has an affair -- man, it's none of your business.

Personally, I can't imagine choosing something for the reason that it's "traditional." Wouldn't you want to do

something because it's the best? And why would one thing be the best for everybody? I mean, it gets extreme, think how weird this is: these people think that gay guys should marry *women*! Can you imagine another idea that is that stupid, on the face of it? Would you want to be that guy? Would you want to be that woman?

I did think Ms. O'Neill's comments were very well expressed, and I hope the board will adopt the philosophy she expressed last night.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 4:56 PM 14 COMMENTS

Saturday, August 06, 2005

The Nonsense of the "Ex-Gay" Thing [Note: This Post Will Be Occasionally Updated]

[I have decided to keep this post "open," and add to it as people mention things or I think of them. Normally it's kind of unethical to edit after posting, but the list below will be an exception.]

Well, I'm back from the most beautiful week in Montreal with my daughter. I had to go to a conference there to receive an Outstanding Paper award from a journal, along with my co-author. There was a great music festival going on downtown -- Les Franco Folies, and we heard some top French and Canadian bands and singers of all types. Took lots of pictures, had lots of adventures, got lots of sunshine, walked until our feet were falling off.

So I see that there were a number of good comments on that last post, which I love. Look, this "ex-gay" thing is a stroke of genius, the wackos knew exactly how hard that would be to refute. I've been seeing the topic on TV, even in Canada, I saw Warren Throckmorton in my hotel room, and I see they're cranking up the volume on this "ex-gay" machine, because it has the potential to work spectacularly for them.

Let me enumerate some of the problems with the "ex-gay" point.

To begin, here is the argument: some people who have a homosexual orientation can pretend to be heterosexual. They can marry someone of the opposite sex, and some can even manage to have children. This is considered preferable to marrying someone that the person finds attractive, usually for religious reasons. The CRC and PFOX intend to use this argument to undermine the Montgomery County sex-ed curriculum. They plan to try to force the district to include teaching about "ex-gays" in the classes, and will claim that the schools are discriminating against them if they don't include it.

So here's what I scribbled in my notebook while I sat in a terminal in Boston waiting for a flight to open up (there were thunderstorms all up and down the East Coast last night, we almost didn't make it back):

- **People don't change** You will not hear even the staunchest proponents of "ex-gayism" say that people can actually change their sexual orientation. If there are actually "ex-gay" people in the world (and it may be possible, though nobody seems to be able to find any of them), they are a big secret. The most anyone can say is that gay people can suppress their feelings or change their behavior.
- **It's religion** Many straight people are confused and uncomfortable with the topic of homosexuality, but the only people who really oppose it use a religious argument. Groups like the Taliban and certain Christian groups focus on scraps of scripture and ignore the larger message of forgiveness and minding your own business. The "ex-gay" movement is almost entirely centered around religious ministries. Some religions don't eat ham, some don't eat beef, some don't shave their beards, some have to cover their heads, some believe gay people should pretend to be something other than what they are. None of it belongs in the public schools.
- **There is nothing special about suppressing your impulses** As a straight married guy, I can tell you there are times that I see attractive women and don't do anything at all. This is not a bit different from a gay person who has learned not to act on their feelings. Do they deserve a medal for that? If they get one, I want one.
- **"Ex-Gay" equals Straight** If somebody used to be gay, and now they're not, then they're "straight." Heterosexual. There doesn't need to be a special word for it. The sex-ed curriculum already teaches about straight people.

- **What's wrong with love?** The "ex-gay" argument is essentially an anti-love position. Maybe I'm overly romantic, but it seems to me a person should be able to follow their heart and fall in love with someone who is actually attractive to them.
- **The Gay Gene** The anti-gay groups like to repeat "there is no gay gene." First of all, they don't *know* if there's a gay gene or not, genetic research is a very young field. Second, nobody ever said there is a gay gene. The argument suggests a false dichotomy, as if there were 1.behaviors you can choose and 2.genetically determined behaviors. Of course, all genes interact with the environment, nothing about the human personality, especially, is carved in stone at birth. That does not prove, or even imply, that sexual orientation is a choice.
- **God's Plan** I saw a preacher on TV the other night saying that homosexuality is not part of God's plan for us. But ... how does he know that? Is God so obvious? It is one thing to say that God's plan is revealed in the Bible, but does anyone really think *all* of God's plan has been published? Doesn't anybody wonder *why* God would have given some people (and members of other species as well) a same-sex orientation? The divine will is profound and mysterious, and it is a presumptuous oversimplification to quote a few Bible verses and say how God feels about something. When someone is hurt in an accident, they talk about how hard it is to understand God's plan; I say, let's love the whole world as a great, unfathomable, constantly-surprising mystery, not just tragedies but everything.
- **Religion is a choice** You will hear the argument that gay people don't deserve "special rights," for instance protection from discrimination, because "it's a choice." (Of course it's not, but they like to hear themselves say it.) This argument is often made by the same people who complain that the world discriminates against Christians. Make up your minds, would you?
- **Statistical insignificance** If there are "ex-gays" who have changed their sexual orientation, their numbers must be very small -- you see a couple of "personalities" who represent the big organizations, and that's it. Certainly there are more important sexual phenomena to talk about in a high-school class, things that real young people will deal with in their real lives.
- **Not Gay in the First Place** Does anybody really believe you can just switch? If someone changed from being gay to living wholly, without conflict and strain, as a straight person, I'm pretty sure most people would understand that he was never really gay to begin with.
- **Conversion therapy is dangerous** There is a tragic history of people becoming depressed and even committing suicide after failed attempts to change their sexual orientation. Proponents will tell you that "tens of thousands" of people have changed, but they won't produce one, besides the usual poster children. The "therapy" is based on bizarre psychological theory, and in its usual form attempts to break down the personality before building it back up anew. This is unwise and can lead to tragedy.
- **Jesus** Jesus never told anyone to be ashamed of their sexual orientation. Hypocrites who quote the Bible overlook this very important fact. What would Jesus do? He would almost certainly not waste his time telling homosexuals to pretend they are straight. He would almost certainly encourage his followers to love others, even when they don't understand them. It seems impossible to me to get from the Beatitudes to the hatefulness of the "ex-gay" rhetoric.
- **Change can go both ways** I heard Larry King, of all people, bring up this point the other night. If you encourage gay people to go straight by saying that "change is possible," you will be simultaneously encouraging apparently-straight people to come out of the closet. Which do you think there are more of -- "out" gays who wish they were straight, or people living straight who are hiding same-sex feelings?
- **Professional ethics** Every mainstream professional organization in the fields of psychology, mental health, and medicine has issued a statement specifically denouncing conversion therapy, which attempts to make "ex-gays" out of gay people, and declaring it unethical for their members to practice it. The explanations are thorough and scientifically sound. Anti-gay groups would like you to believe that these statements are politically motivated; the disrespect that this shows for science generally, and specifically for those who devote their lives to improving ours, should tell you something.
- **False hopes** There are some things about a person that really don't change, no matter how hard you try. Telling a guy who is lonely, confused, and persecuted by society that he can change his sexual orientation may give him unjustifiable hope that leads eventually to even deeper depression, when he has to face the fact that he is, actually, the way he is. This is not a nice thing to do to somebody.
- **Morality** Some people claim that homosexuality is "immoral," based on religious authority. But morality can be derived by reason, too, there are good reasons to separate choices into right and wrong. A reason-based morality will almost certainly value kindness, cooperation, understanding, and empathy over

arbitrary authoritative pronouncement. It would be very hard to give reasons why it is morally better for a person to act on feelings they don't have, in order to satisfy social pressures emanating from people who don't like them.

- **Biblical hypocrisy** The Bible is a long and complex record, and contains very many proscriptions and statements about what God (and various prehistoric tribal leaders) wants us to do. It would be interesting to remove all the adulterers and divorced people, who would have been put to death according to biblical law, from groups like the CRC and PFOX, and see how many people are left to tell gays that the Bible demands that they pretend they're straight.
- **It's insulting** Telling people that "they can change" is logically equivalent to telling them there's something wrong with them. But experts in psychology and mental health agree, there's nothing wrong with being gay. Gay people can have their problems, but they're the same problems the rest of us have. It is not correct, and not nice, to tell them there's something wrong with them. It would be much better for our society to learn to accept its variety rather than abnormalize entire classes of people.
- **Sex in the Bible** Let's not forget that the same Bible that is used to attack homosexuality also describes situations involving incest, adultery, and polygamy, without comment. Do these religious experts have a belief about the appropriate number of concubines for a man to have? Mmm, so what's the big deal about a guy having a boyfriend?
- **Ex-"Ex-Gays"** It does appear that there a whole lot more ex-"ex-gays" than "ex-gays," even if you count the poster children, the leaders and spokesmen of the movement. They're always going back to the gay bars, always getting caught doing something scandalous. If they were really "ex" anythings, that wouldn't happen, would it? (The fact is, they're still gay.)

I'm sure that people will suggest other arguments, these are just what I could come up with sitting in an airport terminal with time on my hands.

The sad thing is that the debate will not be won by reasoning. The "ex-gay" thing is crazy, it's wrong, it's mean-spirited, but these noisy people will only be driven out of business if everybody stands up to them. It doesn't really matter, you might say. Well, it will matter when you wake up in the morning and discover that the nuts are running things in your county.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 12:59 PM 7 COMMENTS

Friday, August 26, 2005

Kid One and Kid Two Get It Wrong

I was out of town and didn't get to attend this week's Board of Education meeting, but I see that the CRC brought in a couple of students to talk at public comments. And this is creepy to write about, because I hate to have to call a kid a liar and criticize what they say -- they're just doing what they're told to do.

I won't use their names, just Kid One and Kid Two. Also, I'll spare you the whole thing, just quote a few lines.

Kid One said:

Two years ago health class was a required course for graduation so I assumed we had to take all units. I wasn't told that I could opt out. When the homosexuality unit surfaced, it was taught with much laughter, awkwardness, and blunt description.

One thing. You opt in, you don't opt out. The kid's parents had to sign a permission slip to take sex ed. If they signed it without reading it, well, you can't blame the school for that, can you?

Second thing. There was no homosexuality unit. Whoever told you this made you lie.

The "homosexuality unit" was not even pilot-tested. Teachers are not allowed to talk about homosexuality in Montgomery County schools. That's since, I think, 1970, and Kid, you're just a little young to go back much further than that.

Kid One ended up with this zinger:

It's rather funny to me that I learned about the implications of homosexual intercourse a whole year before I even had kissed a boy.

So ... hey. How bout those implications of homosexual intercourse?

-- There's nothing in any class about homosexual intercourse.

Listen, Kid, we've been looking pretty closely at this, I don't think you're gonna slip one like that past anybody here, okay?

Kid Two is an Eagle Scout and straight-A student who told the school board this:

The truth is that there are youth in this county who have not forsaken the moral fiber of their elders, who have decided for religious or moral reasons that sexual intercourse is to take place only within a marriage between one man and one woman. Yet despite these convictions, the County has constructed a curriculum opposing these beliefs, requiring students [unintelligible] to listen to degrading notions and suggestions such as homosexual role-playing and the encouraging of teens to practice mutual masturbation and watch erotic movies.

Yikes!

Kid ... kid, what are you saying?

"Homosexual role-playing?" Oh, these are the moments when I struggle. I can just picture the classroom ... no ... must ... not ... go ... there ... must ... not ... use ... humor ...

Kid, there was no "homosexual role-playing" in any sex-ed curriculum in this county. Never was, never will be. Whoever told you that, you need to have a talk with them. Because they just embarrassed you.

"... encouraging of teens to practice mutual masturbation..." Mmm, kid, what can I say? I'm sorry. Whoever told you that, you're the one who went out there and said it. You should have checked your facts, because somebody has been lying to you. And now you, an Eagle Scout (and I used to be a den leader myself, I appreciate your achievement), have repeated an untruth. To the school board, and to the community on television. It may be important to you to remain pure, that's fine, but please, it *must* be important to our upcoming leaders to tell the truth.

"... watching erotic movies ..." Same thing. Nobody shows erotic movies in the health class, nobody tells you to watch erotic movies. Nobody talks about them, there's just plain nothing at all about erotic movies.

Look, if either of these kids sees this blog, or their friends tell them about it, let me say something important.

When you say something in public, it's up to you to make sure it's right. When somebody tells you what to say, and you just repeat it, and it's wrong, well, that makes you the liar. The person who told you that stuff gets away with it, because you're the one who said it where everybody could hear.

So, kids, come on, check your facts, okay? We're going to need you guys to run the world in a few years. Don't just repeat whatever some person tells you. Please?

You don't have to agree with my opinion about the sex-ed program, but please, learn to think for yourselves.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 10:59 PM 3 COMMENTS

Sunday, September 04, 2005

CRC Wins the Debate

Earlier this year the Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum opened up an online forum. I was pretty impressed with their web host, the forum was fast, clean, nice looking. They put some effort into organizing it a little bit, and let people sign up.

I signed up, some others from TeachTheFacts.org signed up, a bunch of CRC people signed up, putting "CRC" in their name, like "CRCJohnny" for "Johnny" Garza. It was cute.

We participated in the discussions politely, explaining our positions on the issues. There was no name-calling, nothing obnoxious, just persistent defense of our viewpoint.

And then ... one by one ... we were banned. Each one of us, one at a time.

One was banned for continuing to press on a subject longer than the admin liked. One was banned, actually, for quoting something from this blog. All, as far as I have heard, were banned for expressing opinions that CRC did not agree with.

I check in every once in awhile -- I am blocked from posting anything, but can read stuff. And, wouldn't you know it? The discussion there has just plain stopped. Nobody has anything to say. Once or twice a week, somebody will post a stupid news article or something, and then silence.

I guess that means they win the debate, right?
POSTED BY JIMK AT 9:02 PM 4 COMMENTS

Tuesday, September 06, 2005

Teens Discussing Sex Ed in the Real World

Maybe it's just me, but I love this stuff. Here's a kid's web site I stumbled across, blogging about their day, including their sex-ed class:

SEX ED!!! lolz!

ahaha well 2day i went to Don Bosco coz we had sex ed there. we put a condom on a tOy penis.. LOL it was soo funi! katie was being a lOser and waving the condom in ma face so im lyk "ok..u asked 4 it buddy!" nd i got da condom and rubbed it all ovaa her face!!! ahahaha she was screaming! lolz it wOz so0o funi..

i lyked the conversazionz we had 2day...we talked about sum guys/girlz in our yr.. shared abit of gOss wid da teachers... mann i didnt nO gOSSIP travelz THAT fast! da teachers nO wot sum ppl in our grade do b4 we no!

yehh... we woz talkin bout guys and how they are dikheadz.. and wot sum of da guyz do in our yr... hmmm yes thats rite boyz...we cud be talkin about U! u will nevvaa no!

newaiiz im gona go now...leave a msg.. baii xoxox

I'm not going to link to it, it's just some kid, OK?

It's like, grown-ups get so moralistic about all this, it's just s-o-o-o-o terrible they're going to see a video where somebody puts a condom on a cucumber. Man, get over it, the kids can handle it.

Oh, and I hope CRC has somebody all ready to tell the school board that we used the "word" *dikheadz*. Yeah, that's pretty bad, but remember, your kids aren't all angels either ... and we have photographs. I mean: really.

Don't make us use them.

Then, of course, there were comments, which are just as good as the original post:

Comments

hey
omg!! 2day was so fun!! even though condoms were invloved lol
my hands were all slimmy ewwww

we had quite a few interesting things to talk about with miss dimagiba lol
well im talkin to u and maria now so bye!
xtina xoxo

Published By xtina (http://spaces.msn.com/members/*****_*****/) - September 06 6:22 PM

aaaawwwwww i wanna no goss tell me 2morro.
newaiis 2day was so much fun I LUV SEX ED, we should tlk bout sex more offen wait.... we already do hahaha
miss ozlem is very open about those sort of things. i rekon we should go 2 don bosco again its fun, how funni
was it wen estelle was tryin 2 do flips on the trampoline lol
im gonna go later
kira

Published By _KaE_1_3 (http://spaces.msn.com/members/****_**/) - September 06 4:19 PM

hi mariam,
2daii was soo funni miss dimagiba was funny as talkin about old ppl havin sex n gay guys cant go 2 the toilet
properly cause there butts r loose he he he he neways cya 2moz luv melissa

Published By shorty_mel_princess (http://spaces.msn.com/members/*****...) - September 06 3:24 PM

hi todaii was really funny...i couldnt put tha condom on LOL.....neways leave a messege on mine...luv ya
lots....BaII Baii

Published By *_*_mEgAn*_*_* (http://spaces.msn.com/members/*****/) - September 06 3:13 PM

Don't you just love it? Kids are so fun, so full of life. Sometimes full to the brim, sometimes spilling over a little bit.
So here they are learning this stuff about condoms, and having the *best time* with it.

It's just terrible how some people can make all of this seem so ugly.

[The Vigilance blog comments were pretty good, too]

COMMENTS:

Anonymous said...

One has to admire the efficacy of their encryption system.
6:26 PM

Alex K. said...

All I have to say is:

LOL
7:38 PM

Sunday, September 11, 2005

A Little Sunday Morning Meditation

I vividly remember back in December when I attended the first meeting of a group that was "concerned" about the new sex-ed curriculum. They had posted some announcements on the listserv at the high-school my daughter attends, and I decided to go see what the big deal was.

It was mind-boggling. You can live your whole life and never know these kinds of things exist.

One after the other, people stood up to talk about the "sodomites" and "deviants," and how we needed to struggle against the "gay agenda." It was, I don't know, it was like when the Blues Brothers played in that bar behind the chickenwire, and you laughed at it, because you couldn't imagine that there really are places that put chickenwire up

in front of the bandstand. And then you walk into a place one day, and there it is, and people throwing stuff at the band.

I remember especially one eloquent older guy who went on about sin. His point was that you have to fight homosexuality because everyone has all types of sin in their hearts. He listed off all the terrible people in his heart, including a murderer, and of course a homosexual, and I listened and thought -- dude, you and me got different hearts. I think of life as a process of self-discovery, of unfolding, discovering the beauty in your heart and learning to bring it out into the world. It has never occurred to me, and I still refuse to consider the possibility, that the heart of man is a dark, dangerous place, and that our true nature must be constantly suppressed.

I am reminded of that moment this morning as I go through my RSS feeds and find one that links to an article at Agapepress.com, the American Family Association's web site. This article is about Hurricane Katrina and how it brought out the dark side of humanity.

Superficially, I agree, this storm did bring out the dark side. The greed, the hatred, the fear. I imagine those sheriffs standing on the bridge with machine guns, blocking the only exit out of New Orleans so that "those people" couldn't come into their suburban county. I imagine the government officials who sent back the generators because there was no federal inspector to certify the site, or who gave the order to keep the Red Cross from bringing food and water into the city, so people would leave. I imagine the President joking around and playing the guitar, and giving political speeches, while people stood on their rooftops waiting for help.

But of course the AFA doesn't mean that. They mean the victims. They mean the looting and disorder among those who couldn't -- woops, they don't say that, they say *didn't* -- evacuate. There's the usual stuff, blaming the looting on people who are "getting back at society" et cetera, not that anybody was hungry or anything. And then the author gets to the real message:

The souls of those who have embraced crime in New Orleans are of the same basic essence as the souls of Josef Stalin, Adolph Hitler, Jeffrey Dahmer ... and you and me. That's right; we are no different from the worst criminal when it comes to the capacity of our hearts to do evil.

The heart of man is desperately wicked, Scripture informs us. And the same verse explains simply and without fanfare why we are so quick to excuse our own behavior and think so well of ourselves -- our hearts are deceitful above all things. Desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things. Perhaps this is why we so readily accepted the oft-heard plea to increase funding for education in order to alleviate poverty, which in turn would make our citizenry a better, more moral people. We lie to ourselves, and we like it.

Perhaps that is also why we have so easily accepted the so-called separation of church and state, explicit instruction on sex education, evolution, and moral relativism, all of which are echoed on the latest sit-coms and reality TV shows. We tell ourselves it is the law, or that it is only entertainment, or that we are too busy to spend hours pouring over every textbook our children bring home. How much harm can it do, anyway?

These developments have no doubt contributed much to the blossoming of full-blown anarchy on the streets of New Orleans. But they did not directly cause the problem. The problem is a lack of inner control, control over our souls. And we must all share the guilt. The Dark Side of Man

People on both sides of the culture wars look across with no ability to understand the other side. Could it be that we differ in this most fundamental assumption about human nature? I haven't really asked my colleagues, say, at TeachTheFacts.org, if they think that humans must constantly struggle to suppress sin, so maybe it's just me. Maybe I'm naive or insensitive, but while I am no angel, I do not feel that my innermost soul is innately evil and must be locked down. Just the opposite, I feel that life is a quest to discover our deepest being, which is godlike and spiritual; the temporal world exists to provide opportunities for realizing our goodness. The evil inside me is not my true nature, but exists when I am *unable* to discover and express my true nature. At least, that is the way I've always looked at it, obviously not everyone does.

The constant state of fearfulness that was promoted in the last Presidential election campaign seems to reflect the vision of the human heart boiling with malice. Danger is everywhere, including in our very nature, and so we need

not only to ask for God's forgiveness every moment, but be on guard for the intrusion of this deep malice from within and without. Anything unknown, unfamiliar, whether it's a suspiciously limp wrist or a backpack on a Metro car, must be treated as if it were a very grave danger.

The suppression of human nature requires the cooperation of others -- how in the world can a guy suppress his inner homosexual when there are men out there smiling and laughing and kissing each other? It simply must be stopped. The inner-sin-fighter must set the world up as a stage, with props that serve his script.

There is no reason to believe that people will just "naturally" respect one another and live in harmony, no, greed and power will pop up if you let them, you still have to be careful. But a society should, it seems to me, provide opportunities for beauty and happiness, not fear them.

Here in our little county, we have some people who fear that if we teach children about sex they will lose control of their passions, and explode in a hail of promiscuous, anarchic, undifferentiated evil. I have seen them speak, I have read their essays, and I think they really do believe this.

I hope I'm never like that. I say, show human beings -- whether they are students, voters, whatever -- some respect by telling them the truth, by informing them thoroughly and accurately, and they will be able to choose to do the right thing.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 11:04 AM 0 COMMENTS

Sunday, September 18, 2005

Reality Makes Our Point For Us

The groups that have been attacking the school district get in a special uproar over the idea that the new curriculum would "normalize" homosexuality. I always found the word distracting, as *normalize* seems to me to be something you should do to vectors, or databases, not somebody's sexuality. But I suppose they get their point across. To them, homosexuality jes plain ain't normal, it ain't natcherl, and if the schools teach about it, students might think there's nothing wrong with it.

Oh, they argue against it from all sides. The President of CRC has been quoted as saying, "I think if we allow the liberal sex education program to happen, we will see the end of families and it will serve a tremendous blow to society." The speakers at the CRC March Hate-Fest had reasons, one after the other, for despising gay people, they went on for four hours listing all the disgusting things they could possibly attribute to gay people. They've got this bigotry down to an art-form.

So it's interesting to see this editorial in the *New York Times* yesterday, looking over what's going on in Massachusetts. It seems that opinions there have swung around the other way. And why? Here's what the *NYT* thinks:

There's nothing like a touch of real-world experience to inject some reason into the inflammatory national debate over gay marriages. Take Massachusetts, where the state's highest court held in late 2003 that under the State Constitution, same-sex couples have a right to marry. The State Legislature moved to undo that decision last year by approving a proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriages and create civil unions as an alternative. But this year, when precisely the same measure came up for a required second vote, it was defeated by a thumping margin of 157 to 39.

The main reason for the flip-flop is that some 6,600 same-sex couples have married over the past year with nary a sign of adverse effects. The sanctity of heterosexual marriages has not been destroyed. Public morals have not gone into a tailspin. Legislators who supported gay marriage in last year's vote have been re-elected. Gay couples, many of whom had been living together monogamously for years, have rejoiced at official recognition of their commitment.

As a Republican leader explained in justifying his vote switch: "Gay marriage has begun, and life has not changed for the citizens of the commonwealth, with the exception of those who can now marry who could not before." A Democrat attributed his change of heart to the beneficial effects he saw "when I looked in the eyes of

the children living with these couples.” Gay marriage, it turned out, is good for family values. The Normality of Gay Marriages

Wow -- this is what we've been saying. Nothing happened, except that some people who were in love were allowed -- legally -- to marry and establish families, and enjoy the privileges that married people everywhere have.

Of course, not every single person in Massachusetts is real happy about the way this is going.

Some legislators who strongly oppose gay marriages also switched their votes this year for tactical reasons. They realized that the original measure was headed for defeat, and they had never really liked the part that created civil unions anyway. They are now pinning their hopes on an even harsher proposal, endorsed by Gov. Mitt Romney, that would ban gay marriages without allowing civil unions.

We can only hope that this new appeal to fear and bigotry will stumble over the reality, already apparent, that gay marriage is no threat to the larger community. States that rushed to ban same-sex marriages after the Massachusetts court ruling were succumbing to misplaced hysteria.

Romney is the governor who last year was heard joking that “I have to admit that as a Mormon, I believe that marriage should be between a man and a woman ... and a woman and a woman.” Mmh hmm, *there's* your traditional family for ya.

The fact is, it is normal for a society to include some homosexuals. It happens everywhere, at all times. Because it is a statistical rarity, simple-minded people are afraid of it. Just as extremely intelligent kids are teased for being “brains” and nerds, gay people are labeled, stigmatized, and ostracized.

The *Times* is right to point out that Massachusetts society did not collapse into a moral trash-heap when gays were allowed to marry. In fact, nothing seemed different, really.

POSTED BY JIMK AT 12:31 PM 1 COMMENTS