

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Michael J. Kleckner
 Managing Editor:
 Jessica Richelderfer
 Editorial Page Assistant:
 Salena De La Cruz

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Editorial

Rick Santorum goes beyond gay slurs; he's lost hold of reality

Once again a Republican senator has spoken his mind about a group of people, and once again tongues are wagging, calling for some sort of sanction.

Rick Santorum, R-Pa., earlier this month told The Associated Press, "if the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery. You have the right to anything."

Santorum is referring to a Supreme Court case currently under review challenging a Texas law against "deviant sexual intercourse." In the case, Houston police received a false report of an armed intruder, entered a home, found two men having sex and arrested them.

Gay rights groups, many Democrats and two Republicans, so far, have called Santorum's comments discriminatory, have said Santorum should be removed from his No. 3 post in the Senate GOP leadership, and have said the comments do not reflect the views of the Republican Party, respectively. Santorum defended his comments and told CNN they "were taken out of context." Actually, they weren't. Read the transcript at <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/04/22/santorum.excerpts.ap/index.html>.

Those challenging Santorum's comments have focused on the quote listed above. And yes, those comments are discriminatory. The difference is that sanctions against bigamy, polygamy, incest and adultery apply equally to everyone. The Texas law, a throwback to zealous religious rule, can be applied to anything beyond vaginal-penile intercourse. But it isn't.

This law isn't used to punish heterosexual couples found doing dirty things. It's used to pass judgment on homosexuality and punish gays. Such witch hunts shouldn't be allowed, and Santorum's words ignore the distinction and keep bigotry alive.

There are more interesting bits in Santorum's interview, though. He actually blames the Catholic Church sex abuse scandal on liberals. Here's the quote:

"You have the problem within the church. Again, it goes back to this moral relativism, which is very accepting of a variety of different lifestyles. And if you make the case that if you can do whatever you want to do, as long as it's in the privacy of your own home, this 'right to privacy,' then why be surprised that people are doing things that are deviant within their own home? If you say, there is no deviant as long as it's private, as long as it's consensual, then don't be surprised what you get."

Wait a minute. It sounds like he's saying that when Catholic priests used their authority to force boys to have sex with them — it was consensual? Here's more:

"In this case, what we're talking about, basically, is priests who were having sexual relations with post-pubescent men. We're not talking about priests with 3 year olds or 5 year olds. We're talking about a basic homosexual relationship."

No, actually, raping minors is not a basic homosexual relationship. And mainstream America recognizes that. The interview shows that Santorum doesn't simply hold bigoted views about gays — he's way out of touch with reality. Forget sanctions; the GOP should cut its losses and drop him entirely.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailymerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.



Steve Baggs Emerald

A fish of a different color

Something is fishy in the state of Oregon.

The other day, I went to Safeway to buy salmon. Before I picked up the "Atlantic Salmon Fillet," I noticed two words, in very small type: COLOR ADDED. Hmm. Then I saw a special deal on the "Salmon King/Chinook." No warning label. But at the counter was a disclaimer on the special. It read: "FARM RAISED-COLOR ADDED."

I asked a butcher about the color. He didn't know they added color to farmed salmon until recently, when he saw a TV special on it. "They were spraying this stuff with a hose," he said. "It was a vitamin supplement." I asked if it was natural. He thought it was, but seemed unsure. He was nice and helpful, so I did not grill him anymore. But I decided to find out how my salmon got its color.

Even in the Northwest, most of the salmon at our supermarkets is Atlantic salmon. All of the Atlantic salmon is farm raised, often in British Columbia. Wild Pacific salmon get their orange-pink color from eating krill and other crustaceans. Farmed salmon don't eat krill. They eat pellets containing canthaxanthin or astaxanthin, synthetic additives that give them the "right" color.

Canthaxanthin? Astaxanthin? Sounds

like biological weapons. In a way, they are. Found in plants and algae, a lab-made version is used in fish feed. Natural color is important to many people. Without the additive, farmed salmon flesh is dull gray. I might not buy gray. And, fish factories fear, neither would millions of health-conscious consumers.

Fish farms claim the additives are essential for healthy fish. But the European Union's Scientific Committee on Animal Nutrition disagrees: "Canthaxanthin is a carotenoid pigment used as feed additive for the sole purpose of colouring food."

The Food and Drug Administration sets an allowable daily intake of these additives. Canthaxanthins cause a buildup of pigments in the retina, which could damage eyesight. In January, health concerns prompted the European Union to cut the color additives allowed in fish feed to less than one-third of former levels. We still follow the old levels.

Since 1995, the FDA has required supermarkets to label individually packaged salmon that had synthetic colorants. But the food safety division of Oregon's Department of Agriculture was unaware of this requirement. The Oregonian reported on Thursday. And — if we give them the benefit of the doubt — so were most supermarkets. Now, someone's making the supermarkets take notice. Class-action lawsuits were filed against Kroger, Safeway and Albertson's last week.

Color isn't the only concern. The pellets are made of wild fish taken from countries like Chile. Canada doesn't allow its own fish to be ground into meal.

It's stealing, but worse. Stanford University researchers calculate 2.4 pounds of wild fish are needed to produce one pound of salmon. Fish factories are wasting nature's bounty.

Fish farms pollute. Anyone who has had a pair of goldfish knows they poop a great deal, and they leave a lot of uneaten pellets. What about 1 million tons of farmed salmon worldwide, as The Seattle Times reports? That's a lot of raw untreated sewage.

Farmed fish are polluted. Last year, the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Chemosphere* discovered that farmed salmon contained 10 times as many PCBs as wild salmon. Farmed fish also get lice. Sea lice spread quickly in crowded fishpens, and escape to infect wild salmon. Many farmed salmon also escape, compete with Pacific salmon for food and take over their habitat. Finally, these farms devastate fishing communities and families that harvest salmon for a living.

Eating salmon seems like a dubious prospect. But here are three simple rules for consumers to follow. First, use reputable sources to find healthy, sustainable seafood. For example, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Web site lists certain seafood to avoid. Farmed salmon is one. Second, unless the package or menu says "WILD," it is farm-raised and artificially colored. Third, spread the word. Eat wild. Don't fall for the dye job.

Contact the columnist at philiphuang@dailymerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Philip Huang
 A different light

Letter to the editor

Be kind to animals; go vegetarian

Bravo to Joseph Bechard for his column, "Vegetarians curb fecal conditions, immoral industry" (ODE, April 22), which very accurately described the cruelty and contempt with which animals in the agriculture industry are treated.

Ten billion cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys, sheep, goats and other animals are slaughtered each year in the United States for human consumption. The majority of them are raised in massive factory farms, usually confined in extremely

cramped stalls or cages, most never going outside. They are routinely forced to undergo barbaric procedures performed without painkillers, including castration and the partial amputation of tails, toes and beaks. Their abbreviated lives typically end violently in slaughterhouses, where they are dismembered, sometimes while still conscious.

There is a vast array of great-tasting, environmentally friendly foods on the market free of meat, eggs and dairy products. By switching to a vegetarian diet, each one of us can practice compassion by not contributing to the suffering of animals.

Barb Lomow
 Eugene

CORRECTION

Monday's story about Korea Night ("Eugene meets Korea," ODE, April 28) used the wrong word when describing the food served. It should have read, "The main course consisted of light teriyaki chicken or bul-go-gi, a Korean beef dish."

The Emerald regrets the error.