

national news

Lesbian columnist in mainstream press

At long last a gay journalist has convinced the established press that there is a receptive audience for a column devoted exclusively to gay and lesbian issues. Deb Price, a news editor for the Washington, D.C., bureau of the *Detroit News*, began writing her column in May and is now transmitted by Gannett News Service to 80 newspapers. Price appears in *USA Today*, the *Des Moines Register*, the *Rochester Democrat* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*. "I'm so excited," Price says. "I hope to be a bridge between the gay and straight communities. I'd like to push the discussion of gay issues forward. Everybody knows a gay person—a brother, a sister, someone who is gay. With the column, I'm saying, 'It's OK to say we're gay'."

The column has inspired a huge response from readers. Though most have been positive, not everyone is pleased. Bob Giles, editor and publisher of the *Detroit paper*, however, is happy with the experiment. "Deb's column is a valuable addition to the paper and is providing badly needed information. We knew we would get a strong response, and my reaction to the negative letters is that it simply demonstrates all the more why we need this column."

Jim Hunger

Queers take on the Christians

Fewer than 50 staid fundamentalists caged themselves in with barricades and police protection on the sidewalk in front of the Bank of America World Headquarters in San Francisco July 15 as at least four times as many counter-demonstrating queers taunted them from the steps above.

The fundamentalists had planned to protest the decision by Bank of America, Wells Fargo Bank, Levi Strauss and United Way of the Bay Area to quit funding the Boy Scouts of America until that organization ends its discriminatory policy against gay men.

Instead, they were overwhelmed by whistle shrieks, boos, chants of "Shame!" and "Bigots go home!", showers of paper triangles and a choral rendition of slightly adapted Christian hymns.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender activists definitely had the upper hand when it came to crowd size, volume, originality and sense of humor. As the fundies read the Pledge of Allegiance, the queers sprinkled them with pages from hymn books. As the fundies sang "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah," the arm-waving queers swayed in choral formation, singing, "What a friend we have in Jesus/He is not bound by bigotry/He teaches love and understanding/Why do you tie him to the tree?"

The fundies were not pleased.

"I think homosexuality is immoral and the Boy Scouts have a right to exclude homosexuals," said Chuck Mollhenny, an organizer of campaigns against San Francisco's domestic-partner law. "I disagree that they're born that way. Everybody is born a sinner, but they have a choice to go with God."

Hundreds of onlookers lining the streets and tourists on stopped cable cars watched the circuslike face-off.

After one woman yelled repeatedly, "Mary was an unwed mother!", a fundamentalist vented his frustration over the microphone: "This is our demonstration. We called the police ahead of time, and yet we're under siege."

"I'm here because they're throwing away everything they say they believe in. They're feeding Satan with their hate and bigotry," explained Robert White, a minister at the Universal Life Church and a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence.

"The Christ you say you believe in needs to speak to your heart and teach you that hatred is wrong, bigotry is a sin and his love is for all people in all situations," White told the wearying fundamentalists as they finally retreated from the sidewalk.

The showdown was particularly meaningful for one onlooker. James Dale was dismissed from the Boy Scouts last year in New Jersey after the Scouts learned that he is gay. Dale had been a Scout from age 8 to age 20. In the next few weeks, he will be filing suit against the Boy Scouts of America under New Jersey's new sexual orientation anti-discrimination law. "I think I've given a lot to the organization for more than half of my life. I see a lot of good in the Boy Scouts, and I want to change it for the better. Bigotry and intolerance cannot be accepted," Dale said. Ken McPherson of the Forgotten Scouts said, following the demonstration, he would present 1,000 signatures to the four companies supporting their decision to defund the Scouts. McPherson said it was only the beginning.

Rachel Timoner

Born-again "ex-gay" becomes born-again gay

David Caliguri, who earned one of *The Advocate's* 1985 homophobia awards for offering discontented gays and lesbians "a way out of the homosexual deathstyle" through the born-again Christian tenets of his Free Indeed national ministry, has reaffirmed his gay sexuality. Also founding the Phoenix chapter of Homosexuals Anonymous during his eight-year digression into the "ex-gay" movement, Caliguri says he started Free Indeed after a traumatic week in 1981. His male lover had ended their romance and business relationship, and Caliguri went on a drinking binge. He ended up going home with a man who tied him up and raped him several times. Finally freed the next day, he returned home to find his ex-lover with another man, and he recalls thinking at that time, "If this is what being gay is about, I don't want to be this way anymore."

Caliguri became a major organizer of anti-gay protests beginning with the 1985 gay pride parade in Phoenix and through his Free Indeed organization employed deceptions typical of homophobic pseudo-Christian groups to attract people. "We were listed under Lesbian and Gay Alternative Services, so people thought we were a gay information board," Caliguri says. "People would call to find out where the local bars were, and we'd preach to them about the sins of homosexuality."

But Caliguri was hardly reformed. By the time he was appearing on the *Sally Jesse Raphael* show as a champion of the ex-gay movement, he recalls, "I'd started having sex with men again. Men would call our hot line and tell me about their latest sin: sex with their pastor, sex with their father. I was horny all the time." To avoid being recognized, he resorted to anonymous encounters in bookstores or slept with other "reformed" homosexuals. "I didn't realize it at first, but a lot of Homosexuals Anonymous leaders were having sex with one another," Caliguri says. "We'd go to conferences in other cities, and we'd be paired up in hotel rooms. Everybody was sleeping with everybody else."

Eventually Caliguri's duplicity began to affect his health. Suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome and candidiasis, he was too sick to attend church. "The more time I spent away from these people, the more I began to feel like myself. I began to remember who I used to be," he says. Turning over the Free Indeed phone lines to a local church in late 1991, he closed the ministry's doors and is now studying alternative spiritualities ("I'm interested in belief systems that aren't judgmental") and considering romance ("But not with a Christian!").

Jim Hunger

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