

'Let Freedom Ring'... What does it really mean?

by Russ Jones
The Print Staff

After reading Richard Chamber's opinion, "Let Freedom Ring," in the Feb. 2 issue of *The Print*, several things crossed my mind. I'd like to share a few of them.

Let me begin with a story. About 10 years ago I was hanging out in a little backwoods tavern in a small town in northern Idaho. It was late in the week and the place was host to the usual collection of regulars, all locals. Around 10 p.m. an "outsider" came in. He appeared to be what the rednecks call a "college boy," and with the University of Idaho only 18 miles away, he probably was. He was young, he was friendly and he had long hair.

A couple of wood rats started in on him right away. One thing led to another and he was on the floor getting a crew-cut with a hunting knife. The majority of the people there thought it was great sport and they all agreed that the hippie needed a hair cut "so's he could look like a man." Even though he was struggling, and it took two of them to hold him down, he only picked up a couple

of cuts on his scalp. His lucky day, I guess. Can you relate, Richard? It was all about community standards and the will of the majority.

"Let Freedom Ring," it certainly has a nice sound to it, but what does it mean? Mr. Chambers states that freedom and minority rule are just not compatible. Would it surprise him to learn that freedom and majority rule are equally incompatible? No doubt.

Mr. Chambers is angry that the Oregon legislature invalidated the majority votes of various city and county initiatives which would have sanctioned continued discrimination, on many levels, against citizens solely on the basis of their sexual orientation. Assessing his presentation, it appears to me that the real argument, in his opinion, is whether or not one group of people has the right to abridge the rights and freedoms of another group simply because there are more votes in one of the groups. In this respect, he is misguided.

These discriminating initiatives are not only wrong on their face, they violate constitutional proscriptions and are therefore illegal. The majority cannot be allowed to impose social sanctions

which are illegal or to vote upon issues which violate or threaten the rights or freedoms of fellow citizens.

It must be remembered that a principle and guiding philosophy of the founding of the American political experience is the notion that the purpose of government is to protect the rights of the individual and to get rid of the very real threat of tyranny by the majority. Our founding principles mandate that the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are inviolate and that, in this regard, we are all created equal.

It should be apparent that in any society founded on this premise, when one person's rights are compromised or abridged, the rights of all members of that society are as well. We cannot hurt or deny others that which we claim for ourselves without injuring ourselves in the process.

Mr. Chambers also states that "when a society wishes to be free, then it must first learn that it is the will of the majority which must set the rules of the land." With this view, Mr. Chambers advocates nothing more than the purest and worst form of democracy, mob rule.

History is rife with the injustices perpetrated in the guise of community standards. A few examples in American history are Cotton Mather's witch hunts in the 18th Century, vigilante justice in the old west, Klan lynchings and the violent beginnings of the civil rights movement, to name a few. To this assertion that the majority must set the rules, I respond that it is the fruits of reasoned debate which must set the rules of the land, not simply the will of the majority. The majority can be and has been wrong on many occasions.

It is no accident that our government was established, in Madison's words, as a Representative Republic. A principal concern at the outset of our political journey was the fear of an uninformed electorate abandoning thoughtful participation. The architects of our founding documents were all too aware that most people form initial opinions more upon emotion than reason and so, in the interest of stability, continuity and assuring some view toward future goals, established a representative form of government.

Yes, the people have the right and responsibility to vote for their representatives and to petition those representatives, individually or in groups, in regard to their interests. Legislative authority, however, was purposely reserved for the legislative bodies in the hope that their decisions would be formed upon an honest and open exchange of concerns and ideas. If anyone needs validation of the inherent dangers of a direct public vote on major policy issues, it is only necessary to look at the chaos and devastation boiling in the wake of various ballot measures and referendums over the last six years.

Judge Norblad's decision to uphold the restraints imposed by House Bill 3500, forbidding cities and counties from enacting anti-gay rights ordinances was proper and in accordance with the law as proscribed by both the federal and state constitutions. The security of our freedoms cannot be maintained by simply invoking the concept of rights, freedom and majority rule. Our actions must be framed and guided by reasoned thought, responsible action and a genuine concern for each other.

Anti-abortionists are 'sincere in their beliefs'

■ Writer believes majority of those against abortion want to lawfully change a practice they find 'unjust and immoral'

by Andrea Smith
The Print Staff

Persons opposed to abortion are portrayed in the media as a bunch of unfeeling, uncaring, unprincipled fanatical idiots. And, frankly, there are some who fit that description. The vast majority, though, want to obey the laws and to change a practice they sincerely believe to be unjust and immoral. The idea that abortion is some sort of necessary element to a healthy and just society is unsubstantiated.

Religious beliefs are a common reason to oppose abortion, but not the only reason. Science has been unable to determine

when life begins. Until conclusive evidence proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that a separate life does not begin at conception, I will continue to believe it does. There is no reasonable evidence to the contrary. To say an unborn human has fewer rights than a born human is a claim with no basis. How are we to decide which life is of greater value if we can't even determine what constitutes a life?

On the claim of women's rights, I have read the Constitution of the United States, and in no section does it say women have a right to terminate unwanted pregnancy. Therefore, it is not a Constitutional right, but rather a cur-

rent interpretation by the Supreme Court, and is subject to change.

If people believe abortion is equivalent to murder, they have to believe stopping murder outweighs supporting mere rights. And this is not ordinary murder, but is the killing of innocent, helpless babies. My only question to the pro-abortionists is this: what are people supposed to do if they honestly and unequivocally believe abortion is the senseless murder of children? Would it be correct for them to allow this kind of atrocity to continue?

If abortion were only a simple matter of rights it would not cause much controversy. The

pro-lifer's believe in human rights as much as the pro-choicer's do.

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The difference is one believes the rights of the pregnant woman are

paramount while the other counts the life of the unborn child the higher consideration.

The point of this article is not to change anyone's mind. The people who agree with me will continue to do so, and those who don't will think I'm some sort of fool.

I did, however, want to voice an aspect of the argument rarely mentioned in the media. The anti-abortionists say what they do because they are sincere in their beliefs. It is difficult to respect the privacy of other people when you believe they are violating one of the most basic aspects of human rights: the right to life.

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