

LETTERS

Church must accept dissent

To the Editor:

Which, I wonder, is more intrinsically evil (or should I say "objectively immoral"): the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy's suppression of the ministry of Father Robert Nugent and Sister Jeannine Gramick ("Vatican shuts down ministry to gays," July 22), or its successful inhibition of their intellectual and emotional freedom all their lives, such that Nugent, to continue in his ministry, would have been willing to sign a personal Profession of Faith concurring in the integral teaching of the Church? (see story, page 32)

Perhaps [church officials] should become aware that most contemporary Christian organizations flourish with a degree of freedom which recognizes the necessity of public dissent and controversy as part of their commitment to be faithful to the truth. That commitment is infinitely more valuable than fidelity to an organization's desire to escape from the necessity for a consistent tradition of error in its sexual teachings, a cruel tradition which has wrought so much pain in so many people's lives.

I write this letter as an outsider, an heretical Catholic (or perhaps a neo-Christian), married, father of two children,

who reads your paper with delight every week. Heretofore, I have not had the courage to publicly take my stand—"come out"—with my belief that the struggle for acceptance and recognition represents a defining opportunity to re-think radically what our human nature is, and what the ethical implications of that insight might be.

John J. Huss, Jr.
Atlanta

Transgendered won't stop ENDA

To the Editor:

In his column ("The new transgender look—selfishness and self-sabotage," July 15), Michael Alvear makes it sound as if transgender activists have a unified position on the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA). That's far from true. A few transgender activists have vowed to fight ENDA if it doesn't include protection for transgendered persons. The rest of us support ENDA, even if it doesn't include us.

There's apprehension in the gay and lesbian community that hate crime and anti-discrimination ordinances and laws won't pass or will have great difficulty passing if they include language to protect

gender identity and presentation. So far, this fear has not been borne out. Four states (California, Minnesota, Missouri and Vermont) and nearly 20 cities protect transgendered persons on the basis of hate crimes or employment discrimination, either as part of a general lesbian and gay measure or specifically for transgendered persons. Getting these laws and ordinances passed has not caused the firestorm pessimists have predicted.

While a few trans activists are actively opposed to a non-inclusive ENDA, the rest of us are merely working towards our own inclusion. We did become offended a few years ago when the Human Rights Campaign actively campaigned to remove the transgender language our lobbyists had managed to get included, and we are incensed at HRC's attempts to placate us with many little kindnesses while working behind our backs to keep us out of ENDA. But we will not fight an ENDA without us or attack those who support it.

I would prefer a measure which does not extract a price in conformity. I believe we can achieve an ENDA that protects all of us. I'll reluctantly support an ENDA that doesn't protect me and perhaps Mr. Alvear, but pardon me if I am not very enthusiastic about it.

Dallas Denny
Pine Lake

Transgendered relish victimhood

To the Editor:

Once again, Michael Alvear has hit the nail squarely on the head. Transgender opposition to the Employment Non-Discrimination Act is preposterous, so obviously wrong-headed that it could only be justified in a culture that wears its victim status like a crown. Asking the rest of us to sign on to this position is like asking people with AIDS to oppose the Ryan White Act because it doesn't provide universal health care.

It is as if there are people in our community who have a vested interest in insisting that we are necessarily victims, and all of the progress of the past 30 years be damned. Let the prospect of winning an important victory rear its head—and ENDA is as big as it gets—and folks we've never heard of before start falling from the sky, telling us why it shouldn't happen, preferring the status quo over actually creating, however incrementally, the kind of world in which we can all truly live free. Thanks, but I think I'll pass. I'd rather take my empowerment where I can find it.

Gordon Ohlsson
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