

After
Dade County:
Turning Defeat into
Victory

Nick Thimmesch

Gays deserve our pity and a little less

WASHINGTON — Sunday, June 26, was the biggest day ever for America's homosexual groups, who marched down the avenues of the largest cities, stirred up like angry bees over the humiliating defeat Anita Bryant visited on them in Miami recently.

These homosexuals seem united never before, have developed clout, and, like all noisy days, get quick and from the media.

Much of their screaming is nonsense, of course propagandists to lightly to "Nazi" around, to cry that

homosexual sex practice doesn't fit that purpose in any way. That's what this is all about.

The deeply felt urge to recreate the human race each generation accounts for these bias against homosexuals through the centuries, the unexecution of its practitioners the mindless chatter people do not want to be

in a position of approval of this deviant practice

Understandably and deserve to urge to harp on the severity of the practice and allow

House deletes homosexuals' housing aid

From Sun-Times Wire
WASHINGTON—The House voted Wednesday to overturn a federal regulation that provides housing aid to homosexuals living in

PEOPLE



Anita wins, gay rights defeated

By Timothy McNulty
Chicago Tribune Press Service

MIAMI—Anita Bryant won. Her drive to repeal a gay-rights law in Dade County succeeded Tuesday at the polls, and she vowed to carry the fight to other cities with such laws. The voters, by more than 2 to 1, overturned equality for homosexuals in employment and housing, an ordinance Miss Bryant had branded as "an affront to God's law."

Save Our Children group against gay-rightsists financed by supporters in major cities. Reportedly Miss Bryant's forces spent \$150,000 and her opponents \$100,000.

WITH COMPLETE unofficial returns from all 46 precincts, there were 202,319 [or 69.3 per cent] votes for repeal of the law and 89,589 [or 30.7 per cent] against.

At a victory press conference Tuesday night in the Miami Beach Holiday Inn, Miss Bryant, the singer and star of range juice TV commercials, said: "Tonight the laws of God and the cultural values of man have been vindicated."

They have voted to repeal an obnoxious assault on our moral values." She then told of plans to expand her campaign across the nation, from Our Children's headquarters in Washington. She said the group will crusade to repeal similar ordinances in such cities as San Antonio and Minneapolis. Before she addressed the gathering, her husband, Bob Green, kissed her on the cheek and drew a cheer when he said, "This is what heterosexuals do."

MISS BRYANT, 37, with a diamond-studded pendant displayed on her pale

Political Pamphlets P202024

blue dress, spoke from a podium for the first 10 minutes of the session devoted to posing for press photographers and network television. The family scene on Street Beach, frequently

At the Fountain that had been a gathering "victory" In a ban

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grams of rent or mortgage subsidies. The effort to nullify President Carter's program of reviewing and upgrading less-than-honorable discharges of Vietnam combat veterans passed 273 to 36 as an amendment to the money bill. The amendment re- ing match be- Marine

These have been some of the headlines we have read in the last year as the anti-gay backlash has gotten stronger. They reflect the growing concern that many Americans have with gay and lesbian issues and the efforts of the right-wing to capitalize on that concern.

But such headlines don't tell the whole story. Along with them have been reports of "*Thousands Nationwide March In Gay Demonstrations*," "*Protest Greets Anita Here*" and "*Gays Come Out Fighting*." While the anti-gay forces seem to gain ground, gay people and our supporters continue, even more actively, the fight for gay rights. That fight has a long and honorable history; the modern gay/lesbian movement is usually dated from June 28, 1969. On that day gay customers at the Stonewall Bar in New York resisted police as they attempted to raid the bar. For one of the first times in history, gay people had publically stood up to their attackers. Since then each June Gay/Lesbian Pride Week has been celebrated as a way to commemorate Stonewall. Since then many gains have been made for gay people — passage of gay rights legislation, election of openly gay and lesbian government officials, increased media coverage of the gay community.

Today, almost a decade after Stonewall, gay rights is a public issue. As such it has come increasingly under attack. Nowhere has this been more visible than in the Dade County (Miami) Florida campaign of Anita Bryant and 'Save Our Children'. What happened there and why? What can gay people expect in the future? What can gay people do to gain our rights?

The Miami Campaign and Beyond

"Tonight the laws of God and the cultural virtues of man have been vindicated," said Anita Bryant as voters in Dade County, Florida overwhelmingly passed a referendum calling for the repeal of Gay rights legislation on Tuesday, June 7, 1977 by the Dade County Board of Commissioners. This vote (202,319 for repeal and 89,569 against) paved the way for a national "*Save Our Children from Homosexuali-*

ty" campaign and was the culmination of a six month campaign by anti-gay forces.

Gay activists pledged to continue fighting for civil rights. "We'll continue from here. We've unified the gay community and brought national attention to the issue," Jack Campbell said, speaking for the Dade County Gay Coalition.

In January, 1977, the Dade County Board of Commissioners had become the first local unit of government in over a year to pass legislation that prohibits discrimination against gay people in employment, housing and public accommodations. Similar ordinances had been enacted in several other communities, such as Berkeley, California, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Passed initially with little notice, the legislation soon became a target for a campaign to force a referendum on the issue. The anti-gay forces were led by Anita Bryant, best known as a former Miss America runner-up and public spokesperson for Florida citrus products. The group, Save Our Children (SOC), began a drive to collect the necessary 10,000 signatures for a public referendum. They began to receive broad media coverage as Bryant began touring the nation. SOC, after gathering 66,000 signatures, campaigned intensely for repeal. SOC literature and advertisements raised many anti-gay myths and stereotypes including charges that the laws would lead to gays openly "recruiting" children to homosexuality. As the campaign heated up, even more vicious attacks by Bryant and SOC occurred. Bryant has referred to gays as "human garbage" and bumper stickers reading "*Kill a Queer for Christ*" appeared.

As it became clear that SOC provided a real threat to gay rights not only in Miami but also around the country, forces mobilized to fight back. Gay rights supporters organized major fundraising efforts in many cities. Demonstrations were organized to protest Bryant's public appearances. In the Twin Cities, the day of Bryant's dedication of a fruit market was

designated "National Fruit Day" by 1,200 pro-gay demonstrators. In many places groups and individuals have promoted a boycott of Florida citrus products. Experienced political campaigners joined the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights which directed the campaign to retain the pro-gay ordinance.

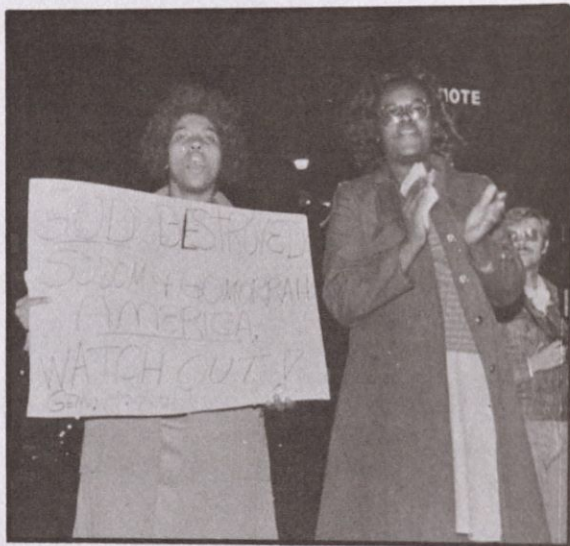


Photo by Jane Melnick

Following the vote in Miami, Bryant and SOC threatened to take their anti-gay campaign to the nation. They spoke of cities such as Minneapolis and San Antonio as targets for the proposed nationwide attack on gay rights. But gay activists, stunned by the defeat, were sparked into protest. Bryant was met by demonstrators wherever she went.

On June 14, Anita Bryant came to Chicago, where she was greeted by thousands of people at the Medinah Temple. But the four thousand plus gay rights supporters were not there to welcome her to the city. Our purpose was to protest her appearance.

Bryant was in Chicago to sing at a benefit for the Shriners, a service organization. The date was made a year ago, in 1976. When her appearance was announced the Shriners were overwhelmed with calls to protest her coming. As a result, the organization promised that the singer would not be allowed to make a political

statement. Many gay people, however, viewed her appearance alone to be a political statement, since Bryant had vowed in her victory statement to take her anti-gay campaign to other cities.

The Chicago demonstrators showed that there are many thousands of people, gay and straight, who are opposed to her campaign. Contingents from many groups carried signs with slogans such as "A day without human rights is a day without sunshine;" "I'd rather be a faggot than a bigot;" and "What makes you think I'd molest your child?" It was coordinated by the Gay and Lesbian Coalition and by the Committee for Gay Rights.

The June 14 demonstration was only the beginning of gay activities. A little more than a week later Gay/Lesbian Pride Week began. In Chicago thousands turned out for the activists that included films, workshops, and of course the Pride Week Parade. Around the country thousands of others also celebrated Pride Week. The largest demonstration was in San Francisco where an estimated 100,000 marched. They were sparked there by the murder earlier in the month of a gay gardener; as his attackers stabbed him they shouted "faggot, faggot". Marches were large successes in New York, Atlanta, and Houston. In Barcelona, Spain 4,000 gay demonstrators were dispersed by police who

Photo by Christine Riddiough





fired rubber bullets into the crowd to break up the demonstrators. Gay Pride Week 1977 became a political focus for the anger generated in the worldwide gay community by the Save Our Children campaign.

The political theme of the activities was evidenced by the greater participation of political groups of all shades and by the preponderance of political slogans and banners. In Chicago, where the theme of Pride Week was "Gays and Lesbians in History," several floats depicted the history of gay oppression and resistance to it, including one that graphically showed the treatment of gay people by Nazis in Germany and promised that it would never happen again. Chants and placards addressed the issues to gay rights and the current anti-gay backlash, including "No More Miamis," "Down with Anita," "Gay Rights and the ERA," and "Down with the anti-gay, anti-black, anti-poor Supreme Court."

After Pride Week both gay activities and our opponents were hard at work. SOC's strategy in other cities was not clear but Bryant began travelling around the country singing and speaking. In every case but one — a small town in Ohio — she was met with demonstrations such as that in Chicago. She also announced the upcoming publication of a book on Save Our Children.

Bryant's anti-gay appeals have received some support from many quarters including clergy such as Billy Graham, and government officials. A member of the U.S. House, Larry McDonald (D-Ga.), proposed an amendment to a bill that provided financial aid for legal services. His amendment, which passed the House, would deny aid for any legal cases involving gay rights. In Illinois Bryant drew some support in the state legislature in Springfield as legislators there attempted to pass a resolution praising her. State Rep. Robert Mann was, however, able to rally enough legislators to defeat the bill. Discussion for the record included comments about not "wasting time on queers."

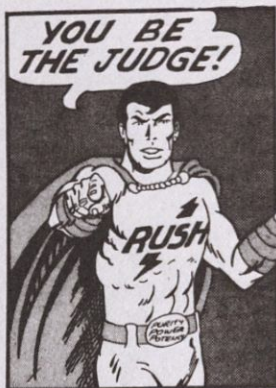
The plans of Bryant and SOC are vague. Bryant has agreed to retire from her position as public spokesperson for the anti-gay cause in order to retain her contract with the Florida Citrus Commission. Nonetheless, she has stirred up both supporters and opponents of gay rights.

Photo by Jane Melnick



Actions against the SOC campaign and for gay rights continue.

In addition to demonstrations by gay people, two lawsuits have been filed against SOC. "Save the Children", a charitable group that gives money to buy food and clothes for needy children, recently won a court injunction ordering SOC to stop using the name. Save the Children charged that people have confused the



two groups and have stopped their contributions to the charity group.

In a second suit, Helen Hillsborough, mother of Robert Hillsborough, the gay gardener slain in San Francisco, has asked for damages of five million dollars from Anita Bryant and others. Her suit contends that the SOC campaign contributed materially to her son's death.

Future plans include activities on a number of fronts: public education, demonstrations, boycotts, legislative action. Before exploring these plans, we need to understand what the Miami campaign and the anti-gay backlash mean.

The Meaning of Miami

The vote in Miami was one of the first major test of the anti-gay backlash; its impact goes far beyond the denial of gay rights to residents of Miami. This impact depends on the forces behind SOC, the potential for similar activity elsewhere, and the response of the gay movement.

SOC's most public figure has been Anita Bryant, who once sang with Bob Hope's Christmas Tours to Vietnam and for Richard Nixon in the White House. She participated in the 1969 "Youth for Decency" rally, and at an anti-gay rally this year, Ronald Reagan presented her with a bag of oranges to signify his support of her cause. Some of her books have been published by the same company that brought out *Total Woman* (a book that tells women how to get close to Christ by playing up to their hus-

bands). Bryant's close connections with the right wing and her conservative views on God, country and motherhood were reflected in SOC's campaign themes.

Bryant has also been outspoken against the Equal Rights Amendment, which she links up to her anti-gay views. In March, 1977, she told the *National Observer*: "I don't like the fact that many of the proclaimed leaders of the ERA are lesbians." Her and SOC's anti-gay campaign closely parallel right-wing anti-ERA efforts, such as those of Phyllis Schlafly. Both movements try to manipulate public opinion with emotionalism and sexist stereotypes. One of the most



potent arguments of the anti-ERA forces has been the charge that passage of the ERA would lead to homosexual marriage and adoption of children. The ERA was defeated in Florida during SOC's campaign; some legislators who had been expected to vote for ERA were quoted as saying that SOC propaganda influenced them to vote no.

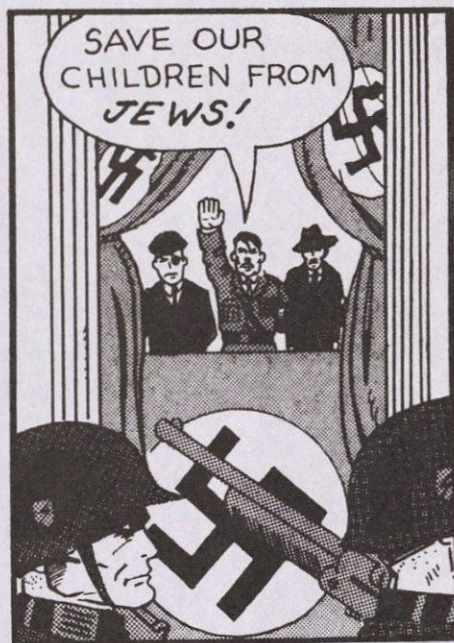
While Bryant was the most visible spokesperson for SOC, she was not alone. The Governor of Florida, Reuben Askew, spoke against gay rights

as did several Miami papers, but among SOC's most powerful allies were conservative religious groups like the Baptists, Catholics and Orthodox Jews. SOC and Bryant frequently quote the Bible in their support and even suggested that the drought in California was God's punishment for passing pro-gay laws there. The reading of a pastoral letter to Catholic congregations calling for the repeal of the legislation a few weeks prior to the election was crucial. The Catholic church has done this before to defeat gay rights legislation and to defeat pro-abortion state legislators.

Unfortunately, SOC's campaign is not unique to Miami. It has become a national effort, part of a rising anti-gay backlash. Passage of gay rights legislation in Minnesota, Illinois, New York and elsewhere has been blocked. Courts have upheld the right of employers to fire someone solely because they are gay. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld a Virginia law that denied states the right to enforce sodomy laws only against gays. This represents a turn away from the liberalization earlier in this decade, when local communities passed gay rights laws with relatively



little brouhaha. The media was beginning to address homosexuality and lesbianism occasionally in positive ways (such as the program "The War Widow" on PBS). The reaction to such gains has now begun and Dade County is only the first of such targets. Bryant has vowed to carry her campaign to such cities as Minneapolis and San Antonio.



The media has played a role in this upsurge of anti-gay sentiment. A series of articles in the *Chicago Tribune* on the sexual abuse of children focussed almost entirely on the abuse of boys by male homosexuals in spite of statistics that show that the vast majority of child molestation (over 90%) is attacks by men on girls. The reportage was clearly designed to arouse anger against gays; it also displayed an anti-woman attitude in its obvious lack of concern for little girls. The stories were sprinkled with phrases like "adult pervert" and description of the Chicago gay area around Clark and Diversey as "Clark and Perversity." Perverting the concern with the abuse of children into a tool to foster anti-gay attitudes, the series led to hearings at local, state, and national levels on child pornography, and was immediately picked up by SOC in their Miami campaign.



The gay community has been united more than ever before; support for the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights came from groups and individuals that were diverse geographically and politically. The willingness of gays to "come out of the closet" and actively work for gay rights, even at the risk of harassment and physical violence, is an indication of the growing self-confidence and self-reliance of gays and lesbians. Even in defeat gays have vowed to continue the fight for gay rights.

To Bryant's theme of "Save Our Children from Homosexuality," gays have responded that the real threat to children is not homosexuality but the lies, distortions, and anti-human attitudes and behavior of SOC.

Gays see the fight linked to other human rights struggles. The slogan of the Dade County Coalition was "A Day Without Human Rights is Like a Day Without Sunshine." A group called Latinos for Human Rights gave the Coalition support and were faced with harassment such as their cars being fire-bombed. Appeals were made to Third World people to compare the fight for gay rights to the fight of civil rights. While such efforts were of course done

in the self interest of gays, it is important to recognize that they appeal to the common interest of all minorities. Among the most explicit of these appeals for support has been an advertisement that has appeared in many gay publications which says, "You be the judge."

Pink triangle pins have become a symbolic reminder of gay oppression and are being worn by supporters of gay rights all over the country. The Nazis in Germany forced homosexuals to wear identical pink triangles, just as Jews were forced to wear yellow Stars of David. The Nazis put hundreds of thousands of homosexuals in concentration camps. There they were used as human experiment subjects, tortured and put to death. Placards bearing the slogan, "Never Again," have indicated gay resistance to any further attempts to such dehumanizations.

SOC and the anti-gay backlash it is promoting represent a real threat to gay rights and to any progressive reforms. Elaine Noble, state representative in Massachusetts, in an interview with the *Advocate*, paints a rather terrifying picture. of worse yet to come for homosexuals and lesbians, and still others, if SOC and its supporters prevail.



Reprinted from RUSH ADVERTISEMENTS

Fighting for Gay Rights

Whether or not Anita Bryant and SOC retreat from their anti-gay crusade, there is much work yet to be done in order to preserve gay rights already won and to gain others. The lessons from Miami include the understanding that gay rights is an emotionally charged issue. While polls show that most Americans support civil right for gay men and lesbians, Miami has shown that the right wing can capitalize on people's underlying fears. To counteract this, gay activists and organizations have planned a long range fight for gay rights that will take place on many fronts.

The most obvious need is for massive public education on gay rights, homosexuality and lesbianism. After centuries of being a taboo subject, gayness is only now emerging as a topic for public discussion. Many people retain the old myths and stereotypes about gay people. The National Gay Task Force (NGTF), a leading U.S. gay rights organization, has announced a program, called "*We Are Your Children!*". This program would be designed to educate people about who gays and lesbians really are. This would include a series of 'theme weeks' where gay people and straight people in the same work would meet together. Such themes might include gays and health, gays and religion, and gays and labor unions. Another part of the campaign is circulation of petitions calling for enactment of gay rights legislation. Along with the national campaign, many local groups provide speakers and educational materials for the general public.



Photo by Jane Melnick

A second area of concern is gay rights legislation. Bills are pending in many cities and states that would prohibit discrimination in housing and employment on the basis of sexual preference. A similar bill has been introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Ed Koch (D-NY). The Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL) is seeking more sponsors for that bill as a step toward its passage. People and groups in various districts will act as 'lobby links'. The links would work with their representative to encourage his/her support for gay rights. Enactment of bills of this type is the first step in protecting our rights as gay people.

While education and legislation are the two main thrusts of future gay activities, other tactics will also be used. The National Gay Leadership Conference (held in July, 1977) voted to support two boycotts — one of Florida Citrus products and one of Coors beer. The first of these has two general goals — the removal of Bryant as citrus spokesperson and a statement from the Florida citrus industry that they are opposed to discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. Indirectly, through its use of Anita Bryant as its spokesperson, the Florida citrus industry has given its support to anti-gay forces and has put forward an image offensive to the millions of gay Americans. By making these two demands,



Photo by Torie Osborn

gay people are asking the industry to show its support of democratic rights for all people and to rectify its past mistakes.

The boycott of Coors beer has other ramifications. Coors has a history of subjecting its employees to dehumanizing procedures. In order to be hired one has to answer questions about sexuality among other things. The boycott was called earlier this year by Brewery Workers Local 366 which is on strike against Coors. The boycott has been endorsed by many gay groups as well as by the AFL-CIO. Along with supporting the rights of workers (including gay workers) at Coors, this boycott also presents an

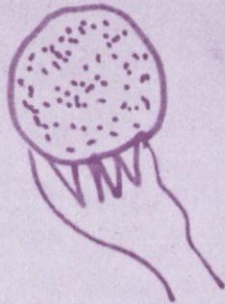
opportunity to work with organized labor and gain their support in future fights. This is a way in which we can begin to form coalitions with other groups — women's, black, Latino, labor — to work together for everyone's rights.

At the Leadership Conference, Virginia Apuzzo, co-chair of GRNL, said, "June 1977 showed America what happens when you mix gay pride and gay rage. We won't let this society disinherit us as its bastard children." In order to prevent our disinheritance and gain our full rights and liberation, we must use that gay rage and pride to build a new society with democratic rights for all.



Photo by Jane Melnick

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BLAZING STAR is produced by an all-women's chapter of the New American Movement. NAM is a socialist-feminist organization of women and men throughout the United States.

BLAZING STAR: Chicago Women's Chapter of NAM works on such projects as lesbian organizing and women's rights. We are working for the passage of gay rights legislation and for the Equal Rights Amendment. Any woman who is interested in working with us on these projects is welcome to join us. Write **BLAZING STAR**, Post Office Box 7892, Chicago 60680; or leave a message for us at 342-2398.

