

Samuel Rodriguez Says Promise Keepers Event Aims to Cancel 'Hate' Culture

In an age when every voice is given equal space online, and every cause is celebrated even if it contradicts another, it's not shocking to see hundreds of skirmishes in our nation's ongoing culture war.

Still, it was surprising that the nation's second-largest newspaper, *USA Today*, turned over its platform to an opinion writer to mainstream anti-Christian hate by calling for the cancellation of a Christian service at AT&T Stadium in July. The screed, given the provocative title, "Don't use Dallas Cowboy's name, AT&T Stadium to Mainstream Anti-Trans Hate," was even more surprising to me because the editorial targeted a former Los Angeles police officer (Compton, to be exact) and chairman of a men's movement called Promise Keepers. And what provoked the torrent of hate unleashed on Christians in this editorial? The audacity of Promise Keepers and Harrison for calling on men to come to AT&T Stadium to become better men, better husbands, better fathers and better members of their churches and communities.

I was taken aback that anyone could interpret this as spreading "anti-trans hate." I'm not Ken Harrison, the one organizing the event. But I am one of the speakers, and nowhere in my speech did I intend to spread hatred or to attack anyone. I'm a follower of Jesus Christ, and as a follower, my purpose is to help, heal, minister, love and in essence, live as close to the model Jesus gave as I possibly can.

Jesus, in his real, true historical life accepted everyone. He was loved by leaders, day laborers, businesspeople,

prostitutes, thieves, the sick and destitute. He touched the leper. He calmed the frightened. He elevated women. He embraced the foreign-born.

Jesus wasn't very popular, though, with the moneychangers that he threw out of the temple, but he became very popular with cheating tax collectors who, after one encounter with Jesus, repaid what they'd stolen.

And that, really, is the issue some people have with Jesus. Meeting Jesus usually does change a person. And sometimes when people change, they stop being what everyone around them wants them to be.

Still, the message of Jesus is to love and care for others. So I wonder why a sports team should be pressured to close its doors to men who want to learn to be more authentically "manly" by conforming to the image of the greatest man that ever lived.

And keep in mind, Promise Keepers is paying rent and filling hotel rooms during an economically difficult time for everyone in the event and hospitality industries. Promise Keepers isn't looking for an endorsement, just a place to gather and worship.

Promise Keepers is a time-tested movement that has met in sports stadiums for years. It was started by Coach Bill McCartney after he won the NCAA football championship with the Colorado Buffaloes in 1990. Coach McCartney prepared his championship team by asking each player, "What are you going to do on the field today?" Then he held them accountable to see their job was done.

He took that same methodology on the road, cramming tens of thousands of men into dozens of stadiums throughout the 1990s and asking men the same thing, "What are you going to do?" Guest speakers helped men identify the answer that was right for them and inspired them to hold to their decision.

This is exactly what men need today and exactly what will happen in AT&T stadium. Coming out of the 2020 lockdown with its skyrocketing rates of divorce, child and spousal abuse, joblessness and hopelessness, it's about time we take a hard look at ourselves.

It's no wonder that Ken Harrison asked, "Where are the Christian men?" Yes, where are they? I don't know if the whole crowd that assembles will even be Christian. It might be that some guys just realize it's time to see what all this Jesus stuff is about.

It's funny that Harrison was quoted as saying that Christian men today are being pressured to "sit down, be silent, and be passive" because that's what the op-ed criticizing Ken wanted him and the tens of thousands of other men attending the event to do. But that's not what Jesus did, and his followers shouldn't either.

Harrison was also quoted as saying, "Christian men are not standing up for what's right." There's no doubt about that. Christian men are, in short, sinning. When a man comes home from a Promise Keepers event and stops neglecting his wife or cutting corners at work and instead accepts responsibility and pays more attention to his kids than the television, there's not a person around who is mad that he went. Anyone who witnessed that change of heart would want the men in their lives to attend the next one.

Harrison reportedly said that our society went from homosexual marriage all the way to men dressing as women and playing on women's sports teams. No one can dispute that. People can only dispute whether it is fair. Everyone can give an opinion, and people from Ken Harrison to Bruce 'Caitlyn' Jenner, a trans athlete, are all entitled to state that they don't believe men should compete in women's sports.

Men will come to the July event and bring their opinions with

them. They'll come from all political parties, philosophical persuasions, socioeconomic strata and ethnic backgrounds. No one is excluded. Everyone is welcome.

Harrison has raised money to bring in underserved men. He's asked me to give half my speech in Spanish so the quarter of the population who understands it is well-served.

I stand with Ken Harrison. It's about time to raise a standard for men, to inspire them to make good decisions and provide the motivation to stick with them. That's what Ken Harrison is talking about doing in AT&T stadium.

Let's not discourage a bunch of guys from getting together to inspire each other to stop harming themselves and others, to turn away from wrongdoing and get motivated to care for their neighbors, starting in their own homes and communities.

Isn't that what the world needs right now? {eoa}

Rev. Dr. Samuel Rodriguez is president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, executive producer of Breakthrough with 20th Century Fox and a bestselling author. CNN and FOX News have called him "the leader of the Hispanic Evangelical movement" and TIME magazine nominated him among the 100 most influential leaders in America. His newest book is From Survive to Thrive.

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