

The 'New York Times' Sanctions Anti-Religious Bigotry

The pattern is now completely predictable: Gay activists and their allies overplay their hand, and the liberal media says, "Well done! We fully support your intolerance."

Last week, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed fired Kelvin Cochran, the city's fire chief with 30 years of service behind him. As the mayor's statements made abundantly clear—and as we documented in the article, "The Mayor of Atlanta Declares War on Religious Freedom"—Cochran was fired because of his biblical beliefs that homosexual practice was abhorrent in God's sight. (Cochran also spoke against fornication, with specific reference to heterosexual promiscuity, along with bestiality, pedophilia and other sexual sins.)

The mayor's actions were so egregious (in keeping with the pattern of intolerance in the name of tolerance) that Christian leaders, both national and local, gathered in Atlanta on Tuesday to protest Cochran's dismissal.

Not to be outdone, the *New York Times* editorial board released an opinion piece earlier the same day, defending the mayor's actions and repeating the claim that Cochran was not fired for his beliefs but for his poor judgment. Their reasoning is as spurious as was the mayor's, but coming from the *Times*, it is even more dangerous.

The *Times* repeats Mayor Reed's allegations that Cochran was not fired because of his religious beliefs but rather: "for failing to get approval for the book's publication, for commenting publicly on his suspension after being told not to, and for exposing the city to possible discrimination lawsuits."

Yet Cochran states that he did receive approval to get the book published, that he only gave his book to a small number of like-minded associates, and that he did not engage in any inappropriate conduct, while an official investigation indicated that he never once discriminated against any of his 1,000 employees.

True, but to paraphrase the *Times* and Mayor Reed, "Perhaps one day he might discriminate against someone, and since he is such a religious bigot, the city can't risk something like this happening. Plus, just the fact that he believes what the Bible says about homosexual practice means that people will feel as if they were already being discriminated against."

Yes, that is the mind-boggling rationale given for his firing.

The *Times* mocks the idea that "Mr. Cochran's rights to free speech and religious freedom have been violated—an assertion that is as wrong as it was predictable," yet at the same time, claims that Cochran's religious beliefs were problematic because they included "virulent anti-gay views."

Backing the mayor's talking points, the *Times* argues that, "This case is not about free speech or religious freedom. It is, as Mr. Reed said at a news conference, about 'making sure that we have an environment in government where everyone, no matter whom they love, can come to work from 8 to 5:30 and do their job and then go home without fear of being discriminated against.'"

But no one ever was discriminated against. The *Times* even points out that an official "investigation found no evidence that Mr. Cochran had mistreated gays or lesbians." Indeed, "Reed officials found no evidence that Cochran treated lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees unfairly during his tenure. The report also reveals that Cochran once supported disciplining firefighters who openly supported

Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy's public statements opposing same-sex marriage."

Talk about even-handed, fair-minded leadership. It appears that Fire Chief Cochran exemplified that.

What then was the problem?

It was that Cochran's religious beliefs included "virulent anti-gay views," meaning the issue was not his conduct, which was above reproach, but rather his beliefs.

As the *Times* explains, "Imagine that Mr. Cochran, who is black, were an adherent of a religion that avowed the inferiority of white people, and that he distributed literature to that effect. He would not have lasted another day in a job that requires him to manage and protect the well-being of a large and diverse work force."

Aside from comparing skin color to romantic attractions and sexual behavior (a comparison as wrong as it is overused), Cochran did not avow the inferiority of homosexuals, and to repeat, he only distributed his book to a small circle of like-minded colleagues. And he did, in fact, "manage and protect the well-being of a large and diverse work force" to the point that, as noted, he once considered disciplining employees whose beliefs he agreed with but whose actions he didn't condone.

That, however, is not enough for the *Times*: "His position as a high-level public servant makes his remarks especially problematic, and requires that he be held to a different standard."

A different standard than what? Than fairness? Equity?

What the *Times* is essentially saying is that, as a high-level public servant, he does not have the right to hold to certain biblically-based beliefs—or, at the least, to allow anyone to

know he holds to those beliefs. Otherwise, he cannot hold such a high-level position.

As for high-level public servants like the president, vice-president, attorney general, and secretary of state, all of whom hold to militantly pro-gay activist views, that is perfectly fine, even if it makes those serving under them terribly uncomfortable to the point that they could easily be discriminated against.

The same could be said for employees of the *Times*. Might not they feel uncomfortable and unwelcome if their biblical viewpoints were made known? Is this fair and right?

It is to the credit of the *Times* editors that they spell out their bigotry for the whole world to see, stating that the anti-religious discrimination bills that Georgia and other states are trying to pass “do little more than provide legal cover for anti-gay discrimination,” meaning that those who believe that marriage is the union of a man and woman or that homosexual practice is sinful should not have protection under the law, since they are guilty of “anti-gay discrimination.”

I am confident to the core of my being that this anti-Christian bigotry will backfire, and so, as ugly as it is, I’m glad to see it get more open and brazen.

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