

= Save Our Children =

Save Our Children , Inc. was a political coalition formed in 1977 in Miami , Florida to overturn a recently legislated county ordinance that banned discrimination in areas of housing , employment , and public accommodation based on sexual orientation . The coalition was publicly headed by celebrity singer Anita Bryant , who claimed the ordinance discriminated against her right to teach her children biblical morality . It was a well @-@ organized campaign that initiated a bitter political fight between unprepared gay activists and highly motivated Christian fundamentalists . When the repeal of the ordinance went to a vote , it attracted the largest response of any special election in Dade County 's history , passing by 70 % .

Save Our Children was the first organized opposition to the gay rights movement , whose beginnings were traced to the Stonewall riots in 1969 . The defeat of the ordinance encouraged groups in other cities to attempt to overturn similar laws . In the next year voters in St. Paul , Minnesota , Wichita , Kansas , and Eugene , Oregon overturned ordinances in those cities , sharing many of the same campaign strategies that were used in Miami . Save Our Children was also involved in Seattle , Washington , where they were unsuccessful , and heavily influenced Proposition 6 ? a proposed state law in California that would have made the firing of openly gay public school employees mandatory ? that was rejected by California voters in 1978 .

Historians have since connected the success of Save Our Children with the organization of conservative Christian participation in political processes . Although forceful Christian involvement had not taken a widespread role in politics in the United States since 1925 , within two years the Reverend Jerry Falwell developed a coalition of conservative religious groups named the Moral Majority that influenced the Republican Party to incorporate a social agenda in national politics . Homosexuality , the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) , abortion , and pornography were among the issues most central to the Moral Majority 's priorities until it folded in 1989 . For many gay people , the surprise at the outcome of all the campaigns in 1977 and 1978 instilled a new determination and consolidated activism and communities in many cities where the gay community had not been politically active .

= = Background = =

On January 18 , 1977 , the Dade County Commission approved a law that would outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment , housing , and public services . Commissioner Ruth Shack proposed the bill on December 7 , 1976 at the request of a gay lobbying organization , named the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays , that was less than a year old . The group was headed by three gay activists : Jack Campbell , an owner of 40 gay bathhouses across the United States , political and gay activist Bob Basker , and Bob Kunst , a local publicist and enthusiast of the Human Potential Movement .

= = = Homosexuality in Miami = = =

The general attitude about homosexuality in Miami mirrored many other cities across the country . Though gay nightlife in the city had enjoyed the same boisterous existence as other forms of entertainment in the 1930s , by the 1950s , the city government worked to shut down as many gay bars as possible and enacted laws making homosexuality and cross @-@ dressing illegal . From 1956 to 1966 , the Johns Committee of the Florida Legislature actively sought to root out homosexuals in state employment and in public universities across the state , publishing the inflammatory " Purple Pamphlet , " which portrayed all homosexuals as predators and a dire threat to the children of Florida . In the 1960s The Miami Herald ran several stories implying the life of area homosexuals as synonymous with pimps and child molesters , and the local NBC television station aired a documentary entitled " The Homosexuals " in 1966 warning viewers that young boys were in danger from predatory men .

The public image of homosexuals changed with liberalized social attitudes of the late 1960s . In

1969 , the Stonewall riots occurred in New York City , marking the start of the gay rights movement . Though gay life in Miami was intensely closeted , and bars were subject to frequent raids , Christ Metropolitan Community Church ? a congregation for gay and lesbian Christians in Miami ? was founded in 1970 as a religious outlet , attracting hundreds of parishioners . The 1972 Democratic National Convention was held in Miami , featuring , for the first time , a public speech about the rights of gay men and lesbians by openly gay San Francisco political activist Jim Foster . Jack Campbell opened the Miami branch of Club Baths in 1974 . When it was raided , he made sure that all charges against those arrested were dropped , filed a lawsuit against the Miami Police Department prohibiting further harassment , and received a formal apology from the police . Even the depiction of gay men and lesbians in the local newspaper had changed to that of a silent , oppressed minority . By 1977 , Miami was one of nearly 40 cities in the U.S. that had passed ordinances outlawing discrimination against gay men and lesbians .

= = = Reaction to the ordinance = = =

When the news of the ordinance proposal was reported in December 1976 , a small ripple of protest spread from local churches . Northwest Baptist Church announced it from the pulpit . The news worried one of the church members named Anita Bryant , who was a 36 @-@ year @-@ old singer celebrity . Bryant began her career as a local child star on a television show in Oklahoma City and on Arthur Godfrey 's Talent Scouts . Her young life was marked by frequent moves ; her parents divorced each other twice , and she often lived in poverty conditions , but she became a born again Christian at eight years old , and counted her faith and her participation at church as the stabilizing influences in her life . As a child , she asked God to make her a star . She was , by her own admission , remarkably driven and ambitious . In her older teens she became a beauty pageant contestant , winning Miss Oklahoma and second runner @-@ up as Miss America . In 1960 , she married a Miami disc jockey named Bob Green and became a professional singer , finding some success with three gold records featuring popular , patriotic , and Gospel standards . She performed with the Bob Hope Christmas tour , entertaining troops serving overseas , and sang at President Lyndon Johnson 's funeral in 1973 . Since 1969 she had been employed regionally by the Florida Citrus Commission endorsing Florida orange juice in television commercials . She also advertised for Coca @-@ Cola , Tupperware , Kraft Foods and Holiday Inns . Bryant 's talent agent was married to Ruth Shack ; Bryant had contributed \$ 1 @,@ 000 to her campaign .

Initially Bryant kept her concerns low @-@ key , despite her pastor 's pleadings to become involved . She wrote a letter to the county commission and called Ruth Shack , expressing her concerns . Her most significant objection to the ordinance was that it would allow homosexuals to work in parochial schools ; all four of Bryant 's children attended a local private Christian school . She admitted she was largely ignorant of any specific dangers homosexuals presented , but when she was sent graphic images of homosexual acts , and shown photos of child pornography by a local police sergeant visiting her church , she was horrified . Bryant credited her inspiration later to her 9 @-@ year @-@ old daughter suggesting God could assist with her cause ; then she decided to take a more public role .

At the time of the commission 's vote in January , the boardroom was crowded with people who held some kind of interest in the issue . Busloads of churchgoers arrived from as far away as Homestead and picketed outside ; there was no corresponding organized show of support for the ordinance . Inside the boardroom , supporters and opposers took the entire allotted time to speak . Bryant reflected most of those opposing the law , telling the Dade County Commission , " The ordinance condones immorality and discriminates against my children 's rights to grow up in a healthy , decent community " . The few members of the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays who were present were stunned , as was Ruth Shack , at the number and force of the hundreds of protesters who filled the commission room , and held placards and pickets outside . But the ordinance passed by a 5 @-@ 3 vote .

= = Dade County ordinance 77 @-@ 4 = =

After the ordinance passed , over thirty conservative political professionals and ministers from various faiths met in Bryant and Green 's home to discuss a plan to raise publicity and attempt to get at least 10 @, @ 000 signatures on a petition to force the issue to be decided by a county voter referendum . They approved the name " Save Our Children , Inc . " , and voted Bryant their president , Bob Green treasurer and a man named Robert Brake ? a devout Catholic with a record of civil rights participation , but increasingly concerned with the liberalization of Miami city politics ? its secretary . With the assistance of a Republican @-@ affiliated advertising executive named Mike Thompson , the coalition eschewed subtlety . They held a press conference where Bryant held a pamphlet about homosexuality she claimed was being distributed at area high schools (a statement she later retracted) , and said Dade County homosexuals " are trying to recruit our children into homosexuality " . Far exceeding the required number of signatures , the coalition delivered more than 64 @, @ 000 signatures within six weeks demanding a referendum vote , which the commission set for June 7 , 1977 .

= = = Strategy = = =

Mike Thompson discovered in a poll taken in March 1977 that women in Dade County opposed repealing the measure two to one ; they saw their gay friends as relatively harmless . Save Our Children 's strategy , therefore , worked to prove that homosexuals were amoral , promiscuous , and defiant of traditional gender roles , and that they were a specific danger to children . Bryant took this strategy as a crusade , delivering speeches that intoned that Dade County 's passing of the ordinance " guts the law on the side of the unrighteous . If homosexuals are allowed to change the law in their favor , why not prostitutes , thieves , or murderers ? " She specifically connected homosexuals with child molesters , saying " Some of the stories I could tell you of child recruitment and child abuse by homosexuals would turn your stomach . " Bryant resented the media depiction of her as hateful , saying that her inspiration came " out of love ? not only love for God 's commandment and His word , but love for my children and yours . Yes , and even love for all sinners ? even homosexuals . "

The Save Our Children campaign produced a local television commercial showing the " wholesome entertainment " of the Orange Bowl Parade (which Bryant hosted) , contrasting that with highly sexualized images of the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade , including men in leather harnesses kissing each other , dancing drag queens , and topless women . The commercial 's announcer accused Miami 's gay community of trying to turn Miami into the " hotbed of homosexuality " that San Francisco had become . Full @-@ page newspaper ads were run in The Miami Herald , showing collections of headlines announcing teachers having sex with their students , children in prostitution rings , and homosexuals involved with youth organizations , followed by the question " Are all homosexuals nice ? ... There is no ' human right ' to corrupt our children . "

Though Miami was not the first community to overturn a sexual orientation civil rights law , the Save Our Children campaign became a national political cause . Bryant became the focus of the campaign , as noted by her husband that she was the " first person with a name " to become vocal about homosexuality ; gay activists agreed , saying that other cities " haven 't had a major personality come out and create a witch hunt . People have lost sight of the issue ; the controversy has become personality oriented " . In opposition to her , Bob Kunst , who had experience as the publicist of the local municipal soccer team , the Miami Toros , was a familiar name to the local press . Kunst , however , remained determined to act as an individual , often taking opportunities to give his views to the press that were not condoned by the Dade County Coalition on the Humanistic Rights of Gays . He took the view that it was the sexually enlightened stance to pass the ordinance , and those who opposed it were uptight , including , near the end of the campaign , Florida Governor Reubin Askew . He gave interviews addressing sexual liberation for gay and straight people , in which he freely spoke about oral and anal sex .

= = = Outside help = = =

Homosexuals in Miami were not well @-@ connected or experienced enough to combat the coalition led by Bryant , so they invited two political organizers to the city : Ethan Geto from New York and Jim Foster from San Francisco , both of whom were gay . Foster and Geto faced battles not only with the Save Our Children campaign , but the disjointed and often closeted gay community in Miami . When organizations outside of Florida promoted boycotting Florida orange juice , Jack Campbell disagreed , worried that an economic backlash in the state would work against local gay men and lesbians . Ruth Shack saw the issue simply , as one of civil rights ; Geto and Foster agreed . Bob Kunst soon broke away from the campaign to promote the orange juice boycott , and his views were often printed in the newspapers to Geto 's alarm .

Save Our Children also received help from outside the area . North Carolina senator Jesse Helms offered his staff and funding from the Congressional Club , and wrote in his column that he was proud of Bryant : " I have pledged my full support to her ... She is fighting for decency and morality in America ? and that makes her , in my book , an all @-@ American lady " . Pastor Jerry Falwell from Lynchburg , Virginia lent his support during visits and with the appearance of B. Larry Coy , who served as a marriage counselor to Bryant and Green . Coy and Green took over management of Bryant 's ministries .

Two months before the referendum vote , Bob Green , speaking for Bryant , vowed to lead her cause in all cities in the United States that protected sexual orientation from discrimination , saying that gay activists waged a " disguised attack on God " , and Bryant would " lead such a crusade to stop it as this country has not seen before " . As information was distributed against the referendum , as much literature was spread expressing local dissatisfaction with Bryant . T @-@ shirts and campaign buttons were produced , showing " Anita Bryant Sucks Oranges " and " Squeeze a fruit for Anita " .

= = = Media = = =

According to Florida Atlantic University Communications professor Fred Fejes , mainstream newspapers and magazines in the 1970s were hesitant to cover the issues of homosexuality or Christian fundamentalism in detail . Media prided themselves on objective reporting without Biblical judgment and at the same time , reporting was a homophobic profession that suppressed openly gay reporters and rarely addressed topics involving homosexuality . As a result , during the 1970s fundamentalist Christians began to develop broadcasting over radio and television in the forms of The 700 Club run by Pat Robertson , PTL Club hosted by Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker , and Jerry Falwell 's Old Time Gospel Hour . These shows originated as praise and worship @-@ oriented , but slowly incorporated political themes interspersed with messages of Christian faith . Bryant 's appearances on the 700 Club and the PTL Club netted the Save Our Children campaign \$ 25 @,@ 000 in donations , and assured her a position as a national spokesperson for traditional Christian values . However , when addressing a secular audience , Bryant was not as successful . During debates with Kunst and Shack she rarely made points that went beyond Bible quotes , and prayed when pressed to provide statistics on homosexuals as child molesters . At another appearance , she broke into " The Battle Hymn of the Republic " to take up time after she had read a pre @-@ written statement . As California was experiencing a drought , Bryant connected it to their tolerance of liberals and homosexuals , and suggested that other morality laws should be enforced , such as those against adultery and cohabitation out of wedlock . Mike Thompson and Robert Brake soon restricted her to primarily religious shows .

At the same time , the gay community promoted their causes using specialty magazines and newspapers . The Advocate , a bi @-@ weekly magazine , dedicated every issue starting in April 1977 to raising awareness of the battle taking place in Miami . It was run by David Goodstein , a friend of Jim Foster 's who had worked with Foster to create the first gay Democratic club in the U.S. in the Alice B. Toklas Memorial Democratic Club . Goodstein warned that the fight would not end in Miami if the gay community lost , as did the local gay @-@ focus newspapers of Boston 's Gay Community News and San Francisco 's Bay Area Reporter . Goodstein also suggested Bryant 's

primary motivation in her actions was furthering her career , or the beginning of " an organized conspiracy to turn (gays) into America 's scapegoats " .

Bryant 's star power and her extreme views were highlighted in national news stories . Mainstream news outlets such as The New York Times , Associated Press and Washington Post reported weekly updates on campaign progress , with smaller local newspapers across the country weighing in their editorial opinions on which side should prevail . Bryant appeared on Good Morning America and The Phil Donahue Show . Her tone and accusations united gay men and lesbians in cities all over the U.S. In the weeks before the vote , almost \$ 55 @,@ 000 was raised outside of Florida to oppose Save Our Children . Foreshadowing the effectiveness of the Save Our Children campaign , on April 13 , 1977 , the Florida Legislature voted not to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) , to the astonishment of those anticipating the vote . The connection between the ERA and ordinance 77 @-@ 4 was obvious to many . Florida Senator Dempsey Barron vocally opposed passing the ERA , fearing it would legalize same @-@ sex marriages , force people to use unisex bathrooms , and that it would harm laws meant to protect families . National Organization for Women founder and ERA proponent Betty Friedan expressed her disdain , saying " suddenly you have this red herring in Anita Bryant . Suddenly you have this wave of anti @-@ gay hysteria and then that was preempting the air waves behind the scenes " .

Washington D.C. mayor Marion Barry , Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley , President Jimmy Carter all expressed support for the ordinance . In The Miami Herald , 51 members of Dutch Parliament , ministers , and civil rights advocates from the Netherlands ran a full @-@ page ad stating " We , from the land of Anne Frank , know where prejudices and discrimination can lead to " , advising the voters of Miami @-@ Dade to uphold the ordinance to protect the rights of homosexuals . California Assemblyman Willie Brown and San Francisco sheriff Richard Hongisto campaigned respectively for Miami 's black community and law enforcement . Hongisto returned to California saying that Save Our Children made an issue of the existence of San Francisco when Thompson referred to the city as " a cesspool of perversion gone rampant " and Bob Green expressed doubt that saving San Francisco was possible . Reverend Jerry Falwell spoke at a rally as the vote neared , telling the audience , " I want to tell you we are dealing with a vile and vicious and vulgar gang . They 'd kill you as quick as look at you . "

= = = Community attitudes = = =

Foster and Geto set the public tone of the campaign battling Save Our Children and were determined not to " get down in the gutter with them " , refusing to run an ad showing Bryant in a revealing outfit she had worn while performing in 1971 , nor run commercials to point out that child molesters were primarily heterosexual . However , they also encountered difficulty when local newspapers refused to run ads that were designed to appeal to Miami 's sizable Jewish community , equating Bryant 's rhetoric with the same language that many Miami citizens faced during the Holocaust . Twenty @-@ eight of Miami 's thirty @-@ four rabbis agreed with Bryant and her campaign ? the president of the Miami Beach B 'nai B 'rith served as an officer of the Save Our Children coalition .

Miami 's Cuban community came together as never before for the campaign , taking the opportunity to register thousands of voters who had never taken part in politics in the city . Bryant actively campaigned to the Cuban community , telling them at a rally , " You came here to get away from one sin ... and it breaks my heart that if Miami becomes another Sodom and Gomorrah you may have to leave here , too . " A Cuban social worker suggested the cause was representative of an older generation of Cuban emigres , worried that their children were being lost in the depravity of Miami . Miami 's archbishop wrote a letter against the gay rights ordinance , and ordered it to be read aloud in all Catholic churches .

The response from Miami 's black community was more conflicted . The Miami Times , a widely respected black newspaper , called Bryant 's tactics " pure bullshit " and urged local blacks not to vote for anything that would discriminate against anyone . However , black audiences reacted angrily during an appearance featuring Bryant and another with Kunst and white ministers from the

Metropolitan Community Church .

Due to the intensely closeted nature of Miami 's gay community at that time , many voters who were not swayed by Bryant 's rhetoric were persuaded instead by her campaign 's point that the law was unnecessary ; they were unable to see the problem of discrimination . Unlike blacks or Cubans , gay men and lesbians were able to find jobs , although they faced dismissal upon their supervisors learning of their sexual orientation . In order to see a complaint through , they would have to remain out , and many lived in constant fear of exposure . Since the advent of second wave feminism earlier in the decade , many lesbians in the U.S. were unable to see themselves as part of the same community with gay men . Accusations from Save Our Children were almost all directed at the behavior of men . As a result , much of the response by gay men was angry and many lesbians took issue with the misogynistic tone gay men used . However , with Bryant representing a common adversary , for the first time in years , gay men and lesbians united to work together on the campaign .

= = = Election results = = =

The vote results in a special June election were overwhelming . It was the largest turnout in any special election in the history of Dade County . Voters supported repealing the gay rights ordinance by a margin of more than two to one . Bryant danced a jig when the response was announced , and told reporters " All America and all the world will hear what the people have said , and with God 's continued help , we will prevail in our fight to repeal similar laws throughout the nation which attempt to legitimize a life style that is both perverse and dangerous " . National Gay Task Force (NGTF) co @-@ director Jean O 'Leary said that the result was " all the evidence anyone could need of the extent and virulence of prejudice against lesbians and gay men in our society " .

= = Response = =

In New York City , Bella Abzug , who had introduced the first gay civil rights bill in U.S. Congress in 1974 , was awoken at 2 am by people in the street chanting her name . " It was hard not to feel sad for this crowd " , Abzug said of the several hundred people below her window . She was optimistic , telling them the defeat would develop a maturity and determination in gay activism . About the same time that evening , about 3 @,@ 000 gay men and lesbians spontaneously gathered in what had become the largest gay neighborhood in the United States ? Castro Street in San Francisco ? furious at the loss in Dade County . The crowd marched around the Castro District , chanting " We Are Your Children ! " pulling people out of gay bars to cheers . Local gay activist and future supervisor Harvey Milk led marchers through a 5 @-@ mile (8 @.@ 0 km) course through the city , careful not to stop for too long lest rioting began . He addressed the crowd with a bullhorn : " This is the power of the gay community . Anita 's going to create a national gay force " . The day after the vote , Jean O 'Leary and NGTF co @-@ director Bruce Voeller said Bryant was doing " an enormous favor " for the gay community by focusing national media attention on discrimination against them .

Several weeks later at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade , 250 @,@ 000 people attended , becoming the largest attendance at any gay event in U.S. history to that point . The largest group of the parade held large placards of Joseph Stalin , Adolf Hitler , Idi Amin , a burning cross , and Anita Bryant . Other cities also saw greater participation in Gay Pride events . People marching in New York 's Gay Pride observance shouted " No more Miamis " . Thousands of people attended events in Seattle , Boston , Cleveland , and Atlanta . Kansas City observed its first Gay Pride demonstration with 30 people . The largest gay newspaper in Australia used the Dade County vote as a warning advising gay men and lesbians there to " Get off Your Butts " . More than 300 people held a vigil at the American embassy in the Netherlands , accusing the U.S. government of failing to protect their citizens ' human rights . Four thousand marchers in Spain were dispersed by rubber bullets . Gay activists in Paris and London also warned that similar challenges could occur in their cities .

In The New York Times , conservative columnist William Safire wrote that Miami 's gay activists had been justifiably defeated : " In the eyes of the vast majority , homosexuality is an abnormality , a mental illness , even ? to use an old @-@ fashioned word ? a sin . Homosexuality is not the ' alternative lifestyle ' the gay activists profess ; it may be tolerable , even acceptable ? but not approvable . " Safire , however , tempered the column (titled " Now Ease Up , Anita ") cautioning against Bryant 's promised nationwide crusade designed to lead to further repeal of homosexuals ' " legitimate civil rights " .

A Connecticut @-@ based charity for unprivileged children named Save the Children filed an injunction in July 1977 against the Miami coalition to prevent them from using the name , and Bryant from using it as a title for a book she was writing ; Save the Children lost donations due to the confusion between the names . Briefly , the coalition was known as " Protect the Children " and focused completely on moral legislation against militant homosexuality , pornography , and images of sex and violence on television . It was renamed to Anita Bryant Ministries .

= = = Violence = = =

Two weeks after the Dade County vote , a gardener who worked for the City of San Francisco named Robert Hillsborough was stabbed 15 times in his face and chest while his attackers chanted " Faggot " at him . Hillsborough 's mother and San Francisco mayor George Moscone blamed Bryant 's rhetoric for his death and 200 @,@ 000 San Francisco residents joined a memorial demonstration for him . Mrs. Hillsborough brought a \$ 5 million civil suit against Anita Bryant claiming Hillsborough 's attackers said " Here 's one for Anita " . She said , " I didn 't think much about Anita Bryant 's campaign at first . Now that my son 's murder has happened , I think about the Bryant campaign a lot . Anyone who wants to carry on this kind of thing must be sick . My son 's blood is on her hands . " Bryant , Green , Mike Thompson and Save Our Children were dismissed from the suit in November 1977 .

Several suicides were connected to the campaign , including a Cuban gay activist in Miami named Ovidio " Herbie " Ramos , who was stunned at the vehemence against homosexuals . He and several other Cuban gay activists participated in a radio call @-@ in show to hear people say homosexuals should be deported , forced into concentration camps , or executed . Ramos shot himself a few days later after telling a friend , " I didn 't know they hated us so much " . Another Cuban gay activist named Manolo Gomez was fired from his job and severely beaten , after which he decided to leave Miami . Gay activists in New Orleans tried to discourage Bryant 's performance with the New Orleans Pops orchestra by connecting local suicides to her campaign . Bryant responded to violence saying , " It made me sad and shocked me that anyone would think I had anything to do with it , but my conscience is clear . I can 't be responsible for how people react to what happened in Dade County . My stand was not taken out of homophobia , but of love for them . "

= = = Economic retaliation = = =

The economic response to the vote was swift and decisive . Bryant worked only twice during 1977 , and lost most of her paid appearances after that . She had recently finished an album named There 's Nothing Like the Love Between a Man and a Woman ; record companies chose to not distribute it . Singer Sewing Machines canceled negotiations for a television variety show . She was replaced after ten years of hosting the Orange Bowl Parade by Rita Moreno , who was older and who had recently performed in a gay @-@ themed film , The Ritz . Bryant and Green held a press conference and claimed Bryant was being blacklisted , and that a national conspiracy was underway by the nation 's homosexuals to deprive her of her livelihood . Time magazine called the charge " unlikely " , and network executives denied gay pressure was behind their decision . Bryant 's claim of being blacklisted brought a tide of condemnation against the perceived pressure by gay organizations . Three major newspapers supported Bryant 's right to free speech . Years later , she admitted that some of the statements made about her cancellations were exaggerated for effect ,

but that the tactic worked against her , as more organizations and companies canceled her performances .

Bryant became the butt of jokes on television shows and film , even by former colleague Bob Hope . Everywhere she went in the days after the vote she was met with noisy protests : Norfolk , Virginia ? where demonstrators interrupted her presentation so forcefully she began crying ? Chicago , and dozens of other cities . The Ku Klux Klan appeared at one of Bryant 's appearances in Huntington , West Virginia claiming they were there to protect her . She attracted the largest gay demonstration in Canadian history when she appeared at a Toronto religious performance . Though she performed and spoke only at revivals and other religious shows , audiences were often less than half the expected number , and many would leave when she came on stage . In Houston Bryant was invited to perform for the Texas State Bar Association two weeks after the Dade County vote . With no cohesive political community , a few gay organizers invited people to protest her appearance at the Hyatt Regency . An organizer estimated for police that 500 people might participate , but guessed because no gay community had responded to a cause before ; police prepared for that number . However , thousands of people swarmed around the hotel chanting loudly enough to drown Bryant 's performance ; a conservative estimate of the participants ' numbers was 2 @, @ 000 . The audience inside could not hear Bryant , and at one point attorneys working with the American Civil Liberties Union walked out and joined the protesters . One of the organizers said that he had never seen so many gay people in one place before , and then made a speech thanking Bryant : " If God in his infinite wisdom had not created Anita Bryant , we would have had to invent her " . He claimed the protest had the same result in Houston as the Stonewall riots .

The Florida Citrus Commission reiterated its commitment to Bryant by stating that it " wholeheartedly support (ed) " her right to free speech , praising her " courageous leadership on a moral issue that it is tearing up religious and other organizations which have become involved " . The commission received thousands of letters both supporting Bryant 's stance and condemning the commission ; at one point the U.S. Postal Service installed bomb detection equipment for the mail collected for delivery to the Florida Citrus Commission . The publicity director for the Florida Department of Citrus told a reporter from the Associated Press , " The whole Anita thing is a mess . No matter what we decide , we 're only going to lose . I wish she would just resign . " Although in 1979 the commission extended their \$ 100 @, @ 000 annual contract with Bryant , they did not renew it in 1980 .

= = Other locations = =

In the weeks after the Dade County vote , Fort Lauderdale , Gainesville , and Palm Beach , Florida , and Austin , Texas , all rejected ordinances to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation . The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development overturned its own rules they had set earlier in the year to allow unmarried and same @-@ sex couples federally financed housing . Newsweek reported that a county government employee who had worked in her position for 15 years had been fired . An openly gay aide to future U.S. senator Paula Hawkins had also been dismissed . Despite the success of the Dade County campaign , activists worked quietly in liberal towns of Aspen , Colorado , Champaign @-@ Urbana , Illinois , Iowa City , Iowa , Wichita , Kansas , and the very liberal Eugene , Oregon to pass gay rights ordinances .

= = = Minneapolis ? St. Paul = = =

Only three weeks before the voter referendum in Dade County , a state gay rights law to protect homosexuals from discrimination in employment , public services , and housing in Minnesota was defeated . The loss was due in large part to the efforts of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis , and once more , caught gay activists completely by surprise . The Twin Cities ' gay community was much more active than Miami 's ; both Minneapolis and St. Paul had passed gay rights laws three years before . State senator Allan Spear ? the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in the U.S. ? served in St. Paul . Spear called it a " victory for bigots " on the senate

floor , then went into his office and cried . A group of guerrilla activists struck Archbishop John Roach a week after the vote by throwing a chocolate cream pie at him as he spoke to receive the National Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews .

Following the pie attack on the archbishop , two of Allan Spear 's colleagues invited Anita Bryant to come to St. Paul to overturn their three @-@ year @-@ old gay rights ordinance , and announced Save Our Children would be opening a branch there . Local activists did not think much of their chances ; a local gay political group invited gays and lesbians in Miami to live in Minneapolis ? St. Paul . In an act representing Bryant 's diminished national public profile , in October 1977 Bryant and her husband were in Des Moines , Iowa , discussing an upcoming concert at a press conference when Thom Higgins , an activist affiliated with organizers in Minneapolis , walked up to her in front of cameras and mashed a strawberry rhubarb pie in her face . Bryant was stunned and bowed her head as she and Green held hands and prayed for Higgins . She quickly quipped " At least it 's a fruit pie . " An image of her covered with the pastry appeared on the front page of The New York Times the next day .

In December 1977 , however , a petition drive was organized by Temple Baptist Church to put St. Paul 's ordinance to a city @-@ wide vote . Volunteers endured below freezing temperatures to collect more than 7 @,@ 000 signatures ; their leader , Richard Angwin , pastor of Temple Baptist reasoned , " I don 't want to live in a community that gives respect to homosexuals . " Angwin used the same strategy as the Miami campaign , tapping the resources of Bryant , Green , and their pastor in Miami . Jerry Falwell held a rally where Bryant was advertised to appear , but Green replaced her at the last minute . At the rally Angwin told the audience " Homosexuality is a murderous , horrendous , twisted act . It is a sin and a powerful , addictive lust . "

Gay activists in St. Paul also borrowed from Miami , taking Jack Campbell 's donor list and some strategies . However , similar to Miami , many gays and lesbians in St. Paul were hesitant to come out and could not make a solid case for discrimination ; most of the activists were from Minneapolis . Gay activists were also split in strategy , much like in Miami . A more mainstream group named the St. Paul Citizens for Human Rights (SPCHR) opted to treat the issue as one of civil and human rights . A more radical group of gays named the Target City Coalition ? those who had arranged the pieing of the archbishop ? saw the issue as one of sexual liberation and grabbed the most media attention by highlighting some of the more flamboyant parts of the gay community . The Advocate wrote that they were " the most stoned @-@ out , off @-@ the @-@ wall , bona @-@ fide crackpots yet to appear in the gay rights cause . " The Target City Coalition invited Bob Kunst to St. Paul , where he spoke of sexual liberation and the need to reach out to gay youth . Allan Spear , supportive ministers , and other members of SPCHR went on local television to debate the civil rights issue . Reverend Angwin stumped Spear and his cohorts by showing them an advertisement placed by the Target City Coalition in a local gay paper appealing to gay teenagers , that offered them " free prostate rubs . "

St. Paul 's special election day was April 25 , 1978 . Again , more than the usual number of voters appeared for a special election , who again , overturned the city 's gay rights ordinance by more than two to one .

= = = Eugene , Oregon = = =

The ordinance that had recently passed in Eugene was met with a different strategy of opposition . Eugene was a college town so liberal the Grateful Dead spent their summers there . A housewife named Lynne Greene rejected the Biblical rhetoric offered by Bryant and instead argued that since gays already had the protection they needed under the law further legislation was unnecessary . Since homosexuality was a chosen lifestyle , they reasoned , homosexuals were not a minority and needed no protection . Acknowledging the rights of gays would lead the law to give them rights to marry , and adopt children . Though gay rights advocates worked differently in Eugene , registering many new voters and seeing lesbians significantly working the campaign for the first time , their opposition worked steadily by canvassing neighborhoods . Most of their volunteers were members of conservative churches , and the message was similar to recent campaigns : " Keep it straight .

Our children come first , " but the Eugene campaign lacked the sensational aspect as those in Miami and St. Paul .

Once more in nearly a two to one margin , the gay rights ordinance was defeated in Eugene . A poll taken after the vote showed that liberal voters who were not gay simply declined to show up and vote , and those who opposed the ordinance were much more motivated .

= = = Wichita , Kansas = = =

Anita Bryant lent her support to the effort in Wichita , which was led by a minister named Ron Adrian . They used a similar strategy , printing a full @-@ page ad in The Wichita Eagle with newspaper clippings connecting gays to child molestation . They raised approximately \$ 50 @,@ 000 and used the network of churches , local media , and a highly organized grassroots voter registration and mobilization drive . Campaign literature focused on the aspect gay visibility , and the dangers of gays as role models for children : " There is a real danger that homosexual teachers , social workers or counselors , simply by public acknowledgment of their lifestyles , can encourage sexual deviation in children . " In comparison , the very small and closeted gay community raised only \$ 6 @,@ 000 ; the National Gay Task Force was so pessimistic they offered no assistance at all . Bryant attended a rally stating the law would give homosexuals " special rights ... and next you will have thieves , prostitutes and people who have relations with St. Bernards asking for the same rights " . The Wichita ordinance was defeated by a five to one margin leaving Ron Adrian ecstatic .

= = = Seattle , Washington = = =

Seattle in 1977 was a liberal city that had passed a gay rights ordinance in 1973 , and whose mayor had just declared a Gay Pride Week for June . When a police officer named David Estes learned of the mayor 's gesture , he decided to take action . Estes was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter @-@ day Saints , and regarded gay men as " mentally disturbed " according to his religious opinion . Estes designed a ballot measure named Initiative Thirteen that would overturn the existing gay rights ordinance , but also allowed the mere accusation of homosexuality to be the basis for dismissal from a job or eviction from a residence . Also included in the proposed law was the prospect of shifting the responsibility of enforcing Initiative Thirteen to a city department already overtaxed with investigating claims of bias against blacks and women .

Estes ' organization attracted a \$ 3 @,@ 000 donation from Anita Bryant , and her pastor traveled to Seattle to give advice on Estes ' campaign . However , where Estes planned to use the network of conservative churches in the city , many members were discouraged from working with him because he was a Mormon . The tone of the advertising for the campaign was more dire than in Miami ; ads claimed homosexuals were responsible for half the murders and suicides in major cities and half the cases of syphilis . Perhaps the most significant factor of the campaign was Estes ' co @-@ chair , a police officer named Dennis Falk . Two months before election day , Falk shot and killed a suspect who turned out to be a black , mentally retarded , young boy . The black community was furious with Falk , and transferred their anger to Initiative Thirteen .

The tone of the Seattle campaign against Initiative Thirteen was different from those in Miami and St. Paul ; it focused consistently on privacy and civil rights . Instead of educating the public about different subcultures in the gay community , they printed effective posters showing an eye peeping through a keyhole and a family living in a fishbowl . High @-@ profile liberal figures , labor unions , and other large organizations including the Church Council of Greater Seattle opposed Initiative Thirteen . David Estes did not have the enthusiasm and momentum modeled by Bryant and other communities though his campaign used many of their tactics . On election day , Initiative Thirteen was rejected by 63 % .

= = = California = = =

A day after the Dade County repeal , State Assemblyman Art Agnos , who represented portions of

San Francisco with a very high population of gays and lesbians , decided not to submit a gay civil rights bill to the state legislature , reasoning that it no longer had any support . California state senator John Briggs , from Fullerton was in the crowd with Anita Bryant the night she and Save Our Children won the Dade County vote . Greatly impressed by the voter turnout , Briggs had designs to win the race for governor of California for 1978 . When he returned from Miami , since there was no gay rights law to overturn , he proposed a law to forbid employing openly gay public school teachers and other workers . The bill , Proposition 6 ? nicknamed the Briggs Initiative ? was written so broadly that it also allowed the dismissal of any public school employee for supporting gay rights including voting against Proposition 6 , regardless of their sexual orientation . He stated , " What I am after is to remove those homosexual teachers who through word , thought or deed want to be a public homosexual , to entice young impressionable children into their lifestyle " . Briggs announced the proposition on the steps of San Francisco City Hall , after notifying several local gay organizations of his intentions . The city had experienced an influx of so many gay people in the past ten years that they counted as a quarter of its voting population .

Gay activists , newly alarmed at the threat to their rights , confronted vice president Walter Mondale at a political rally in San Francisco two weeks after the announcement of Proposition 6 . Mondale ran with Jimmy Carter in 1976 on a platform highlighting human rights as their first priority , and he was there to address the subject pertaining to Latin America . When gay activists interrupted him and demanded he address their issues , he quickly left without a response , and San Francisco Democratic organizers and liberal politicians were furious at the gay activists .

Briggs named his organization California Defend Our Children (CDOC) to avoid legal problems with the Connecticut charity , and used the same strategies as Save Our Children : collages of newspaper headlines about child molesters , and because a proposition was on the ballot regarding the death penalty in California , CDOC campaign literature urged voters to " act now to help protect your family from vicious killers and defend your children from homosexual teachers " . Briggs placed minister Lou Sheldon in charge of CDOC .

A significant difference between the community components in Miami and California was that both Los Angeles and San Francisco had very active and visible gay communities . Founder of Metropolitan Community Church Reverend Troy Perry , who began his career as a charismatic preacher in the Church of God of Prophecy but was rejected for being gay , went on a 16 @-@ day fast to raise \$ 100 @,@ 000 and succeeded . Hollywood stars Bette Midler , Lily Tomlin , and Richard Pryor came out in force for the cause , raising another \$ 100 @,@ 000 . In January 1978 Harvey Milk took office as a supervisor of San Francisco , and the first openly gay man to be elected to office in California . Briggs campaigned for the measure throughout the state , and held a series of public and televised debates with Milk who was very well received by the media , quick to quip and give print @-@ friendly comments . He often made the front page in newspapers in San Francisco with the outrageous things he said . Milk spoke to 350 @,@ 000 participants of 1978 's San Francisco Gay Freedom Day ; similar numbers were seen in Los Angeles .

The strategies of gay activists were once again split . David Goodstein and other professional gay men paid an advertising agency to outline their message , which focused on the threat to privacy and the rights of teachers . In The Advocate , Goodstein urged gays not to live up to stereotypes and let the professionals try to win . However , grassroots efforts by longtime activists such as Morris Kight , who went on a walk across the state to promote voting down the Briggs Initiative , were also effective . Women were highly visible in the campaign , raising about the same amount of money as men . However , when California law was revealed to state that anyone who gave more than \$ 50 to the campaign would have to release his or her name , most of the donations came in at \$ 49 , including one by Rock Hudson .

Due to the broad nature of the law , as it would have allowed the firing of public school employees for the way they voted or spoke their opinions in favor of gay rights , conservative Republican politicians spoke out against it . Primarily , former governor Ronald Reagan voiced his opinion , saying " Prop . 6 is not needed to protect our children . We have that legal protection now . It could be very costly to implement and has the potential for causing undue harm to people . " Reagan 's statement turned public opinion against the proposition almost overnight . Gay activists were not

optimistic in light of the record of voter turnout against them in the previous year , but they were overwhelmed to learn that on election day more than a million voters turned out to strike down the proposition .

= = Effects on Bryant = =

The members of the gay community were not the only people adversely affected by the Save Our Children campaign . Bryant and Bob Green were divorced in May 1979 , in a dispute made public through newspapers . Bryant moved to Alabama and gave a candid interview to Ladies Home Journal in 1980 where she told the details of her marriage during the campaign . She claimed she had been " married for the wrong reasons " and that she and Green had fought regularly , often considering divorce . Green became her manager and she claimed exhaustion due to being booked for every event available , making \$ 700 @, @ 000 (\$ 2910935 @. @ 67 in today 's dollars) in 1976 . She had checked herself into a Christian psychiatric facility in 1973 , and regularly saw psychiatrists and marriage counselors . Her anxiety manifested itself in chest pains , tremors , difficulty swallowing food , and a bout with 24 @-@ hour paralysis during a trip to Israel with the Falwell family . Bryant revealed she had received severe criticism from Christians following her divorce . One Canadian pastor expressed doubt to her that she had " ever met the Lord " , to her humiliation . As a result of the backlash she received from Christians , Bryant had softened her stances on gay rights : " The church needs to be more loving , unconditionally , and willing to see these people as human beings , to minister to them and try to understand . If I had it to do over , I 'd do it again , but not in the same way , " and feminism : " The church needs to wake up and find some way to cope with divorce and women 's problems that are based on Biblical principles . I believe in the long run God will vindicate me . I 've about given up on the fundamentalists , who have become so legalistic and letter @-@ bound to the Bible . "

Bryant 's career did not recover . She attempted to stage comebacks in Eureka Springs , Arkansas in 1992 , Branson , Missouri in 1994 (" People who come to my performances are hungry for the truth . They thank me for reminding them of the importance of God and country . ") , and Pigeon Forge , Tennessee in 1997 . However , at each venue her audiences dwindled and investors were non @-@ existent . By 2002 , Bryant and her second husband Charlie Dry had claimed bankruptcy in three states . As of 2006 Bryant was living in Oklahoma City .

In 2007 Bob Green counted the campaign and its aftermath as factors in strengthening his faith . The breakdown of the marriage he attributed on the pressures put on Bryant , and blamed gays and lesbians for his emotional devastation after the divorce : " Their goal was to put (Bryant) out of business and destroy her career . And that 's what they did . It 's unfair . " However , Green said he would not have done it again if he had to : " It just wasn 't worth it ... The trauma , the battling we all got caught up in . I don 't want to ever go back to that . "

= = Significance = =

= = = Moral Majority = = =

The Save Our Children campaign was an intensely focused effort by conservative forces , many of whom received inspiration from previous controversies in the 1970s . Not since the Scopes Trial about the legality of teaching evolution in public schools in 1925 had religious organizations made earnest attempts to influence politics on such a wide scale . Fred Fejes credits the Save Our Children campaign as a significant factor in the rise of conservative Christian activism , noting " This was the beginning of the culture wars " . Ruth Shack points to the connection between the rise of the New Right and the Save Our Children campaign : " Back in 1977 , there was no organized religious right per se . Anita Bryant was a pioneer . "

In the late 1970s the Reverend Jerry Falwell moved from presiding over the megachurch Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg , Virginia and hosting the Old Time Gospel Hour , to being

involved in politics . Falwell took credit for defeating the Dade County gay rights ordinance and the failure of the ERA in Florida . He developed a campaign called Clean Up America in 1977 that was a fundraising vehicle for his television show . Falwell sent letters asking for donations , which included questionnaires asking ? Do you approve of known practicing homosexuals teaching in public schools ? ? that he promised would be sent to politicians ; he distributed information about how to put together political groups to influence elections and lawmakers . In 1979 Falwell spearheaded a coalition of religious groups that included Catholics , fundamentalist Protestants , Mormons , and Orthodox Jews that he called the Moral Majority , which developed a branch dedicated to political action . Falwell declared in 1965 that he had no business in politics , but justified his involvement and the inevitable mix of religion and government with evidence that the social problems of abortion , pornography , sexual immorality , and drugs were bringing the United States to a dangerous precipice where communism would prevail over Christianity .

Falwell claimed that the grassroots efforts of the Moral Majority ? registering millions of voters , informing the public , and using the media ? had been a significant factor in the election of President Ronald Reagan . By 1982 they had a budget of \$ 1 million and millions of volunteers . Around the same time , gay men were being stricken with AIDS , desperate for money for research and services . Spokesmen for the Moral Majority connected it to God 's will , asserting the general public needed protection from " the gay plague " , and warned , " If homosexuals are not stopped they will infect the entire nation and America will be destroyed . "

= = = Gay activism = = =

Just as the Save Our Children campaign was a motivational force for conservative Christians , it was also one for gay and lesbian politics . Fejes writes , " While the Stonewall riots of 1969 may have marked the beginning of the modern lesbian and gay movement , the campaigns of 1977 and 1978 marked the emergence of a national politically self @-@ conscious lesbian and gay community " . The birth of a political life for gays and lesbians gave opportunities for national networking as Anita Bryant and those who followed her acted as a virtual lightning rod , attracting a collective anger . Thirty years after the campaign , the Stonewall Library & Archives sponsored an exhibition of the events surrounding the Save Our Children campaign and displayed it at the Broward County Public Library . According to the curator of the exhibit , Bryant is considered " the best thing to happen to the gay rights movement . She and her cohorts were so over the top that it just completely galvanized the gay rights movement " .

San Francisco author Armistead Maupin was writing his installments of individual stories in a column for the San Francisco Chronicle titled Tales of the City in 1977 . He remembered , " I know what the battle did for me : It forced me to confront my own residual self @-@ loathing and stare it down once and for all by coming out . " Maupin used the next installment of Tales to have one of his gay characters come out to his parents who , by remarkable coincidence , Maupin had previously established as Florida citrus growers .

Political activism in American gay communities was transformed by the arrival of AIDS in the early 1980s . When gay men tried in several desperate measures to follow established political channels to bring attention to a disease that afflicted the most cast out members of society only to meet silence from the government , some used direct action tactics . AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) , formed by Larry Kramer and others in 1987 , was a response not only to government forces that downplayed or ignored the seriousness of AIDS in the United States , but also to a timid gay community who were not militant enough . Their first act was to march on Wall Street in New York City to protest the high price of AZT and the lack of other drugs to address HIV . They blocked morning rush hour traffic , a civil disobedience action in which several protesters were arrested , and the fledgling organization received national news coverage for their demonstration . ACT UP inspired the establishment of direct action groups Queer Nation , Pink Panthers and the Lesbian Avengers , that concentrated on gay and lesbian rights and protection .

While Save Our Children may have been a temporary setback for the gay community in Florida , LGBTs in Florida would go on to win numerous victories in the future , from the re @-@ enactment

of the non @-@ discrimination ordinance in Miami @-@ Dade County , to the enactment of such ordinances elsewhere throughout the state , to the legalization of gay adoption to marriage equality .