



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Florida Gay Rights Activists Boycott Orange Juice, 1977-1980

Time period notes: *Although the ordinance was repealed in June 1977, Bryant wasn't fired from the Florida Citrus Commission until 1980. The boycott's mission failed, but continued until she was fired.*

January

1977

to: June 7

1980

Country: United States

Location City/State/Province: Dade County, Miami Florida

Location Description: *Dade County is the county in the southeastern part of the state of Florida and encompasses the city of Miami.*

Goals:

Uphold the Dade County ordinance to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination.

Discredit Bryant's Save Our Children organization and curtail their goals.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 072. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods › Supporters refused to drink Florida Orange Juice

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 072. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods › Supporters refused to drink Florida Orange Juice

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 072. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods › Supporters refused to drink Florida Orange Juice

Methods in 4th segment:

- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 072. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods › Supporters refused to drink Florida Orange Juice

Methods in 5th segment:

- 072. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods › Supporters refused to drink Florida Orange Juice

Methods in 6th segment:

- 072. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods › Supporters refused to drink Florida Orange Juice

Notes on Methods:

The primary method of nonviolent action was a non-consumption of boycotted goods. While prominent gay rights activists advocated on behalf of the boycott, there are few recorded public speeches and official statements.

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- gay rights activists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Jack Campbell, Bob Basker, and Bob Kunst of Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays; Ethan Geto, Jim Foster, Ruth Shack

External allies:

National LGBT movement activists, Alameda (California) County Democratic Central Committee, The San Francisco Tavern Guild

Involvement of social elites:

Publisher of The Advocate David Goodstein, Politician Harvey Milk

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- human rights activists

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- national gay rights activists

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Alameda County Democrats

Groups in 5th Segment:

- The San Francisco Tavern Guild

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: 6 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Anita Bryant, Save Our Children, Jesse Helms and the Congressional Club, Pastor Jerry Falwell, Bob Green

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Not known

Repressive Violence:

Not known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

1 point out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The legal ordinance was repealed, marking a large failure of the boycott to achieve goals. However, the campaign succeeded in getting Anita Bryant fired from the Florida Citrus Commission. Then later in 1998, Dade County passed a new gay and lesbian rights ordinance and it was unable to be overturned.

Boycotts were a popular method of nonviolent action during the 1960s and 1970s, highlighted by the Montgomery bus boycotts during the mid 1950s and the California grape boycott in 1965, that stood in solidarity with Filipino farm workers. Most boycotts in the 1970s worked to affect institutional or policy change, and such was the nature of the LGBT movement's orange juice boycott of 1977, which targeted Anita Bryant and the Florida Citrus Commission.

On January 18th, 1977 the Dade County Commission of Miami, Florida approved a law that would outlaw discrimination against gays and lesbians in the workplace and housing markets. A gay lobbying group named Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays, which was formed only a year before, had requested that this bill be brought before the Commission by Commissioner Ruth Shack. The lobbying group was led by gay activists Jack Campbell, Bob Basker, and Bob Kunst.

In early 1977, former American pop star and beauty pageant winner Anita Bryant began campaigning in Dade County, Florida to repeal the local ordinance. She formed the group Save Our Children in 1977 and led an aggressive campaign to amass votes on a public petition for the repeal of the ordinance. As the President of Save Our Children, Anita Bryant claimed that "known practicing homosexuals" were converting children to homosexuality. Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays and Save Our Children were the key actors in the boycott.

Having gained popularity in the United States for her chart topping songs, Anita Bryant had been previously hired by the Florida

Citrus Commission in 1969 as their spokeswoman. Bryant used her celebrity to garner support for Save Our Children, the primary purpose of which was to repeal the ordinance that protected gay and lesbian residents of Dade County from housing and employment discrimination based on their sexuality. Save Our Children was a personal project of Bryant's, but in the November of 1977 the Florida Citrus Commission openly supported her campaign.

The Florida Citrus Commission's public support of Save Our Children is what catalyzed the 1977 boycott. National human rights advocates and gay rights activists supported the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays in a nationwide boycott of consumer goods, targeted at Florida orange juice. Some gay rights activists were concerned that the boycott could threaten Anita Bryant's career when she had been acting as a private citizen. Another faction of the protesters were concerned with the possibility that Bryant would be portrayed as a political martyr to the Christian right. However, these qualms seemed to have dissipated when the Citrus Commission threw its weight behind the issue.

The boycott was arranged by a partnership between the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays and the national LGBTQ movement. It was bolstered by support from the iconic gay activist and politician Harvey Milk as well as the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee and the San Francisco Tavern Guild. The goals of the boycott were to bring national attention to the ordinance and exert pressure on the area to uphold the ordinance. The movement was fortified by Milk's recognition and the backing of columnists from the Bay Area Reporter and the gay rights paper The Advocate, who appealed to people's patriotism by drawing connections between the Florida orange juice boycott and the Boston Tea Party.

Both private citizens and organizations condemned the Florida Citrus Commission. The San Francisco Tavern Guild and many gay bars and restaurants across the country stopped purchasing Florida orange juice. Gay bars participated in the boycott by serving modified screwdrivers with apple juice instead of orange juice, named the "Anita Bryant." Furthermore, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists unanimously voted "to deny their services and talents to Bryant." As a symbol of solidarity, activists wore flags and pins that mocked Bryant and the Florida Citrus Commission. In one of the more aggressive moves by the gay rights activists, they threw a pie in the face of Bryant during an event she attended in Iowa.

While organizations that supported the gay rights movement mobilized support for the boycott, the opposition used its own connections to further support for the message of Save Our Children. Newspapers such as the Miami Herald ran recycled stories from previous years about gay sex crimes. From the pulpits on Sunday mornings, local priests urged their congregations to take political action by voting for the repeal of the ordinance. Despite the efforts of the nationwide boycott of Florida orange juice, in June 1977 residents of Dade County repealed the ordinance by a large majority with a margin of 69 to 31.

While this was a massive loss for gay rights activists, in 1980 they celebrated when Bryant's rapidly diminishing career was highlighted by her firing from the Florida Citrus Commission. Save Our Children's popularity sank with that of Anita Bryant. While gay activists were happy with the fact that Bryant's national fame was permanently damaged, their primary goal of upholding the ordinance had failed. Furthermore, the Florida Citrus Commission never formally retracted its support for Bryant and would go on to support openly homophobic spokespeople in the future.

In 1998, Dade County passed a new gay and lesbian rights ordinance that remains until this day, which conservative Christian groups attempted and failed to repeal in 2002.

Research Notes

Influences:

The orange juice boycott was greatly influenced by the nationwide gay rights movement because it garnered considerable support and grew much more quickly because of the infrastructure provided by the national campaign. The film industry helped the boycott by condemning Anita Bryant and multiple democratic committees, primarily the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee, also gave recognition and support to the campaign.

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