

“Burn It Down”
How the Forces of “Tolerance” and “Diversity” Used Technology and Media to Demonize a Family Pizza Shop—and Change the Culture

Paul Kengor Ph.D.

On March 31, 2015, a young girl working the counter at Memories Pizza, a tiny family-owned shop in Walkerton, Indiana, about 20 miles from South Bend, was asked by a TV reporter if her family supported a bill by the Indiana legislature and Governor Mike Pence to protect the religious liberty of Christian business owners. Legislators in the state had created their version of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act [RFRA], a bill that had enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support several years earlier in the U.S. Congress, championed by legislators as diverse as Senator Rick Santorum and Senator Hillary Clinton, and which had been emulated in upwards of 18 other states around the nation. The Indiana legislators, like those in many other states, deemed their action necessary to prevent Christian business owners from being forced to provide services to same-sex wedding ceremonies that violated their religious beliefs. Their fears were more than justified, given that florists and bakers and photographers and caterers and other service providers in states all around the nation, from New Mexico to Washington state, from Oregon to New York, from Colorado to Massachusetts, were being sued, fined, picketed, boycotted, demonized, harassed, hauled before state “human rights” commissions, shut down, and even occasionally threatened with imprisonment for refusing to service same-sex-wedding ceremonies that they believed violated their religious convictions. These service providers were targeted by gay-rights activists and leftists generally, including liberal politicians, bureaucrats, and judges. They needed protection. Indiana was among the states that stepped forward with a bill intended to help.

Unfortunately, gay-rights groups and countless liberals did not view the Indiana bill this way. They were convinced, or at least convinced themselves, that the bill was a vile display of discrimination, bigotry, “homophobia,” and “hate.” That was how they framed it. And they would seize every means of technology and media, especially social media, to characterize the bill as such—and to characterize supporters of the bill as such, including those whom the bill was intended to protect, such as the owners of little Memories Pizza.

For a local news reporter in Indiana, this was obviously a story of interest that demanded coverage and presentation of both sides. And so, Alyssa Marino, a reporter from nearby WBND-TV, dropped in on Memories Pizza with a microphone and camera crew to get the take of the O’Connor family on the effort by the legislature to protect their religious freedom. The shop seemed a good place: This was a rural mom-and-pop establishment filled with religious symbols and messages, from crucifixes on the wall to a laminated statement explaining to customers that the owners and staff started every day gathered in prayer for their work, their business, and their family. The shop even featured a prayer-suggestion box. “Every day before we open the store, we gather and pray together,” reads a sign posted in the shop, near another declaring, “Glorify the Lord.” “If there is something you would like us to pray for,” requests a note on the counter, “just write it down and drop it in the box.”¹

And now, it was March 31, Year of the Lord, 2015. Ironically, it was Holy Week. And this would soon be a Holy Week that the O’Connor family would never forget. The family’s faith would be put on trial unlike ever before.

The girl at the counter met by the reporter was Crystal, daughter of the owners. She cheerfully shared her opinion, no doubt excited about a chance to talk to a TV reporter. How naïve she was. Crystal could not imagine the fire and brimstone about to be unleashed upon the

¹ Justin Wm. Moyer, “Indiana Pizza Shop Won’t Cater Gay Wedding,” *Washington Post*, April 2, 2015.

Christian business by the same-sex-marriage forces claiming to champion “tolerance” and “diversity.” The camera captured her words, which then went to the TV studio to be edited for broadcast. With that, all hell was poised to break loose not only in Walkerton, Indiana, but in the Midwest and nationwide.

Alyssa Marino filed her story, which aired on the evening news on WBND-TV, channel ABC 57. The entire story was less than three minutes long, a remarkably brief spot given the sustained tirade it uncorked. (Here is the link to the original story, along with an embedded video of the news report: <http://www.abc57.com/story/28681598/rfra-first-business-to-publicly-deny-same-sex-service>.)

In times past, the broadcast of the story on the evening news would have largely ended there, but not in our modern media-computer age. The broadcast was posted online, which made it instantly available to the widest masses, including those who saw the clip as a vehicle to pounce upon a tiny little pizza shop in Walkerton, Indiana, and to turn the O’Connor family into poster children for a national campaign against “homophobia” and “hate.”

The story was immediately placed at the station’s website, allowing it to go viral and to be accessed by the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity” that utterly refused to tolerate the position of this family and their business and their faith. Here is the entirety of the story as it was posted online at 10:40 p.m. Eastern time that evening:

WALKERTON, Ind. - A small-town pizza shop is saying they agree with Governor Pence and the signing of the controversial Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The O'Connor family, who owns Memories Pizza, says they have a right to believe in their religion and protect those ideals.

“If a gay couple came in and wanted us to provide pizzas for their wedding, we would

have to say no,” says Crystal O’Connor of Memories Pizza.

She and her family are standing firm in their beliefs.

The O’Connors have owned Memories Pizza in Walkerton for 9 years.

It’s a small-town business, with small-town ideals.

“We are a Christian establishment,” says O’Connor.

The O’Connor family prides themselves in owning a business that reflects their religious beliefs.

“We’re not discriminating against anyone, that’s just our belief and anyone has the right to believe in anything,” says O’Connor.

So, when Governor Pence signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act into law, the family was not disappointed.

“We definitely agree with the bill,” says O’Connor.

When ABC 57 asked O’Connor about the negative backlash the bill has been getting for being a discriminatory piece of legislation, she says that’s simply not true.

“I do not think it’s targeting gays. I don’t think it’s discrimination,” says O’Connor.

“It’s supposed to help people that have a religious belief.”

O’Connor says because she’s a Christian, she and her family don’t support a gay marriage and that is their right.

Kevin O’Connor, Crystal’s father, says he believes the negative backlash the bill and its supporters are getting isn’t fair.

“That lifestyle is something they choose. I choose to be heterosexual. They choose to be homosexual. Why should I be beat over the head to go along with something they choose?” says Kevin O’Connor.

The O'Connor family told ABC 57 news that if a gay couple or a couple belonging to another religion came in to the restaurant to eat, they would never deny them service.

The O'Connors say they just don't agree with gay marriages and wouldn't cater them if asked to.²

That was the totality of the online print story that accompanied the short video clip of the story broadcast on the evening news. It was merely 339 words, but it was enough. It was more than enough.

"They do not deserve respect."

A flood of readers' comments materialized at the news station's website. The first was from a man named Jim O'Keefe, who blasted the O'Connor family for "using religion as a reason to hate." He was followed by a man named Greg Nee, self-identified with a public-school district, who denounced the O'Connor family for "Putting Religion before the Constitution."

Here we should pause to underscore a key distinction or two. First, despite what Greg Nee's comment suggested, religious freedom exists in the U.S. Constitution. In fact, the literal first words of the First Amendment of the Bill of the Rights of the U.S. Constitution are explicitly about protecting religious freedom. The American founders deemed this utterly essential. There was literally nothing more sacred to them than freedom of religion. America was founded, of course, by people seeking religious freedom and protection. Conversely, there certainly has never been any mention of same-sex marriage in the Constitution; it was never anywhere remotely in the minds of the founders. At this point, in March 2015, Justice Anthony

² ABC57 Web site, "RFRA: Michiana Business Wouldn't Cater a Gay Wedding," www.abc57.com, <http://www.abc57.com/story/28681598/rfra-first-business-to-publicly-deny-same-sex-service> (accessed December 29, 2015).

Kennedy and the U.S. Supreme Court’s liberals had not yet invented a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, as they would on June 26, 2015, with the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision.

Moreover, note that Crystal O’Connor told WBND-TV that she and her family would serve a “gay couple” at the restaurant; they simply would prefer to not be forced to cater a same-sex wedding. “The O’Connor family told ABC 57 news that if a gay couple or a couple belonging to another religion came in to the restaurant to eat, they would never deny them service,” the news report had carefully noted. “The O’Connors say they just don't agree with gay marriages and wouldn’t cater them if asked to.” The family drew the line with a same-sex-wedding ceremony, seeing it as an unequivocal violation of their Christian faith. That was something they could not do. They would serve homosexuals, even homosexual couples, but not a homosexual wedding.

This would seem reasonable, and certainly an understandable extension of the family’s faith and the nearly 240-year-old First Amendment’s freedom of religion. Once upon a time in America, no one would have batted an eye. But sadly, this was neither reasonable nor satisfactory to the modern forces of “tolerance” and “diversity” in a new and fundamentally transformed American culture. The position of the O’Connor family was deemed intolerable and unacceptable. The family had to be punished and punished hard. The O’Connors would be forced by the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity” to service a same-sex wedding against their will and against their religious beliefs. Period.

There would be no tolerance here. “Diversity” apparently has its limits.

In response, opponents of Memories Pizza rapidly rallied on social media and the web. They raged. As *USA Today* put it, “The comments [from the O’Connor family] resulted in a

flood of threats against the business on Yelp and Twitter.”³ *USA Today* listed a few examples from Twitter. Here are merely two:

- “I have nothing but contempt for homophobic views,” said a woman named Faine Greenwood. “They [the O’Connors] do not deserve respect.”
- “I don’t eat pizza topped with hate,” proclaimed another woman who identified herself by the name “DogLovers4Hillary.”

For the record, and to reemphasize, at no point did Memories ever actually refuse to cater a same-sex wedding. Its owners never actually refused service to anyone, nor ever submitted a claim under Indiana’s religious freedom bill. They had never been asked to cater a same-sex wedding.

But nonetheless, the family expressed a view that the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity” refused to tolerate. Gay-rights groups and liberal allies thus sprang into action.

It was on March 31 that the story about Memories Pizza went live online. Instantly, the Yelp page for Memories Pizza started receiving numerous fraudulent and threatening reviews. One “reviewer” of the restaurant chimed in that Memories Pizza serves an “intolerance special with toppings of hate, bigotry, stupidity, and old fashioned beliefs.” This reviewer was a man named “Jarrett J.,” who is located in Sydney, Australia. Jarrett obviously had never met the O’Connor family nor tried their pizza or strolled into their shop, but of course, he need not do so: Jarrett J. could smell “hate, bigotry, stupidity, and old fashioned beliefs” halfway across the globe, thanks to technology.⁴ And Memories was topped with it.

Jarrett’s “review” was mild compared to thousands of others too vitriolic and profane to repeat here. The vast majority of “reviews” were fraudulent, posted by liars who had never once

³ Mary Bowerman, “Indiana Pizza Shop that Won’t Cater Gay Weddings to Close,” *USA Today*, April 2, 2015.

⁴ Kendall Breitman, “Yelp Reviewers Rip Indiana Pizza Shop that Endorsed ‘Religious Freedom’ Law,” *Politico.com*, April 2, 2015.

darkened the door of Memories Pizza. Their goal was merely to hurt the image of the family and the business. One imposter created a fake internet site for Memories Pizza with vicious content panning the pizza-makers and their religious beliefs. The irony of these people and their behavior is breathtaking in their apparent inability to perceive the obvious hypocrisy: They accused Memories Pizza of the very hate that they harbored and unleashed in spades. They effused a torrent of true, unquestioned, indisputable, boiling, steaming, palpable, tangible, oozing hate.

And not surprisingly, in some cases, their hatred began to grow violent.

One such manifestation came from a local high school women's golf coach in Concord, Indiana. The coach, a Ms. Jess Dooley, sent a tweet threatening to burn Memories Pizza to the ground, typing: "Who's going to Walkerton, IN to burn down #memoriespizza w me?"

Yes, time to burn it down.

The mob was on. All that was lacking were the torches. The secular-progressive crusaders dashed to the doors of the little pizza shop. They were ready to explode. They were ready to squash these religious-reprobate "haters" at Memories Pizza—all in the name of "tolerance," of course.

The O'Connor family wisely fled the scene. They got out of Dodge. They promptly not only closed the shop's door the very next day after the news report, but went into hiding, in fear for their lives amid the threats from the forces of "tolerance" and "diversity."

Crystal O'Connor, who had unexpectedly become an ignominious family spokeswoman of sorts, was contacted on April 1 by a reporter from *The Blaze*. She told *The Blaze* that the restaurant owners were "in hiding basically, staying in the house." She said: "I don't know if we will re-open, or if we can, if it's safe to re-open."⁵

⁵ Eric Ritz, "After Indiana Pizzeria Said They Wouldn't Cater Gay Weddings, the Backlash Was So Extreme It May Not Be Safe to Re-Open," *The Blaze* Web site, April 2, 2015.

They had good reason to hide at the Christian-owned business. Hoisting the rainbow flag, the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity” were demanding a white flag of surrender from Memories Pizza and like-minded religious opponents of same-sex marriage. The message was clear: *You either serve a same-sex ceremony, or you go out of business.*

Columnist Robert Knight watched the episode and chronicled it in horror. “To the cheers of the mob, the family went into hiding,” recorded Knight. “It took a day or two, but the intolerant Left managed to turn a tiny, Christian, family-owned business pizza parlor in Indiana into a useful ‘face of hate.’” It was, said Knight, another “scalp on the wall” of the new “tolerance,” and also a “nice piece of work, during Holy Week.” For Holy Week, said Knight, the “hounds of hell” were unleashed upon the O’Connor family for its unacceptable beliefs—so judged by the secular fundamentalists.⁶

For the Left, Memories Pizza would be made into a national poster boy for what happens to those who dare to oppose the gay-marriage juggernaut. All such opponents would be smeared and destroyed—all in the name of “tolerance,” naturally.⁷

“Here’s hoping you go out of business, you bigot.”

It would not be so bad if the campaign against Memories Pizza was an isolated incident orchestrated by a band of fanatics or neo-pagans fashioning some modern golden calf for Baal somewhere in the woods of northern Indiana. Regrettably, however, this kind of harassment has

⁶ Robert Knight, “Pagan Fury Against a Pizza Parlor,” *Whistleblower* magazine, May 2015, 14-15.

⁷ After Memories closed its doors on April 1, a “GoFundMe” page was set up by Lawrence Billy Jones III, a contributor for *The Blaze*, to raise money to support the family. The GoFundMe page shut down after raising \$842,592. (Noah Rayman, “Indiana’s ‘No-Gay Wedding’ Pizza Parlor Raises \$842,592 from Supporters,” *Time*, April 4, 2015.) On April 9, Memories reopened. Several months later, on September 29, news broke that someone named Robin Trevino, a “homosexual sketch comic,” purchased several pizzas from Memories in order to serve them at a wedding reception in an attempt to trick the pizzeria into “catering” his gay wedding. On October 1, Kevin O’Connor, owner of Memories, reacted to the news about Trevino’s prank: “I don’t know if it was to try and make us look stupid or make themselves look stupid ... because the reaction I’ve gotten is people just calling them idiots, basically.... But if they got a kick out of it, that’s okay. It doesn’t hurt me.” (Travis Weber, “How the Indiana Pizza Shop Responded After Being Tricked Into ‘Catering’ a Gay Wedding,” *The Daily Signal*, October 16, 2015.)

become standard fare for the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity.” This is how they treat those who dare to disagree with their views, and specifically with their completely novel and completely unprecedented reconfigurations and redefinitions of marriage—new forms of marriage totally untested in the multi-millennial-old history of the Judeo-Christian world. I could fill this paper with examples of similar smear campaigns, but I will give merely a few more cases.

The American left for several years now has been viciously targeting those who dare to oppose the so-called “LGBT” [lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender] agenda, especially on same-sex marriage—and have done so with media and technology as their chosen handmaidens. Whether groups like Media Matters or MoveOn.org or any number of left-wing websites and publications and media outlets, the American Left has been merciless in thoroughly demonizing conscientious objectors. Progressives do not politely disagree, or agree that people can disagree; no, they constantly caricature dissenters as cretins with no possible good intentions or reasoning for their positions. Those who stand for traditional marriage as people have understood it since the literal dawn of humanity are framed as awful people, as contemptible creatures.

When an Oregon couple, the Kleins, two bakers, declined to make a wedding cake for two members of the same sex, the apostles of “tolerance” and “diversity” went screaming mad, attacking the couple with profanities and threatening lawsuits, with no respect at all for the couples’ religious freedom. “You stupid bible thumping, hypocritical b---ch,” wrote one person to Melissa Klein, owner of “Sweet Cakes by Melissa.” “I hope your kids get really, really, sick and you go out of business.” Another self-professing champion of compassion added: “Here’s hoping you go out of business, you bigot. Enjoy hell.”⁸

⁸ Billy Hallowell, “Stupid, Bible-Thumping B**ch,” *The Blaze* Web site, May 31, 2013.

This person got his wish. The Kleins have been forced out of business. Aaron Klein now drives a garbage truck to provide income for his family. The Klein children are harassed. Melissa has gone underground to clandestinely make her sweets. The Kleins were mere family bakers who pleaded the right not to be compelled by Caesar to make a cake for a same-sex ceremony.⁹

Worse, cases like the Kleins are legion. Cynthia and Robert Gifford, a Christian family that owns a barn in New York but declined to rent it to a homosexual couple for a wedding ceremony, because such an arrangement violates the family's religious beliefs, were fined \$13,000.¹⁰ Elaine Photography in New Mexico, which pleaded with liberals not to be compelled by the state to photograph a same-sex wedding, was sued by gay-marriage advocates and was prosecuted by the state. It was not well enough for gay-marriage activists to simply find another photographer and leave Elaine Photography alone. A liberal judge on the New Mexico high court told the husband-and-wife team at Elaine Photography that being coerced to serve a homosexual wedding against their will was the "price of citizenship" in the new America.

Nor was the same mercy granted to Jack Phillips, a baker in Colorado, who faced possible imprisonment for conscientiously declining a homosexual ceremony. The same harassment and state fiat is being applied to florists and bakers and photographers in any number of states who beg not to service same-sex events because such services contravene their religious principles.

Of course, there is also the popular example of the Chick-fil-A franchise, which is so loyal to its Christian beliefs that it is closed on Sundays—foregoing sizable profits in the process. It has been targeted by gay-marriage brigades, especially via social media. What is the "sin" of this business? Chick-fil-A's owner dared to say that he opposed redefining his God's teachings

⁹ Claire Healey, "Bakery Bullies," *The American Spectator*, October 12, 2013.

¹⁰ Jessica Chasmar, "N.Y. Farm Owners Fined \$13,000 for Refusing to Host Lesbian Wedding," *Washington Times*, August 19, 2014.

on marriage. When the owner and founder, S. Truett Cathy, a World War II veteran, died at age 93 in September 2014, the self-anointed liberal champions of “tolerance” flocked to websites to insist he was going to hell for being a bigoted “homophobe” and “Christian trash-bag.” “Let US All Celebrate One LESS Bigot on the Planet,” one gay-marriage supporter wrote. Another added: “Bigotry is bigotry. He can RIH [Rest in Hell].”¹¹

Chick-fil-A has been a target of leftist rage: boycotts, protests, homosexual “kiss-ins” inside the restaurant, and even mayors of big cities trying to ban the restaurant and describing its product as “hate chicken.” Why? Simply because the CEO voiced an opinion personally not supporting same-sex marriage, which not long ago was the position of Bill and Hillary Clinton and the entire Democratic Party.

I could go on and on with examples of pro-homosexual-marriage intolerance against religious people who believe they have no right to define something that their God ordained, or who simply disagree with gay marriage for whatever reason. Consider the well-publicized situations with Mozilla, or ESPN’s Craig James, or the owner of Barilla pasta, or the governor of Arizona, etc., etc., etc.¹²

And most important from the perspective of this paper and the theme of this Center for Vision & Values conference is that the forces mobilized into this kind of action are mobilized and facilitated by technology and media, especially computer-web-social media.

In some cases, this has manifested itself in an especially dangerous way. Family-based organizations opposing the redefinition of marriage—and arguing that children need both a mom and a dad—are being derided as “hate groups.” In fact, in many such cases, when Googling the name of certain pro-family groups, the first words that follow in the Google search box is “hate

¹¹ See: Paul Kengor, “Death of a Hell-Destined Homophobe,” *The American Spectator*, September 10, 2014.

¹² See my summary in Paul Kengor, “The Left’s Evolving Hierarchy of Rights,” *The Center for Vision & Values*, April 4, 2014.

group,” instantly placing the group in a category once reserved for the likes of the Ku Klux Klan. This has prompted some pro-gay-marriage individuals to moments of major violence.

A tragic example happened with Family Research Council, the longtime leading conservative-traditional family group based in Washington, D.C. Family Research Council has been tagged as a “hate group” by left-wing activists for opposing same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, and for generally holding to traditional views of marriage, family, and sexuality. I personally know people at Family Research Council. I have known them for years. I have read their research, presented my own research there, and written letters of recommendations for students who wanted to intern or work there. I have had my own disagreements with them, which we exchanged amicably, including on certain matters of theology. They are good-hearted, standard social conservatives with classic views on family and marriage. Their social positions are not any different from where the Democratic Party stood for over a century. But once liberals—led by the reckless Southern Poverty Law Center—labeled the Family Research Council a “hate group,” the charge went viral, and then, one fateful day in August 2012, an enraged gay-rights activist headed for the group’s offices with an arsenal of bullets and weapons poorly concealed in Chick-fil-A bags (yes, no kidding). This radical leftist was poised to murder every staff member of Family Research Council. He was bent on massacring them. He was stopped only by an alert security guard, who was shot and injured.¹³

This left-wing gay activist, convinced that Family Research Council was promulgating “hate,” was prompted to an act of attempted mass murder. He got his incriminating information online.

Needless to say, the fears of the folks at Memories Pizza were justified.

¹³ See: Jeffrey Lord, “Liberal Group Cited in Terrorism Case,” *The American Spectator*, May 2, 2013.

In the name of “tolerance”—“repressive tolerance”

My main point with this paper is to illustrate how stories like Memories Pizza and others go viral via social media, making a minor story a huge one, making a mountain out of a mole-hill, and becoming modern “morality” tales for the crusading Left to change the culture. Memories Pizza is one of the better albeit examples of the crass impact of contemporary technology and social media on the wider culture.

But I would like to wrap up this paper with a second point not irrelevant to this discussion. It pertains to the culture and my repeated rhetorical emphasis in this paper on the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity.” And here, I will bring in the person of Herbert Marcuse, the leading cultural Marxist from the 1960s whose inane left-wing ideas are now amazingly dominant among the culture today, specifically through the academic-university world where he had his strongest influence.

Marcuse has rightly been called the “Father of the New Left” due to his huge impact among ’60s student radicals, many of which are now tenured professors in the universities that have spawned the generation that today redefines marriage and smears those who disagree. He has been dubbed the leader of the New Left’s “academic brain trust.”¹⁴ “[Marcuse] became the guru and inspiration of the New Left in its war on education, religion, and the family in the 1960s, and its call for violence against all authority,” wrote the late Ralph de Toledano. “His leadership role in imposing Critical Theory on educational institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Brandeis, and the University of California [as well as Columbia] became one of the Frankfurt School’s most awesome successes.”¹⁵

¹⁴ See: Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism* (NY: Doubleday, 2008), 175.

¹⁵ Ralph de Toledano, *Cry Havoc! The Great American Bring-down and How it Happened* (Washington, DC: Anthem, 2006), 48.

Marcuse (pronounced “Mar-koo-zeh”) was born in Berlin in July 1898. He fought for the losing side in World War I, and then emerged to pursue graduate work. In 1922, he completed his doctoral work at the University of Freiburg. In 1924 he married Sophie Wertheim, his first of three marriages. In 1933, Marcuse joined the Institute for Social Research, i.e., the so-called Frankfurt School that pioneered cultural Marxism, but, like other Jews, was soon forced to flee Germany as Hitler took power. He first fled to Geneva with his Frankfurt School comrades and then came to the United States, compliments of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Columbia University cohort spearheaded by professor John Dewey.

Marcuse found a home in American academia. There to roll out the red carpet for Marcuse and his cohort was Columbia University, where they began to really spread their wings and lay the foundation for a Freudian-based Marxist cultural revolution. As the leading voice and face of the Frankfurt School, Marcuse produced what some have called an “eroticized Marx,” most notably in his 1955 work, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. The book came just in time to be digested among faculty intellectuals and regurgitated for mass consumption by students arriving on campuses in the tumultuous ’60s. It became must-reading in many college classrooms. Ralph de Toledano dubbed it “the Bible of the New Left movement,” inspiring Marxist rabble-rouser Angela Davis, hippie leader Abbie Hoffman, the Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and (to a degree) even the Weathermen, home of the likes of Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, and Mark Rudd and gang.

There is much more that could be said here about Marcuse, but my interest in this paper is this aspect of Marcuse’s thinking:

To the university students of the 1960s, Marcuse heralded what he curiously called “liberating tolerance,” or “repressive tolerance.” The Frankfurt School neo-Marxist/cultural

Marxist urged “intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.”¹⁶

In short, this was a stark foreshadowing of the *selective tolerance* we see incessantly from the political Left today, which trumpets “tolerance” loudly and proudly, but, in truth, only tolerates ideas it likes. This, of course, is not genuine tolerance. It takes no great effort to tolerate only things you want. What today’s liberals/progressives really mean when they speak of “tolerance” is a highly selective tolerance. That is precisely what Marcuse supported. He urged a withdrawal of toleration of speech for groups that opposed the Left and its goals. That phony tolerance also translates into the Left’s phony claims of “diversity” and “multiculturalism,” which only extend to certain approved categories of race, gender, and sexual orientation, and not to (say) undesired religious convictions. The ultimate stage for this insanity is the modern university, where all of these awful Marcusean-progressive-liberal-leftist contradictions are on display at every moment. These close-minded and (ironically) *intolerant* tactics have been a tremendous asset for the culture-changers, especially those who steamroll and silence the “intolerants” who dare to disagree with them on issues like same-sex marriage.

For today’s liberals/progressives, the likes of “marriage rights”—their new term for same-sex marriage—suddenly rise superior to ancient rights rooted in Natural Law and Biblical law, certainly religious rights and property rights. We see this in the examples of intolerance by gay-marriage proponents listed above. In all these cases, there is one commonality: liberals/progressives angrily disregard the religious rights and property rights that they steamroll in the name of gay marriage. Religious rights and property rights are subjugated to a kind of liberal/progressive gulag. They are deemed bottom-of-the-barrel, and in no way nearly as

¹⁶ See: Daniel J. Flynn, “The Sixties’ Road to Rutgers and Beyond,” *The American Spectator*, May 9, 2014; Toledano, *Cry Havoc!*, 151-53, 159, 188, and 191; and also Goldberg’s *Liberal Fascism*.

important or even worthy of consideration. In fact, those rights are held in contempt; they are bottom-dwellers. For religious believers who disagree, too bad. Progressives will see them in court.

This tolerance of only their own ideas of marriage (and of certain new “rights”) and their refusal to tolerate the millennia-old standard held by others, is something that Herbert Marcuse would have not only endorsed but advised.¹⁷ Here again, Marcuse and the neo-Marxists were way ahead of their time. Of course, it is downright bizarre that those who today support natural-traditional-Biblical marriage as it has always been supported by 99.999-plus percent of every person who ever lived can somehow be derided as holding a “right-wing” position, but such is the kind of maneuvering that the Left always engages in, with its own ideas always progressing and ever-changing, and always in a more non-natural, non-traditional, non-Biblical direction.

* * *

In conclusion, the theme of this conference is how technology, social media/networks, and ideas shape modern American society and culture, particularly their impact on the Christian church and religious believers—for better or worse.

What we see here in this paper, from Memories Pizza to other examples, is how the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity” pushing for same-sex marriage (not to mention the wider agenda of the so-called “LGBT” movement) have used technology and social media/networks to shape modern American society and culture—really, to strong-arm society and culture and those who dare stand in their way. They are relentless. They can be brutal. And most of all, they can be extremely effective, thanks to that technology and their ability to wield it.

To that end, I will conclude with an anecdotal example: In May 2015 I published a book on the far left’s “takedown” of marriage and family, and how that long effort has culminated in

¹⁷ Daniel J. Flynn, “The Sixties’ Road to Rutgers and Beyond,” *The American Spectator*, May 9, 2014.

same-sex marriage as the vehicle to secure the final takedown.¹⁸ (The book sprung from my April 2015 conference paper.) I quickly learned in trying to promote the book that many of my longtime go-to allies in the conservative world—newspapers, websites, talk-radio, TV, think-tanks, organizations, etc.—did not respond to my requests to speak, write for them, do interviews, or whatever. This was unprecedented in my relationships with them. One of the individuals who had done a Q&A with me on every book I have done candidly told me that his website was not touching this issue. Why the reluctance? A friend in talk-radio told me that even conservative media is afraid of the Left and gay-marriage brigades targeting their advertisers via web and social-media campaigns. Many of them are flat-out afraid.

I was not surprised. Over the last few years, especially since President Obama’s open endorsement of same-sex marriage in May 2012, I repeatedly witnessed the incredible effectiveness of these activists anytime I wrote anything opposing their redefinition of marriage, no matter what the ideological leanings of the website. Sure, when I wrote a piece opposing the redefinition of marriage for the left-wing *The Guardian*, I expected the vitriol and personal attacks in the readers’ comments section,¹⁹ but I was shocked by the intense opposition when I wrote for conservative and religious websites. It was not unusual to encounter readers’ comments immediately lined up 10 to 1 against me even for pieces I wrote for the most conservative evangelical, Catholic, and political websites. Editors at these sites recognized this; one editor at a Catholic website told me that he had to hire writers simply to go to the readers’ comments section to take on these obviously professional activists who were clearly not regular readers, but who seemed to have been assigned to the website by some outside organization of political-

¹⁸ Paul Kengor, *Takedown: From Communists to Progressives, How the Left Has Sabotaged Family and Marriage* (Washington, DC: WND Books, 2015).

¹⁹ See the readers’ comments posted at: Paul Kengor, “My disappointment With the Supreme Court’s Same-Sex Marriage Rulings,” *The Guardian*, June 26, 2013.

cultural agitators. I have never written for the John Birch Society website, but it would not surprise me if left-wing activists were 10 to 1 against even there. They are phenomenally well organized in electronic media. It is their home and their medium. It is where they flourish. That being the case, I can say from personal knowledge that even conservative outlets like Fox News Channel shudder in trepidation at the ferocity of these forces. Fox likewise fears what the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity” will do to its advertisers. Fox executives have clearly sent up the white flag on the marriage issue.

They are as afraid as the state of Indiana and its business owners after the Religious Freedom Restoration Act fiasco in 2015. Indeed, I recently drove through the city of Indianapolis, which was targeted with vehemence by left-wing and homosexual activists after the RFRA blow-up. These activists swamped organizations like the NCAA (among others), which for years has held college basketball’s Final Four in Indianapolis. They demanded boycotts of the city and state by these organizations. As I approached the downtown area, I was struck by the largest gay-rights rainbow flag I have ever seen. It was a flag of surrender, with city officials begging the forces of “tolerance” and “diversity” not to destroy their city.

They are afraid. They have watched everything from Memories Pizza to threats against and from the NCAA and whoever and whatever else. They have learned to not dare oppose those seeking to fundamentally transform and redefine marriage, family, gender, and sexual orientation in their own image. They have a culture and country to change, and nothing and no one will deter them, including a nation’s longtime precious heritage of freedom of religion and conscience.

Beware: They will destroy you. And technology and media (particularly social media) is the vehicle of choice for their destruction. Just ask the O’Connor family at Memories Pizza.