

To Anita Bryant: Moderation, Please

This Saturday, Oct. 8, Anita Bryant will appear in a concert at the Robins Center. The Baptist organization sponsoring it has suggested that she is appearing strictly because of her religious beliefs and her musical talent, and that she will discuss no political or social issues during her performance.

This fact notwithstanding, her past and present crusade against the gay rights movement has linked her name with the issue forever, and wherever she goes this topic is bound to arise.

Since she has put her famous name and her reputation on the line over this issue, and since she is appearing on campus this weekend, perhaps the whole matter of gay rights deserves closer scrutiny. And like many complex issues, her stand against it has its good and bad points.

First, the good:

Back in June, the voters of Miami rejected by a 2-to-1 margin an ordinance which would have prohibited discrimination in jobs, hiring, and public accommodations based on "affectional or sexual preference." Miss Bryant, of course, played an instrumental part in getting voters to reject the ordinance.

The militant homosexual leaders who crusaded for the ordinance suggested that the issue was one of lawful civil rights for them vs. redneck bigotry on the part of those who would deny them these "rights." However, that was not the issue at all; a vast majority of Americans are willing to let consenting adults do as they like in private, but in the Miami ordinance the gays were asking society to legitimize their lifestyle, and to put a seal of approval on it. This demand is one that the Miami voters did not, and other Americans will not, ever grant to homosexuals.

The fact is, an overwhelming majority of Americans regard homosexuality as deviant behavior, while many also see it as a mental illness, or even a sin. The American people proudly maintain that there are certain standards of behavior and religious and moral values which should be recognized and strived for. Thus, while society will tolerate, and even accept, the private lifestyle of homosexuals, it will never approve of homosexual behavior carried on in private or, especially, in public.

Gays, however, should be allowed to teach, and rent apartments, and eat in restaurants, and do everything that heterosexual Americans do, as long as they keep their homosexuality a private matter.

But if a homosexual teacher flaunts his lifestyle in the classroom in an attempt to induce students to emulate his abnormal behavior, then the school has the right to dismiss him, and rightfully so.

And if a homosexual couple is holding hands in a restaurant, then the proprietor has the right to bounce the couple, just as he would bounce a drunk or a prostitute or anyone else behaving in a manner which is viewed by a majority of people as reprehensible. This right to discriminate against those who behave in a socially unacceptable way is inherent in our free society.

Thus, Anita Bryant's crusade against gay extremism in Miami was a good thing, in that it led the voters to stand up for traditional moral values and norms of conduct, and to reject the militant gays' demands to approve their lifestyle. For this, Miss Bryant should be applauded.

The gay activists in Miami wanted the public to say that their lifestyle is "right" and "good", and this is a sentiment which most Americans, in all honesty, cannot profess.

Now, the bad:

Miss Bryant seems to regard her victory in Miami as a mandate to crusade across the country against homosexuality. However, the Miami vote only indicates that most people do not approve of the homosexual lifestyle, and not that they wish to undertake a vast campaign to wipe it from the face of the earth.

An all-out attack by Miss Bryant on homosexuals would hurt those who only wish to be left alone and to keep their lifestyle a private matter. All American citizens, including homosexuals, are protected against being penalized for their private behavior, and this is as it should be. What adults do in private should be of no concern to anyone but themselves, as long as no injury is involved.

Thus, a witch hunt for homosexuals would only serve to destroy many innocent lives, while it would also lead many Americans to side with the militant homosexuals, out of sympathy. Such an occurrence would be most unfortunate.

Therefore, Miss Bryant should be pleased with her victory and congratulated for her efforts in Miami. But Miss Bryant will only make an important victory for common sense meaningless if she chooses to conduct a national campaign against homosexuals. Neither radical homosexuals nor radical attacks against them is desirable.