

Advocating for Sexual Rights in Fundamentalist Contexts

EXPERIENCES PRESENTED DURING THE
1ST AMERICAS SOCIAL FORUM QUITO, ECUADOR AND THE
5TH WORLD SOCIAL FORUM IN PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

CDD - Catholics for a Free Choice Cordoba

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I G L H R C

2 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS

4 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS

Advocating for Sexual Rights in Fundamentalist Contexts

AN OVERVIEW OF SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES
FROM A VARIETY OF CONTEXTS

CDD

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir Córdoba (Catholics for a Free Choice
Cordoba)

IGLHRC

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

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Index

<i>Introduction</i>		8
<i>1. Religious fundamentalisms vs. the Secular State</i>		
	Marta Vassallo	11
<i>2. Between reactives and dissidents. Retracing the boundaries between the religious and the secular</i>		
	Juan Marco Vaggione	19
<i>3. Fundamentalisms and The Secular State, the Defence of Sexual Rights</i>		
	Blanca Dole Durón	38
<i>4. An Account of the Participation of Lesbian Women in the LGBT Movement</i>		
	Gissy Cedamanos R.	46
<i>5. How fundamentalists operate and how we continue to resist and win some victories even, in spite of them</i>		
	Carla Batista	52
<i>6. Natural tips for getting a cardinal's help</i>		
	Marcelo Ernesto Ferreyra	57
<i>7. Fundamentalist Strategies in the National Women's Meetings in Argentina</i>		
	Marta Alanís	66
<i>8. The defence of Human Rights of LGBT people in Medellín</i>		
	Robinson Sánchez Tamayo	71
<i>9. On Fundamentalisms in Colombia</i>		
	Sandra Mazo	80

Introduction

MARCOSUR Feminist Articulation (AFM), the driving force behind the campaign "Against fundamentalisms, People are fundamental" declares that whether it is, "religious, economic, scientific or cultural, fundamentalism is always political and flourishes in societies that negate humanity in its diversity and legitimize the violent mechanisms adopted to subjugate one group to the other, one person to another. Essentially exclusionary and bellicose, fundamentalisms undermine the construction of a project for the human race, where all persons have the right to have rights, by sacrificing the lives of women at the altar of perversity".

This campaign aims at "amplifying the voices" that oppose discriminatory social practices, discourses and representations. These voices were the inspiration behind the slogan YOUR VOICE IS FUNDAMENTAL AGAINST FUNDAMENTALISMS¹.

Based on this "core idea" the organizations, Catholics for a Free Choice - Cordoba and IGLHRC - International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, as member organizations of the AFM, joined forces to coordinate spaces for the collective reflections, debates and presentations that took place in Quito, Ecuador during the 1st AMERICAS SOCIAL FORUM in July 2004 and in Porto Alegre, Brazil during the WORLD SOCIAL FORUM in January 2005, on issues of the interference of fundamentalisms in the defence of sexual rights in the region and the strategies that are being employed to combat them, based on experiences of various initiatives for the defence of sexual rights in fundamentalist contexts. These debates were held with the intention of providing further insight into fundamentalisms, condemning

¹ *"Your voice is fundamental against fundamentalisms", MARCOSUR Feminist Articulation, December, 2002 – Montevideo, Uruguay*

fundamentalist actions against the rights of women and diverse expressions of sexuality, as well as analyzing the international reality, in which the Bush government and the Vatican who share the same views on issues such as family, gender and sexuality are taking steps that are endangering hard won rights.

This publication provides an account of the outcome of these experiences, with the collaboration of: Gissy Cedamanos (Peru), Carla Batista (Brazil), Marcelo Ernesto Ferreyra (Argentina), Marta Alanís (Argentina), Robinson Sánchez Tamayo (Colombia), Sandra Mazo (Colombia), Marta Vassallo (Argentina), Juan Marco Vaggione (Argentina) and Blanca Dole Durón (Honduras). Many of these people are members of groups that are a part of the LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexual and transgender persons) and feminist movements in Latin America, which have a strong human rights and - in recent years - sexual rights focus, which had its beginning in the early 70s. In many of its expressions, this movement follows the historical inheritance of Latin-American human rights activism and places emphasis on civil and political rights. As a consequence, documentation and activism around LGBT issues have basically focussed on the actions of states that punish the behaviour of those who they consider "deviant", ranging from specific atrocities such as torture, extrajudicial executions and impunity to atrocities, whose devastating effect is more permanent, such as raids in bars, persecution of those who display their affections in public and the anti-sodomy laws.

The alliance between Catholics for A Free Choice - Córdoba and IGLHRC - the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission is not a casual alliance, both organizations work on issues, which are targets of fundamentalisms and we have suffered persecution for daring to say for example that the right to abortion is a just cause. Gender and sexuality are key themes of the fundamentalist discourse. Our commitment is to forging alliances between organizations that are raising controversial

10 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS

issues for debate and this alliance must be strengthened. We must forge multiple alliances and create diverse strategies to be able to resist and achieve cultural, social and political changes that are needed to eliminate discrimination in any form.

Marcelo Ferreyra and Marta Alanís

C. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report comprises nine presentations. The first two chapters provide the background needed to get an understanding the struggle against fundamentalisms in different contexts, which are described in the rest of the publication.

In Chapter 1 Marta Vasallo gives us a general overview of the origin and scope of fundamentalisms in it's relation with secular states.

The presentation by Juan Marco Vaggione in Chapter 2 is based on the article previously published by CLADEM in *La Trampa de la Moral Única, Argumentos para una Democracia Secular* Publisher Línea Andina: Lima, 2005.

These two presentations were made in Porto Alegre, Brazil during the WORLD SOCIAL FORUM in January 2005 along with Blanca Dole Durón's presentation, which talks of the Honduran experience.

The following chapters, which situate this global reality in the local context, describe various experiences in the fight against fundamentalisms in Peru (Chapter 4), Brazil (Chapter 5), Argentina (Chapters 6 and 7) and Colombia (Chapters 8 and 9). These presentations were made in Quito, Ecuador during the 1st AMERICAS SOCIAL FORUM held in July 2004.

1. Religious fundamentalisms vs. the Secular State.

Marta Vassallo

*Marta Vassallo: Argentinean journalist, Bachelor of Arts, who is presently engaged in bringing out the *Lemonde Diplomatique* in the Southern Cone and is researching on the workings of fundamentalism and the consequences it has on the lives of women.*

Religious Fundamentalisms and Secular States are incompatible notions.

Fundamentalisms are religious revival movements that are affecting all major world religions. They are the most striking and visible manifestations of what has been termed the return of the religions; a phenomenon that also has other manifestations, that are less visible, less known but more promising when we consider our objectives.

We say that fundamentalisms are incompatible with the secular state because they are opposed to modernity; inseparable from the secularization that characterizes the Western World and its global hegemony. These are movements that are opposed to the principle inherent in Secular states (the ideal of the modern state) according to which religion is a question that concerns the private, intimate sphere. Thus States must restrict themselves to guaranteeing freedom of religious practice and equal treatment towards all religions, by not identifying with any of these religions or giving it any preferential treatment.

Fundamentalisms favour the reinstating of the public character of

religion, and are as a consequence political and even belligerent in nature.

The characterization of the western world and its hegemony on the basis of modernity as secularized and laical stumbles in the contemporary scenario, given the paradox that the major power of this Western World, the United States, is governed at the moment by the Bush administration, president from a Republican party, which in the last 20 years has been abandoning it's liberal character, to be dominated by the so-called right-wing Christian, Evangelical and Pentecostal fundamentalist movements, far removed from the principles of separation between churches and the State and even less connected to the defence of civil liberties that constituted the nucleus of the social model that the United States offered to the world. Imperial, militarist and messianic, Bush Junior is following a policy that can reverse the right to abortion that is consecrated in the United States since 1973, by virtue of the judicial sentence Roe vs. Wade, and that will strengthen the policies of abstinence-based sex education, exaltation of the traditional and hierarchical family based on male authority, restrictions on gay and lesbian rights and the targeting of public education that is not based on the literal understanding of the Bible. All this accompanied by a policy of destruction of the extended system of social welfare, which has been converted into social help by religious groups.

The term fundamentalism is used loosely even to cover certain economic policies. We talk of economic fundamentalism or market fundamentalism and further still almost any stand based on a conviction, which is non-negotiable, is qualified as fundamentalist; fundamentalist is fanatic, but it is also a conviction about something that places strict restrictions on its stand.

I choose to refer to fundamentalism as religious fundamentalism and would like to highlight, at the outset, the difficulty in using this term:

Applied equally to the renovations that cut across all monotheist religions, fundamentalism is a term that is of Evangelical origin and was first used in the United States in the beginning of the 20th Century. Between 1910 and 1920 twelve volumes, written by different Protestant theologians, were published under the name *The Fundamentals*. The first of these fundamentals was the literal and infallible nature of the Scriptures. It came to be used in current vocabulary, after the judgement declared in 1925, in the case *State of Tennessee versus John Scopes*, a young professor of Biology, who was using Darwinian studies as reference in Secondary School and Higher Secondary School classes. This went against a local norm, according to which anything that went against Biblical teachings could not be taught in schools. (For example, if the Bible says that God created the world in seven days, the scientific theory of evolution would be a heresy). Scopes lost the case but at the ideological level this judgement had a boomerang effect, as the most eminent representatives of the academic and intellectual world defended Scopes and ridiculed the fundamentalist arguments. The polemic between Creationists (those who follow the Biblical text literally) and Darwinists (those to subscribe to the theory of evolution) acquired fresh impetus in the last quarter of the century in the United States, along with the polemic on religious prayers in public schools and on the option of home-based education, as against the public education system, which gained supporters among the fundamentalists in the United States and abroad.

This term thus has the characteristic of being a category of American culture applied to foreign cultures, which ignore the significant cultural differences between different monotheist religions and even differences between different Christian churches.

Fundamentalism has an Evangelical stamp since the time in which in Protestant churches, faith has come to be considered a question between God and the believer, without the mediation of clerics and the interpretation of the Bible was left to the understanding of the believer,

14 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS

while in Catholicism there is one interpretation of the Bible provided by the Papal authority, from which the believer cannot deviate. For the Catholic there is no literal interpretation of the Scriptures, there is one established interpretation, while the Evangelical believer goes to the sources and understands them literally.

In the Catholic world a movement similar to Evangelical fundamentalism, came up in the beginning of the 20th Century in France, which was termed integralism or integrism. The idea of an integral Catholic denies the citizen/believer divide.

However, a Theologian of repute, Hans Kung, dissident of the lineage of the present Pontificate, resorts to the use of the term Roman Catholic fundamentalism: "In present day Catholicism there is a variant of fundamentalism, given that the leaders of the Church are identifying Catholic faith with ecclesial traditions that are clearly the more recent ones (the Council of Trent, Vatican I, preconciliar Pontifical documents) and by a process of re-evangelization - re-catholicization they are trying to force Catholics into returning to the medieval - counter-reformist-counter-modernist paradigm of the Church and society.."

Quoting from *Fundamentalismos y diálogo entre religiones*, (Fundamentalisms and dialogue between religions) written by the Spanish Theologian Juan José Tamayo, who writes that at the end of the XX Century and in opposition to the Vatican Council II "fundamentalism re-emerges at the end of the 70s, when there is a shift from the modernization of Christianity to the Christianization of modernity, and this occurs during the extended pontificate of John Paul II, through the programme for new evangelization designed by Cardinal Ratzinger and implemented by the new Ecclesial movements: Communion and Liberation, Opus Dei, Neocatechumenal Communities and the Legionaries of Christ.."

Among Catholics fundamentalist tendencies Tamayo includes: the

Integrist movement in the beginning of the 20th Century in Spain and France; the Lefebvrist movement that upholds the Tridentine Ritual; the Conservative tendency that prioritizes obedience to the Pope and wants to impose the views of ecclesiastical teaching on sexual morals upon the secular state; the Sectarian that excludes other religions, even other Christian Churches and the Puritan that rejects the body.

In Latin America the Charismatic Pentecostal movement, Opus Dei, Legionaries, Sodalitium and Gospel Herald are some of the movements that can be identified as fundamentalist.

Rather than the existence of a Catholic fundamentalism, Tamayo prefers to talk of fundamentalist symptoms in the Catholicism of the last few centuries "which are manifested in the absolutization of tradition and dogma".

One extreme manifestation would be the dogmatic definition of the infallibility of the Pope during the pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878) in the Vatican Council I.

Tamayo refers to the Vatican Council II as an anti-fundamentalist landmark: it recognizes historical-critical methods in Bible study; it engages with modernity, with other Christian churches and with non-Christian Religions, with non-believers, it values secularization and establishes the separation between Church and State.

Fundamentalism advocates a realistic study of symbolic and metaphoric texts and is opposed to ecumenism; it is hostile to modernity, one of the aspects of which is the emancipation of women. Its views on the march of history are negative, catastrophic even, exactly the reverse of the modern notion of unlimited progress.

A psychological interpretation of fundamentalism would be to view it as a pathological reaction to the rupture in the stability of the

16 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS

foundations of religion, family and society.

It is interesting to point out that although Catholic fundamentalism tends to exclude other churches, the so-called Christian right - wing in the United States, which is of evangelical origin, had no reservations in joining forces, in 1979 with some Catholic streams (specifically speaking that of Paul Weyrich, Director of Free Congress Foundation, Catholic co-founder of Moral Majority, the organization of Jerry Falwell, who explained the 9-11 attacks as a divine punishment for the secularization of North-American society, the advancement in it of the feminist cause, civil liberties, rights of lesbians and gays) with the idea of bringing about, in collaboration with the political platform of the Republican Party of 1980, measures against abortion, pornography, gay and lesbian rights, sex education and with the objective of dividing the Catholic electorate, which had traditionally been voting for the Democrats.

The intersection of various groups on the issue of sexual moral makes convergence rather than rivalry over who has more followers, a more intelligent policy to adopt. The Catholic Church has, in fact, accepted Charismatic Renewal within its fold to be able to compete with Pentecostalism, which is growing in Latin America.

In spite of the fact that there are no explicit alliances, in Argentina, there has been convergence on certain issues among the conservative streams of all churches: for example all of them alike opposed the draft proposal for the law on sex education, reproductive health programmes, including the exhibition by artist Leon Ferrari who questioned the traditional catholic notion of hell as a place of infinite torture, a notion which, however, had already been refuted by the Pope himself.

The sexual moral of the Evangelical Christian Right-wing and the Pontificate of John Paul II condemns sexuality by itself, and finds it necessary to accord it an objective that transcends it and this higher objective is, in it's view, procreation; the only licit sexuality is therefore

conjugal coitus, with the sole objective of procreation, within the framework of matrimony. All other acts exercising sexuality are condemned: be it masturbation, pre-marital heterosexual relations or relations outside marriage, relations between persons of the same sex, multiple relations whether simultaneous or not etc.

It is important to break free of a homogenizing view of religions. Christianity facilitates this liberation, because it's relationship with secularization is complex. It is complex because since its origin, Christianity has implied a dual conception of social organization, where it recognizes one profane and another sacred instance; certainly the latter is superior. Conservatives or modernists interpret this duality, consubstantial to Christianity differently.

Fundamentalism is inscribed in the traditionalist response of Christianity to modernity, which is one of rejection. It condemns modernity, because in it Christianity cannot continue to fulfil the socio-political function that it performed before. Secularization is an aberration, a perversion of Christianity.

But there is also another important aspect of Christianity for which social secularization is the continuity, culmination and not the negation or aberration of the Judeo-Christian tradition, which is a tradition of historical consciousness. This aspect considers the modern emancipating discourse as a culmination of Christianity, it is the response of the liberal and liberalising Christianisms, which see in Christianity, the source of secularization or the source of the great socialist narrative (the Vatican Council II and the liberation theologies are examples of this).

The modern notion of progress would, in this perspective, be the secularized version of the eschatological conception of the Bible: the birth of natural sciences, of democratic institutions, cultural pluralism would thus be in this tradition. In this the world and politics are desacralized from the origin itself: God creates the world, the world is not

sacred; the biblical episode of the exodus shatters the coincidence between the political order and the religious order of archaic religions. Primitive Christianity denied the sacred character of the emperor, and advocated the separation between religion and the empire.

This liberating force of Christianity is behind the theology of liberation: Leonardo Boff said that in Latin America religion works as opium for the bourgeoisie and as liberation for the common people.

We said that fundamentalisms are one of the manifestations of the movements for religious renewal but they are certainly not the only manifestation. There are religious currents that understand the inadequacy of schools of thought based on scientific and technical reason. These other manifestations allow us to see the liberating potential of religions, helping us overcome the narrow view of religion as a mere instrument for manipulation of power, comfort for the unfortunate or the despicable alienation that positivist logic, which has permeated the views of the traditional left to a large extent, has made us accustomed to. They understand the deception that has undermined confidence in reason as an integral source for the meaning of life; this feeling of frustration has been heightened by the transcendental events of our era: the break down of the Soviet block, which was not a model of a secular State but of a belligerently atheist superstate, the relativization of the concept of progress (scientific, technological progress is both a reason for panic as well as a source of comfort in the present world), the developments of neoliberalism as a current phase of capitalism.

On the other hand, the confusion regarding the boundaries between the private and the public sphere, which is an unequivocal feature of present day societies forces us to review the scope of the so called secular states and the strategies to secularize those states in which the process of secularization is mid - way, which is the case with the majority of them.

2. Between reactives and dissidents Retracing the boundaries between the religious and the secular

Juan Marco Vaggione

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INTRODUCTION

Neither modernity as a historical process nor globalization as a spatial process has implied a withdrawal from the religious phenomenon. If theories on modernity were united in assuming a constant withdrawal of religion, the last few years have demonstrated to the contrary, at times brutally. Religious institutions continue to be key actors in contemporary societies and religion continues to be a key identitary dimension. Neither has globalization led to a weakening of the religious phenomenon. On the contrary, the majority of the religions, have found a more fertile ground transnationally; maybe because they were never completely "nationalized" as in the case of Islam and Catholicism or because these were transformed into international churches, such as

20 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS Evangelical Protestantism¹.

This 'resurgence'² of the religious phenomenon has multiple and complex manifestations, but in some way, it can be said that gender and sexuality are the dimensions where the influence of religious discourses makes its presence felt the most. On the one hand the major religions have been, and continue to be, the upholders of patriarchal and heteronormative systems³. Religion as a cultural phenomenon reinforces norms that justify gender inequalities and intensify discrimination against sexual minorities. Likewise, religious actors exert pressure on states and political societies to maintain a legal system that institutionalizes these inequalities. On the other hand, religions that have been characterised by strong and violent clashes against each other, have found a political focus for establishing alliances, in their opposition to feminism and sexual minorities. Probably the most paradigmatic example can be found in the United Nations where the Holy See, Islamic countries and the North-American religious right wing have formed a block to counter a

¹ Berger (2002) holds that Evangelical Protestantism and Islam are the two most impressive examples of globalized religions. Peter Berger "Globalization and religion" in *The Hedgehog Review* (Summer 2002). For the importance of globalization in the case of the Catholic Church consult Casanova (2001) "Globalizing Catholicism and the Return to a "Universal" Church in Peter Beyer (editor) *Religion in the Process of Globalization*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag

² I have put the word resurgence within quotes because, as I see it, it doesn't necessarily mean a fundamental change in the public faces of religion, but does so, many a time in, academic agendas. It is not to say that the religious aspect has a bigger role to play in contemporary societies than it had before, as it never ceased to be important. However academic agendas are now incorporating it more.

³ Heteronormativity is a term that describes a dominant system of gender and sexuality based on male (hetero)sexuality where the subordination of women and sexual minorities is legally and socially institutionalized.

supposed 'invasion of radical feminism'⁴.

The secularization theory was, for many years, a paradigmatic response to counter the role of religion and thereby, allow greater liberalization of gender and sexuality. In spite of the fact that this theory had its own historical and geographical genesis - the start of modernity in the USA and Western Europe - it soon became a paradigmatic response to resolve the role of religions in democratic systems. In general terms, it may be said that secularism, as a political doctrine, aims at the depoliticization of religion. The existence of religion is certainly not an issue, if it remains within the limits of the private sphere, as a set of beliefs. Neither is it an issue when religious actors and institutions participate in public life, but this participation, in some way, requires the dispossession of religious elements, which is certainly impossible. These actors must "translate" their religious beliefs into secular languages. It is in this far from perfect exclusion of the religious dimension, where it is hoped that a greater space may be gained for pluralism.

In Latin America the importance of secularization as a theory and as a political doctrine is highlighted by the powerful presence of the Catholic Church. Gender and sexuality are the spheres in which this power is most evident. It is not surprising to observe a client-based relationship, wherein states, in exchange for legitimacy by the Catholic Church, take responsibility for protection of the family in accordance with the Catholic doctrine. This practically hegemonic presence of the Church has resulted in the demand for the intensification of secularization by progressive sectors, specifically by pointing out the incomplete separation between church and state

⁴ *For an analysis of this alliance see Doris Buss and Didi Herman (2003). Globalizing Family Values. The Christian Right in International Politics. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.*

or by condemning the emergence of fundamentalist sectors attacking pluralism⁵. Thus, progressive sectors, aiming at destroying the hegemony of the church in its regulation of the body, appeal strongly in favour of the need to complete secularization as a way to allow a more democratic institutionalization of gender and sexuality.

However secularism has stopped being a paradigmatic reaction to counter religion. The very same religious resurgence that threatens pluralism and in particular the liberalization of gender and sexuality, has also resulted in the limitations of secularization being considered not only as a theory that explains the role of religion but also as a normative model for this resurgence. For some, this resurgence is evidence of the emergence of a post-secular period, which requires new analytical and theoretical frameworks. Probably Talal Asad and his anthropology of the secular can be termed one of the most original efforts in this direction. Others, on the other hand, distinguish between various dimensions within the theory of secularization and although they do accept that some of these have lost their validity, they still consider that secularization must be highlighted as a modernity theory. José Casanove, in this vein, presents an interesting proposal when he reaffirms secularization as theory of the differentiation between the secular and religious spheres, but rejects privatization of religion as a valid part of it.

It is necessary and this is the main objective of this article, to think in terms of theoretical frameworks that can, simultaneously incorporate religious resurgence, especially from the point of view of gender and sexuality, without reducing it to an incomplete modernization; critically review secularization as an epistemic model to understand the multiple ways in which religion and definitions of

⁵ See the magazine *Debate Feminista, La Derecha y los Derechos*. Año 14, vol. 27 dated April 2003 in particular the articles by Jean Franco and Marta Lamas.

gender and sexuality intersect. Secularization is also a way of constructing social reality, which while illuminating some dynamics, obscures others. As stated, the secular also constructs the religious, not as an independent category, in conflict with the secular - not even in continuity - but rather that the religious can also be interpreted as an ideological construction where the secular acquires its significance⁶. It is therefore, necessary to suspend the paradigmatic validity of secularization and consider the various forms of the religious that exist in the margins of secularism. In short, it is necessary to risk the possibility of thinking beyond secularization or secularism as normative instruments to counter the religious.

More specifically, this article proposes that the paradigmatic influence of secularization tends to generate two reductionisms that obscure important mutations of the religious phenomena. In the first place it creates a tendency to reduce the public influence of the religion to an issue of incomplete separation between the state and church. In this vein, the article proposes the concept of reactive politicization as a way of understanding the manner in which conservative religious sectors adapt in the face of feminist and sexual minority movements. Secondly, the paradigmatic influence of secularization tends to provide an essentialist definition of the religious phenomenon. In particular, with respect to gender and sexuality the tendency is to consider the religious dimension as a homogeneity that sustains the patriarchal system, invisibilizing or playing down the importance of the phenomenon of internal dissidences. Precisely speaking, the second part of the article talks of the political importance that religious dissidences have for the liberalization of gender and sexuality.

⁶ *Talal Asad (2003) Formations of the Secular Christianity, Islam, Modernity. Stanford University Press.*

An important clarification. To suspend and rethink secularization as an analytical and normative instrument to counter religious resurgence, does not necessarily mean, that it must be discarded. Even to reaffirm the necessity of secularization as a historical process, it is necessary to redefine the religious phenomenon in its most contemporary manifestations. What is absolutely essential however is to do away with the paradigmatic status of secularization and to reflect on its analytical and normative limitations, a decision that could also imply, its reaffirmation, albeit reformulated, in combating the regressive tendencies of the religious.

BEYOND THE SECULAR STATE: REACTIVE POLITICIZATION

The main antagonism with respect to definitions of gender and sexuality comes from, on the one hand a religious sector that aims at defending a traditional definition of family and on the other, from feminist and sexual minority movements who, with their pluralist agenda, reject any essential construction of the family. These two sectors, with opposing agendas, register their demands in diverse scenarios. Both sectors aim at influencing the State to achieve the legal institutionalization of their demands.

The Church is, without doubt, the biggest obstacle for the liberalization of gender and sexuality in Latin America. If, in general, the region has a complex history with respect to the interaction between the state and church, when this history is considered from the specific viewpoint of gender and sexuality, we are able to observe a client-based relationship, where it is not surprising that the state, in exchange for legitimacy, supports the major demands of the Church⁷. The deinstitutionalization of patriarchal and

⁷ See Htun, Mala (2003) *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family Under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies*. New York, Cambridge University Press.

heteronormative norms is further complicated, thus, owing to the establishment of the State-Church block. Not only do the national churches put pressure on and negotiate with governments, the Vatican too puts pressure on Catholic legislators on their vote on issues such as abortion and homosexuality.

In this context the demand for a secular State, which functions independently of religious sectors is transformed, once again, into a privileged discourse. The state - church separation as an aspect of secularization has become some sort of a democratic mantra to achieve the institutionalization of the demands of feminists and sexual minorities⁸. Without denying the complexity and importance of this issue, it is necessary to also acknowledge that this is only one facet of the issue. It has been blown out of proportion to such an extent that any influence of the Church and associated groups is immediately interpreted as a violation of the principle of separation, of the secularity of the State.

It is necessary, thus, to recognize that although the secular state is a key focus, it does not take away from religion as a power factor. In the first place, the institutionalization of the said separation does not mean that the Church would cease to be an influential actor on gender and sexuality policies. As it has been maintained, separation does not mean the privatization of the religious phenomenon. On the contrary, reviews of the secularization theory maintain that it is precisely this separation that enables religions to establish themselves as public actors in contemporary societies. The separation of the state repositions the church within civil society and, in this way, as the creator of influential policies⁹.

⁸ *Certainly, there are differences between secularism and laicity but these are not relevant in the context of this article. The church/state separation, that is to say the achievement of a secular state, is considered as an aspect of secularization.*

⁹ *For a reconstruction of the political dimensions of civil society see Cohen and Arato (1992) *Civil Society and Political Theory*. MIT, Cambridge.*

After the 2nd Vatican Council, the Church accepted the separation of the state and religious pluralism, shifting from a state-centric institution to one centred on society. This does not mean that the institutionalization of this separation is complete, particularly in some countries of Latin-American where the state still 'sustain worship'¹⁰, but it can be stated that the separation between state and church, at least as a democratic principle, is accepted by the major political actors even if, many a time, the application of this principle fails. This separation, although ambiguous and partial in nature, has also given the church greater autonomy and legitimacy in its actions. Thus, it could become, at least potentially, a critical instance as in the case of Chile or Brazil, where the church was a sector for opposition during the military reigns. In a generalized way in the last few years, the church positioned itself as a counter power against the neo-liberal policies instrumented by the majority of the Latin American countries during the 90s.

Although there is a tendency to assume that the separation of the state implies a less influential church, the relationship is much more complex. This very separation could imply an institution that plays a different role, which does not imply that it is less powerful because of this. On the one hand, one engages as an actor in civil society and pressurizes the state and political society - which has been termed as the de-privatization of religion¹¹ -. On the other hand this autonomy makes it possible for the Church to become a critical instance, which has given it greater citizen legitimacy and thus a greater share of symbolic power in the defence of its doctrinary principles. Weak states and delegitimized political societies, without

¹⁰ *This is the case, for example, in Argentina. In the last constitutional reform the phrase "sustain worship" generated a debate regarding its scope.*

¹¹ *See Casanova, José (1994). Public religion in the Modern World Chicago: University of Chicago Press.*

doubt, strengthen this power¹².

To reduce the resistance of religious phenomenon to the liberalization of gender and sexuality, to an issue of insufficient separation between the church and state can, ironically generate an invisibilization of the alternative ways in which the Catholic Church and similar sectors influence both society as well as the state in Latin-America. In stead of delegitimizing the influence of the church as violating of the democratic principle of secularism, it is necessary to propose theoretical models that capture it's various interventions as a socio-political actor. Without refuting the need to strengthen the secular nature of states, it is also important to consider the Church as a legitimate actor of civil society. Besides secular states one should also think of autonomous states that have enough power to protect minorities in the face of different lobbies, with the ecclesiastical lobby being one of them. The ambiguity of the role of Church in Latin America, of it being a part of civil society without ceasing to be a part of the state, also requires a two- pronged approach.

This article proposes the concept of reactive politicization to encompass both, the actions of the Church as well as of conservative religious organizations, which are a part of civil society, who exert pressure on the State but do not violate the principle of secularism. The tendency to consider civil society as a progressive space has led to it's simplification, obscuring its heterogeneity and it's more antagonistic tendencies. Not only is civil society rife with inequalities and exclusions, but it also creates instances that aim at perpetuating these inequalities. In the same way that this scenario is conducive to the emergence of organizations and movements aiming at reducing

¹² *Blancarte posits, in the case of Mexico, how the weakness of the state is an important element when we talk about secular states in the region. Roberto Blancarte (1992). La historia de la Iglesia Católica en México. Fondo de Cultura Económica, México.*

the multiple inequalities that characterize Latin-America societies, civil society is also a scenario wherein various instances that resist such changes emerge and are able to grow in strength.

One of the important changes in conservative religious sectors has been the articulation of non-governmental organizations. From the 70s, starting with the United States and later expanding globally, a growing number of groups connected with different religious denominations began to put pressure on the states to avoid the institutionalization of feminist and sexual minority demands. If in the United States these groups emerged after abortion was decriminalized, in Latin America, on the contrary, these very groups emerged as a "preventive measure" even before abortion or homosexuality came to be a part of some political agendas¹³.

The notion of reactive politicization is a way of understanding the actions of conservative religious institutions and groups who are a part of civil society, and mobilize to impede or reverse the process of liberalization of gender and sexuality. They are 'reactive' in the sense that their emergence and functioning is justified as a measure to defend a traditional order that is threatened by feminism and the sexual minorities movement. Faced with pluralism and relativization, the church and religious organizations have become the defenders of a traditional and natural order based on the family unit.

There is much more than mere religious belief behind this traditional view of family. It is, in some way, a regime of truth, where religion is a key element that amalgamates with secular dimensions

¹³ See *Htun (2003) op.cit.*

in a harmonic process¹⁴. In the face of this, the demands of the feminist and sexual minorities movement are projected as a threat, which goes beyond any religious belief. Clearly both, these organizations as well as the Church, keep religious discourse to a minimum when they mobilize to defend their respective positions. On the contrary, their interventions and the defending of "the" family unit is based on a strategic articulation of secular discourses, be it scientific or legal.

This 'strategic secularism'¹⁵, is one the most important fields for analysis. Although these discourses are "rational" they do not necessarily present a lesser degree of dogmatism than the religious beliefs that sustain them. In some way, strategic secularism demonstrates the ease with which the most conservative sectors amalgamate and fuse discourses. An ease, which ironically deconstructs religious/secular dichotomy. There are many examples that can be given but the debate on the condom is paradigmatic in this sense. The more traditional stand that states that campaigns based on the use of condoms to prevent AIDS encourage promiscuity as a disvalue is supported by more intense 'scientific' arguments. Although some of these arguments lack empiric evidence, such as the porosity of the condom, others on the other hand, are based on statistics and case studies. Certainly the interpretation of the data is criticisable but it is important to highlight within the framework of this article that the anti-condom position, although obviously inspired by moral/religious principles is projected as a stand based on scientific evidence.

¹⁴ *For the way in which the regimen of truth is structured see Foucault (1980) Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977. P Pantheon Books.*

¹⁵ *The term strategic secularism is, in some way, inspired by Spivak's 'strategic essentialism', although they reference completely different dynamics.*

The notion of reactive politicization also aims at reflecting an aspect that is generally excluded owing to the influence of the theory of secularization: both, these organizations as well as the Catholic Church must be considered as legitimate actors. In stead of representing the emergence of a fundamentalist or dogmatic position, the concept of politicization aims at including these organizations and their public participation as a legitimate part of the democratic process. If the Church and organizations connected with it have decided to be a part of democracy in defence of their concept of family, it is necessary to understand them as actors who have created a political space for themselves.

These spaces however, are obscured owing to the paradigmatic influence of secularization. While the theory of secularization concentrates on the state-church separation it ignores, and indirectly, strengthens, the most democratic ways in which the church and conservative religious sectors mobilize to prevent liberalization of gender and sexuality. The challenge is to overcome this reductionism and understand that civil society, as a democratic space, is also a space for articulation for regressive sectors, which though religious in nature, use secular rhetoric in the articulation of their positions. To insist that the public influence of the church in Latin America is only owing to it's insufficient separation from the state is to invisibilize alternative spaces where the church can be opposed and challenged as a political actor.

BEYOND RELIGIOUS DOGMATISM: POLITICIZATION OF DISSIDENCES

Another limitation of the secularization theory is the tendency to construct the religious dimension as homogeneous, with characteristics that are completely different from the secular. Thus, the religious is defined as irrational, as opposed to the 'rationality' of

the secular and in being so, not apt as a public discourse¹⁶. When issues linked to gender or sexuality are considered, the religious/secular dichotomy is superimposed, in various way, with the conservative/progressive dichotomy. The religious is defined as essentially connected with patriarchy and the perpetuation of the domination of women and sexual minorities.

This essentialist construction, although partially correct, leads to an incomplete understanding of the multiple intersections between religion and definitions of gender and sexuality. Without denying that religion is a fundamental aspect in understanding patriarchy and homophobia, it is necessary to also recognize the existence of at least two other dynamics. In first place, the potential liberalizing consequences of religion, in spite of it's patriarchal content. In second place, understanding that the religious dimension is in a process of constant change and adaptation and that part of these changes have been the incorporation, in different ways, of the demands of feminists and sexual minorities.

Secularization as a historical process has not always meant an improvement in the situation of women¹⁷. In some cases, the legislation sanctioned by emerging states, replacing the Catholic doctrine, implied a worsening in the inequality of women¹⁸. The case of adultery would be an interesting example. While according to Catholic doctrine fidelity between spouses is defined regardless

¹⁶ *This is a position shared by the majority of theoreticians on democracy. From the most liberal of stands, such as Rawl's, to the most critical, such as that of Habermas.*

¹⁷ *In relation to the issue of sexuality, Foucault in the History of Sexuality offers an interesting analysis where the process of 'secularization' is not apparently associated with a lesser domination of sexuality, on the contrary, it is associated with the emergence of alternative discourses that invent and control it in a more effective manner.*

¹⁸ *See in particular, the introduction in Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin América. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molymeu (2000). Duke University Press*

of gender, when adultery is classified as a crime by the State, the woman is penalized for one single sexual act while for the man to be penalized, the existence of a mistress, that is a fairly stable relationship outside of marriage, is required to be proved.

The analysis of contemporary situations also brings out the various ways in which patriarchal religions can result in the empowering of women. It has been claimed, not without debate, that participation in the Base Ecclesial Communities creates more active citizens who participate more in the public sphere¹⁹. On the other hand, the conversion of women to Pentecostalism, a generalized phenomenon in the region, has been associated with a certain level of equalization in the domestic sphere, in particular with respect to issues of violence and also the use of contraceptives²⁰. Although there is the question as to what extent these empowerments can be considered as genuinely feminist, what is interesting is that these analysis distinguish between the patriarchal content of religions and the liberalizing consequences that these may have.

Finally, one of the most interesting changes that are occurring is the emergence, within the various denominations, of persons and groups that are mobilizing to make their religious identity compatible

¹⁹ Although there is an important bibliography on this, Drogus (1997) offers an interesting analysis of the same. Drogus, Carol Ann (1997), *Women, religión, and social change in Brazil's popular church*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press y Carol Ann Drogus "Private Power or Public Power: Pentecostalism, Base Communities and Gender" in *Power, Politics and Pentecostals in Latin America*

²⁰ Brusco, Elizabeth E *The reformation of machismo: evangelical conversion and gender in Colombia*. 1st ed.; Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995; Mahado Campos, Maria das Dores (1996) *Carismaticos e Pentecostais: Adesao religiosa na esfera familiar*. Campinas, S.P.: Autores Associados; Sao Paulo; *Women, religión, and Social Change in Brazil's Popular Church* (University Press of Notre Dame Press, 1997

with feminist and sexual minority demands. This phenomenon of religious dissidence has shown an interesting dynamism by demonstrating how the same discourse that is used to oppress can also be used to liberate.

Pro-abortion Catholics, Queer Muslims or Pro-gay Evangelics, these are positions that for many are oxymoronic, they reflect the most interesting type of change that modernity has brought in relation to the religious. In stead of secularization, modernity has led to pluralism, showing that modernity and secularization are not necessarily connected²¹. People have not stopped believing although the ways in which they believe have been modified. Believers have more autonomy in the construction of their religious identities and among these many different ways of believing, dissidents constitute a relevant phenomenon.

Religious dissidence is an important political phenomenon to counter the hegemonic role of the church in Latin America. People react in different ways in the construction of their identities and dissenting is a way of negotiating religious identities with liberalized conceptions of gender and sexuality. It is a type of negotiation that displaces habitual understanding of identity processes. On the one hand the dissident reaffirms an identity belonging with what he is dissenting against. Although it may sound paradoxical, the act of dissenting is an act of community involvement. Unlike the deserter, who empties the power space, the dissident reaffirms his belonging even at the cost of risking his membership. But, dissidence also implies the articulation of an antagonism, the construction of a political space. The dissident also tries to break assumed or imposed consensus,

²¹ *Peter Berger maintains, precisely, that modernization, although implying a greater level of plurality, has not meant an intensification of secularization. See Peter Berger (1999) "Introduction" in The Desecularization of the world: resurgent religion and world politics. Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

prove the existence of fractures that point to a level of pluralization of apparently homogeneous realities.

These religious dissidences manifest in two fundamental ways. On the one hand, through feminist and queer theologies. These theologies (de) construct the official doctrines, proving that patriarchy is a historic and cultural construct and therefore, a characteristic that can be reconstructed. On the other hand, an important number of organizations have come up within the denominations, mobilizing politically to register alternate voices²². Within Catholicism, the group Catholics for A Free Choice (CDD) is a dissident organization, working on issues of gender and sexuality that enjoys maximum reach. After its creation in the United States, the CDD re-emerged in various Latin American countries where the Catholic Church has a preponderant role. The organization not only shows the way of being a Catholic who is different, more plural and more dynamic, but it is also a subaltern public sphere that engages with the Catholic Church through national and international campaigns²³.

What distinguishes dissident organizations is the articulation of religious discourses as a part of its political agenda. These discourses not only reveal the existence of multiple interpretations, many of them close to the way in which people negotiate and live

²² For an analysis of these 'protests within' the church see: Michele Dillon *Catholic Identity: Balancing Faith, Reason, and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. Katzenstein, Mary Fainsod. 1998. "Stepsisters: Feminist Movement Activism in Different Institutional Spaces." in *The Social Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century*, edited by David S. Meyer and Sid Tarrow. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield. *Faithful And Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest Inside The Church And Military*. Princeton University Press.

²³ At the transnational level Catholics for a Free Choice have an important role in the United Nations, as a global political arena, where a series of campaigns have been initiated against the Holy See.

their identities, but also provide ethical justification for issues like abortion and homosexuality in a context where moral discourses are the monopoly of conservative sectors. If reactive politicization implies a strategic inclusion of secular discourses, the dissidence phenomenon finds its strength in the public inclusion of religious discourses. The politics of resignification that these dissident organizations articulate against the official doctrine show how patriarchy and heteronormativity are historical and cultural constructions.

Instead of reinforcing secularization, it is important to generate political and legal frameworks that allow a more complete inclusion of these dissidences. It is not about excluding the religious from the public sphere, of depoliticizing it, but of including it in a more complete manner, with its fractures and pluralisms. If for the catholic hierarchy the solution is to maintain these dissidences within organizational limits, avoiding their public inclusion, theories such as secularization, indirectly favour, this 'privatization' of dissidences. Secularization, by excluding religious discourse from the public arena, only excludes dissidences and fractures as the official doctrine is re-included, in multiple ways. The challenge lies in a complete politicization of the religious phenomenon, wherein its plural voices would also be included.

CONCLUSIONS

This article reflects on secularization and its limitations to account for the resurgence of religion in the contemporary world. The secularization, that at some point of time was a paradigmatic and indisputable discourse, is now being reviewed owing to its limitations in accounting for the religious phenomenon. The challenge lies in generating normative frameworks that make this resurgence compatible, without delegitimizing it as a political phenomenon and at the same time permit the strengthening of the

liberalization of gender and sexuality, which are the dimensions that are most at threat from these resurgences.

To start with, religion is, inevitably, an aspect in the social and juridical regulation of gender and sexuality. Trying to inhibit this influence by strengthening secular forces, on the contrary, could result in the strengthening of the most conservative sectors. On the one hand, the reactive politicization of the Catholic Church and religious organizations shows how part of its public intervention is done from 'within' the rules of the secular. Although it is a religious Cosmo vision that is being defended, this defence is done by the articulation of scientific and legal discourses, which is termed in the article as strategic secularism. Besides insisting on the separation of the church/state, it is necessary to consider that church and religious organizations are political actors.

On the other hand, the religious dissidence phenomenon brings to light the important fractures within Catholicism. Pluralism is also a phenomenon within the denominations and a secular construction of the public dimension can obscure this diversity. In stead of insisting on the exclusion of the religious as a political phenomenon, the article proposes it's re-politicization, with its internal fractures and pluralisms. The de-legitimization of the religious, in some way, favours the conservative sectors that reduce the internal 'pluralism' to an organizational problem. Re-politicizing the religious also requires the politicization of this pluralism.

Secondly, it is necessary to overcome dichotomization between the religious and the secular. While the theory of secularization defines the secular in opposition to the religious, it is necessary to understand that the religious and the secular are mixed in a complex way when we talk of gender and sexuality. On the one hand, strategic secularism ignores the existence of essential differences between the religious

and secular discourse. The fact that a discourse is secular, does not necessarily make it, more open to dialogue and rational criticism. On the other hand, the phenomenon of religious dissidences, particularly alternative theologies, shows that the religious discourse can also be a discourse open to different interpretations²⁴. Finally, the strong dichotomization between the religious and the secular has made the forging of alliances between progressist sectors, difficult. While the Catholic Church and conservative sectors have a long history of alliances and articulation of discourse much beyond the religious/secular dichotomy, the strong secularism that characterizes the more progressive sectors, has made the emergence of a similar movement difficult. If the religious/secular dichotomy contributed for years to an undoubtedly progressive agenda, it is still necessary to re-examine it through social dynamics that are constructing new political spaces, in the shadows of secularization.

²⁴ *For an analysis on religious discourse as a rational discourse see Dillon op.cit.*

3. Fundamentalisms and The Secular State, the Defence of Sexual Rights.

Blanca Dole Durón

Blanca Dole Durón: Honduran, Coordinator of the Colectiva Feminista de Mujeres Universitarias (Feminist Collective of University Women). Graduate in Social Work from the National Autonomous University of Honduras. She was a consultant to CEPAL in the Democratic Governability project 2003-2004, a project which defined the strategy of the National Institute for Women to influence the process for approval of the Electoral Law.

A very Good Morning to all of you!

I would like to thank the organizers of this panel for dealing with an issue of such importance to the life of every human being.

Today, in the time that has been assigned to me, I would like to share some important aspects of the feminist struggle and some of the strategies adopted in the Honduran context:

- Brief description of my country, Honduras to situate ourselves in the context.
- What is our struggle as feminists within this context?
- And lastly what are the strategies that have helped us find a place in public opinion.

ASPECTS REGARDING THE CONTEXT

Honduras is a country in Central America, with a population

of 6.5 million people, of which 51% are women and 49% men. According to data provided by CEPAL, 79.3% of its population lives below the poverty line. The official figure of the medium and long term external public debt reached 4,785.2 million dollars in 2004. Debt servicing also rose to 153.8 million dollars. According to macro-economic analyses, the indicators show a certain improvement, which is mainly owing to the increase in the remittances made to family members by Honduran men and women living in the United States, which were over 1200 million dollars. This entire context is also marked by the negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, the ALCA and the Plan Puebla Panama. This discouraging scenario is further aggravated by the direct interference of the church hierarchy in the affairs of the State. At present there is a Sexual and Reproductive Health policy that has not been implemented because the church hierarchy is opposed to it and is in complicity with public officials. To add to this situation, there have been certain reforms to the Constitution of the Republic, which go against the human rights of people. These reforms use the welfare of the family as an excuse, in order to ensure that this institution is not permeated with bad examples, such as the co-existence of lesbians and gays. This situation, which has emerged recently, is a clear violation of the concept of a secular state, given that the petition for the constitutional reform was made by the confraternity of Evangelical churches and endorsed by the fundamentalist vision of the president of one of the state powers, in this case, the legislative power.

The signing of the CEDAW Protocol has also been hampered because of this viewpoint and because of the complicity between the church and the state. Honduran people, like people in many Latin-American countries, profess the Catholic religion, which in the last few decades has been displaced by the invasion of the so called mega churches that have organized themselves into a group called the Union

of Evangelical Churches of Honduras. These have been acquiring more and more power, from managing large capital to offering to end suffering, which serves to attract many.

THE FEMINIST STRUGGLE IN THIS CONTEXT

A starting point in an otherwise adverse context has been knowledge of our Constitution, which states that from the 1st of November 1880 onwards; the church came to be separated from the State, with it thus becoming a Secular State. The struggle has not been easy, being in a country in which the feminist stereotype is that of libertines, women who destroy homes, prostitutes, lesbians and every other qualification that the patriarchy has used to disqualify us.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED WITHIN THIS CONTEXT

The Colectivo Feminista Mujeres Universitarias (Collective of Feminist University Women) is committed to strengthening the Women's Movement and the Feminist Movement, in order to create political subjects who are capable of generating collective responses and we are likewise committed to forging alliances with different groups. To that end we would like to highlight the following as our successes:

- **The Minimum Agenda for Women (Dealt with the issue of abortion)**
- **Alliances and coordination with the Catrachas Lesbian Response Group.**

CHALLENGES:

- **Continuing with the defence of the Secular State**
- **Continue creating public opinion**
- **Maintaining alliances with Social Movements**
- **Maintaining the flow of information**
- **Setting up debate groups at the national level as response groups.**

CATTRACHAS Lesbian Response Group

Honduras

Tegucigalpa, M.D.C; 10th November 2004

PUBLIC STATEMENT

A Constitutional reform that is using same sex marriage as a pretext.

The homosexual community of Honduras would like to declare:

- That it has not been, nor is it, our intention to establish matrimonial ties within our community.
- That at present, articles 112 and 116 of the Constitution of the Republic do not allow marriage between persons of the same sex.
- That the State of Honduras is SECULAR, and therefore it is inadmissible and irresponsible on the part of the Deputy Rodolfo Zelaya, to introduce himself and declare publicly that the President of the National Congress, Porfirio Lobo is in agreement with and supports the stand taken by the church. (Hoy Mismo al Día)
- That the Evangelical Pastor Thomas Barahona, stated publicly that he had consented to participate in the list of deputies, in favour of the Porfirio Lobo camp, because he would do a better job than the present deputies given that he is a good son of God and said that his congregations would support this camp. (Kairos FM)
- That the President of the National Congress cannot use the excuse of internal policies of other countries to reduce to silence the

42 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS

- right of people to choose to love differently.
- That we know that these are delaying tactics to ensure that Honduran people and the media play down the major problems afflicting our society.
- That this reform is also prejudicial to other discriminated minorities such as the black and indigenous peoples, the disabled and women.

Therefore we appeal to the deputies of the National Congress to take cognizance of the mistake that their leaders are committing by this irresponsible action.

We appeal to the entities engaged in the defence of Human Rights to make a declaration against this social atrophy.

We appeal to the homosexual community to assert their rights, removing corrupt and homophobic politicians from the lists, by their vote.

Our Christian brothers and sisters must remember that there are false prophets and that some of them are right in front of your pulpits, spreading **HATRED in exchange for political power.**

IT IS TIME TO ACT, NO MORE SILENCE ...

Geneva, Switzerland; 12th December 2004

Ms. Asma Jahangir
Special Rapporteur on Religion
of the Human Rights Commission

Esteemed Rapporteur:

The Cattrachas Lesbian Response Group of the Republic of Honduras hereby appeals for your intervention in the face of wave of violence and the undue political interference of the Ecclesiastical Community in our country against the Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual and Bisexual Community (LGTB).

The Political Constitution of the State of Honduras of 1st November 1880 separated the Church from the State, thus establishing it as a secular state. (Attached)

As a backlash to the awarding of legal status to three LGBT organizations, on the 7th of August of this year, the Union of Evangelical Churches of Honduras, represented by the Lawyer Paulette Patiño Mungia # 04059, held public rallies, meetings with the Executive and Legislative Powers, demanding their impugnation, on the basis of the allegation that they go against morality, public order, health and public morals as stated in the objection submitted to the Secretariat of Governance and Justice on the 9th of November 2004. (Attached)

Owing to the interference of the Evangelical Churches in the matters of the State, the President of the National Congress, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, submitted the motion to modify articles 112 and 116 of

the Constitution of the Republic of 1982, to clearly establish that homosexual marriages are prohibited and that only families comprising a man and a woman, born as a man or a woman, may adopt. This motion was unanimously voted for in the first legislature of 28th October, dispensing with the requirement for two debates for approval of a law and approving it with just one. (See annexure)

We are of the opinion that this motion introduces the discriminatory exercise of the right to marriage, which did not exist in the Constitution, as it permanently restricts the possibility of a particular group from enjoying a fundamental right - which is not the function that a Constitution of any country must fulfil.

The homosexual community of Honduras never included the right to marriage as part of its agenda and Articles 112 and 116 of the Constitution of the Republic do not include it either, which is why the motion for Constitutional Reform is nothing but an act of demagogy, as part of the electoral campaign of the Presidential Candidate Porfirio Lobo Sosa, who is the current President of the National Congress and his confabulation with the Evangelical Churches (See annexure)- and it is in no way in response to any such demand made by the people of Honduras.

This homophobic campaign by the Evangelical churches, has unleashed a wave of persecution and even murder of the members of the LGBT community and a frontal attack by the media as the complaints made to the Special Rapporteur against Torture and the enclosed reports clearly show.

In the last four months, at least four persons from the LGBT community have been murdered in Honduras. Attached to this appeal are articles from newspapers and magazines and a video and a CD presentation, describing the facts.

Ms. Jahangir, as active and public members of the lesbian community of Honduras, we appeal to you to order an urgent investigation on the attacks by intolerant religious forces against the liberties of the sexual minorities and their intention to approve a constitutional reform that is going to restrict rights instead of extending access to their exercise of these rights.

Indyra Mendoza
Coordinator - Catrachas Group
Honduras

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4. An Account of the Participation of Lesbian Women in the LGBT Movement

Gissy Cedamano R.

Gissy Cedamano R is Coordinator of Lesbianas Feministas in Peru

CONTEXT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW MILLENIUM ONWARDS

- The unification of religious fundamentalisms with economic integrism. A strong relationship shared by the neoliberal and sexist economic power and the most conservative religious dogmas.
- The United States initiates invasions and aggressions against other states, expanding the empire. Alliance against the "axis of evil"
- In Peru, organized civil society achieves the overthrow of the Dictator Fujimori and the process to return institutionality to the country and investigate human rights violations and corruption, is initiated.
- International civil society proposes alternative programmes to counter sexist and violent neo-liberal globalization; by demonstrating before meetings of the WTC, World Bank and other organizations.
- International civil society comes together to discuss alternatives and strategies to counter the prevailing sexist neo-liberal model: WSE, ASE, Theme networks etc. Spaces for debate on alternative

- proposals to the model.
- In Peru, the Academia begins to include sexual diversity in its curriculum and to create theories.
 - There is a leap in communications globally: rapid and timely communications.
 - In Peru, the number of positions of the Opus Dei increases. The Vatican appoints as Cardinal, the Bishop of Ayacucho (a place where terrorist violence was at its worst during the period of terrorism), who among other things said that, "human rights are bollocks". With the Cardinal at the seat of power, the Opus Dei exercises a strong interference in the Affairs of the State - especially health and education. It impedes the creation of public policies, especially those concerning the sexual and reproductive rights of the people (two Health ministers connected with the Opus Dei stalled public family planning services by refusing to distribute contraceptives, including condoms) and the extension of rights to those sectors who are traditionally in a special situation of vulnerability (it opposed the approval of a law prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or any rights for these groups). It frequently targets gender perspective, gays, lesbians and contraceptive methods.
 - There are some achievements though: Some traditionally chauvinistic and lesbo/homophobic sectors, such as for example trade unions, begin to adopt more democratic theories and practices.

DEFENCE OF LESBIANS, GAY AND TRANS RIGHTS IN PERU:

Some of the strategies that lesbian women have devised include:

WITHIN THE LGBT MOVEMENT:

- Elimination of any type of hegemony and inequitable power: discussions on, training and spreading awareness about the phobias and misogyny within; gender perspective and equity; gender identity. Tension certainly exists between various elements and if this is not worked out in a suitable manner, it could have devastating consequences.
- In mixed organizations, apply the principle of "affirmative politics" with respect to lesbian women and trans persons.
- Visibilization and recognition of the existence and contributions of each of the components of diversity.
- Destruction of the popular notion that when we talk of the LGBT movement, we are talking of gays and that its struggle is only for the demands of the gay community.
- Development of platforms for each of the components of the LGBT movement and based on these, the developing of the LGBT Platform.
- Strengthen leaderships and train our spokesmen and spokeswomanes to debate and negotiate our agendas with different political actors and decision makers and opinion generators.
- Fair distribution and allocation of human, material and economic resources within the LGBT movement.
- Create democratic conditions for the formation and coordination of networks and other alliances. If any sector feels discriminated against, excluded, unrecognized or relegated, it cannot be sustained in this type of coordination.
- Ensure against false representations and phantom groups.
- Ensure that a few legal triumphs do not make us lose our perspective in the struggle for changes in the structure of society. We are in favour of a radical change in many of the existing institutions.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

- Alliances: strengthen alliances, in the case of lesbian women, with their natural allies, the feminists; consolidate alliances with the trade union and human rights sector; establish relations and eventually alliances with other sectors of civil society: movements of Indigenous peoples and African descendants.
- ¿Do gender transversality and diversities have a place in the spaces of our allies? We must communicate to our allies that we do not wish for them to include sexual orientation and diversity in their platforms and documents only because it is politically correct to do so; it should rather be because they, as human rights defenders, adopt our struggles, demands and interests and our struggle for our rights as their own. They must be reminded that there are no hierarchies in Human Rights. We want a proactive and not a discursive attitude.
- Persist with our struggle for a Law to prevent and eliminate discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. It is a framework law that will help us get other rights eventually: such as civil unions, adoption etc. This framework law should not only cover the punitive aspect but also the obligation of the State to educate people to create citizens with an inclusive attitude, one of respect for differences and diversity. Likewise, ensure that the Constitutional Reform recognizes sexual orientation as one of grounds for discrimination.
- Participate with feminist organizations in the fight for a Law on Equal Opportunities with Gender Equity, for sexual rights and for the right to abortion.
- Carefully review International treaties and conventions on Human Rights and DESC for argumentation for our draft proposals for laws, as well as report violations of our rights.
- Treat the LGBT Pride Day an opportunity to spread awareness about our demands and achievements, in a political yet festive

50 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS

manner, involving all democratic sectors of civil society in these activities.

- Coordinate campaigns, with other sectors to establish a Secular State and to strengthen the citizenship of persons.
- Fight for change in the definition of family and the institution of marriage.
- Provide alternatives for the meaning of Citizenship: this concept, the way it stands at present, seems neither democratic nor inclusive.
- Carry out continuous campaigns for public education. Diffusion of materials, radio programmes, radio spots, to sensitize people that all of us have the same rights and that discrimination and exclusion undermine the structures of our society and only serve to generate violence. Campaigns against sexist, racist, lesbophobic, homophobic and transphobic programmes. Report all such cases.
- Fight for education policies to include the principles of equality, non-discrimination and inclusion at all educational levels. Training of teachers in: HR, non-discrimination, consequences of exclusion, respect for differences, recognition of different types of families, of the different sexual orientations of mothers /fathers and students: sexuality free from religious, silent and hypocritical prejudices,
- With respect to the allies: they are welcome to suggest and support but not interfere in our decisions.

AT THE REGIONAL, CONTINENTAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

- With respect to the UN: contribute towards reforming it so that it may respond to the interests and demands of the world's population and not the interests of corporations; and that it should not only serve to palliate the devastating consequences of neo-liberal sexist politics.

- Work actively in the campaign to support the Proposal submitted by Brazil to the UN's Human Rights Commission.
- Promote regional, continental and international articulation by LGBT groups.
- Promote the establishment of the Latin American and Caribbean LGBT Platform.
- Lesbian women, gays and trans persons who participate in international events must take this platform to the conferences, workshops, seminars, panels or other such events of the specific issues or groups that they are a part of. For example: a lesbian labour unionist must negotiate the LGBT agenda in its union space.
- We as LGBT persons should not restrict ourselves to holding meetings only amongst ourselves and participating in our LGBT workshops. Rather we should participate in all spaces and on all issues. Organize workshops for non-LGBTs and only meet to coordinate strategies and evaluate our participation.

5. How fundamentalists operate and how we continue to resist and win some victories even, in spite of them.

Carla Batista

Educator with the SOS Corpo Insituto Feminista para a Democracia and Joint Secretary of the Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras. Brazil.

Through the last decade there has been a rise in the conservative sectors of religions, not only in the case of the Catholic religion but also in the case of Protestant and Evangelical religions. This conservatism is sustained and is increasing in tandem with the increase in political conservativeness, and vice versa.

However, it is important to always remember, that churches are not uniform blocks and that within them there are progressive sectors, although the action and the public discourse of these sectors generally do not enjoy the same visibility and social impact as the more reactionary ones. We must however reaffirm the importance of these progressive sectors expressing themselves and gaining a public space. The best example of this would be Catholics for A Free Choice.

Brazil has witnessed - and it probably is the same in other countries as well - the expansion of the influence of churches and their conservative ideas. Focussing in particular on suppressing

women's rights and the rights of those who speak of free sexual orientation, they have gained influence mainly by the investment that they have made in:

- Increasing community social work, given the decrease in state action in these sectors.
- Political parties: both in terms of candidatures, as well as in strengthening their ability to influence governments and parliaments.
- In schools, with proposals for the inclusion or re-inclusion of religious studies.
- In the media: Today churches are TV and radio channel distributors, besides also investing heavily in producing programmes, creating of a series of media persons and "products" that act as mouthpieces for their ideas and values.
- - In the establishment of social work organizations whose objective is to "cure" people whose sexual orientation does not fit within the heterosexual standard. Organizations that call themselves feminists but work against reproductive and sexual rights etc. These organizations also use the Internet as a privileged space for propaganda.

We are aware that for all this they have enough financial resources and political support and that the doors of the media are open to them.

I agree with what Francis Kissling said in Cordoba some months ago, about how conservative forces are behaving in this manner because they are reacting to the advancement of democratic proposals in the daily life of persons, thanks to the actions of social movements and in particular the feminist movement.

- The voting process for the Reproductive Health Law in Uruguay, gave all of us, who have been fighting so long for the

legalization of abortion, the faith that YES, it is possible and YES it can be now. And that we must Not wait any longer for "ideal conditions" to start the debate in our societies, on a larger scale than what we have been doing in the last few years.

In Brazil, we were investing a lot of our efforts (from the end of the 80s onwards) in setting up health services that would attend to cases of legal abortion, guaranteed by the law since 1940. Now we want legalization, and right now! Although we will continue with our struggle for partial victories.

- The widening of the dialogue and our capacity for articulation between movements in our region (and I believe that both the Campaign against Fundamentalisms, which was initially started by the Marcosur Feminist Articulation in the World Social Forum and which today has surpassed boundaries and has widened the debate and increased participation and mobilization against fundamentalisms, as well as the Campaign for a Convention, which among other aspects, has been a strong reason for the debate on secular state) have assumed an important role thanks to the political direction that we have been giving them.

- Our capacity for articulation and reaction was also important in terms of the Cairo and Beijing +10 processes, where we managed to reverse all the pessimistic perspectives that emerged and certainly, the immoral pressures of the Vatican and the United States.

In Brazil, we are also involved in all these other processes:

In mid 2003, a series of organizations, networks and articulations began to work in a more articulate, organized and strategic manner, in what was termed the Brazilian Campaigns for legal and safe abortions, the objective of which is self-evident! There are no doubts and no mid paths.

A concrete example of the action undertaken in the campaigns is the appeal submitted by the National Confederation of Health Workers - CNTS, defending the theory that it is a violation of human dignity to force a women to carry a pregnancy to term in cases of Anencephalia. The Supreme Federal Court ruled in its favour and this means that the entire health services must attend to women who decide to interrupt their pregnancy in such a case. This, besides being an authorization to perform an abortion legally, is also important because of the manner in which this case has become a topic of debate in Brazilian society for various weeks, mobilizing the media and various sectors of society, who are expressing their opinion through articles, letters to newspapers etc. This is the right time to widen alliances around the issue of reproductive rights and the secular state. There are many negative reactions from religious groups and the CNBB is demanding that this decision of the Supreme Court be reviewed.

The Visibility marches and the LGBT Pride March have had an increasing number of participants, including people who have adopted the cause and also sympathizers. And the number of municipalities that are now participating and want to hold their own marches is on the increase. It can be said that these marches depoliticize, but their importance cannot be denied as this is a very playful form of confrontation and provocation. Besides this these marches also help in the advancement of local initiatives for approval of draft proposals for laws, which would benefit homosexual couples.

It widens the scope of lesbian organizations as collective subjects, creating new organizations or movements and also helps in their articulation with women's and feminist movements, democratizing and establishing new agendas for these movements.

This year we also made a big investment on the issues of abortion, secular state and sexual rights in the conferences on public

policies for various spheres of action by governments, in particular in the health conferences and the human rights conference where, for the first time, representatives from various organized sectors of civil society participated and contributed to the widening of the meaning of human rights, where the secular nature of the Brazilian State was reaffirmed. It highlighted the fact that the Human Rights movement is where there is greater participation of religious organizations. We also debated on the legalization of abortion, but we did not conduct a vote in the final plenary session. The Women's movement and the LGBT movement were in agreement on these and other issues.

We also participated in the First Political Conference for Women. In this the secular nature of the state was once again reaffirmed and the decriminalization and legalization of abortion was almost unanimously approved! Around 20 thousand people participated in these processes, the majority of them, women. There were also representatives of civil society and governments. A strong cohesion can be noted among women's movements around this issue. Approval was received from each work group as well as in the plenary.

Well, it was certainly very optimistic. I believe that the manner in which the issue was introduced influenced me a lot. However I would also like to add that there is still a lot to be done. We have only begun but we are alert and ready to act as well as learn from all this. Thank you.

6. *Natural tips for getting a cardinal's help.*

Marcelo Ernesto Ferreyra

Marcelo Ernesto Ferreyra lives in Argentina and is the Program Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean at IGLHRC - International Commission for the Human Rights of Gays and Lesbians

The events that I am going to talk about are situated between two key moments in the achievement of the right to free sexual orientation in the city of Buenos Aires

The period between March 1992 - when, after various years of insistence and successive prohibitive judgements, first by the Inspección General de Justicia (Office of Corporations) and later by the nation's Supreme Court of Justice, founded on the most homophobic aspect of religious fundamentalism, the Argentinean Homosexual Community obtained legal status by a decree issued by the then President Carlos Menem - and September 1996 - when the Constituent Assembly unanimously approved an article that included the rejection of "discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation" in the statute of the City of Buenos Aires, amidst applause from the representatives of homosexual organizations¹ - shows the differences in the assessment made by the governing class, of the political risk

¹ *Diario Popular, Buenos Aires 1996-09-31, No to discrimination*

involved in holding on to traditional values in place of the new values that have already been accepted by public opinion.

We will try to list and analyze the strategies that helped us achieve a substantial change in the social imagery, which influences the concept of correct public image and political decision making.

The contrast is remarkable if we consider that in the first case it was necessary to threaten President Menem's image in American academic and intellectual circles, which shape the future leaders who eventually climb the economic and political ladders of American power.

Taken aback on this occasion, the President did not expect that the status of the CHA would be an issue that would result in his first brush with the students of the prestigious University of Columbia, an audience that had not questioned any of his responses till that moment.

- "¿Can you explain the contradiction in the fact that you proclaim liberty for all countries but in your own country you persecute and discriminate against homosexuals and lesbians?"

asked an Argentinean student, who was applauded by various young people within the room². He thus managed to force the President into salvaging his international image by granting the right hitherto denied.

Four years later, even the representatives of the most reactionary ideologies felt obliged to clarify "I am against discrimination" and to vote unanimously against it.

² *Diario Clarín, Buenos Aires, 20th November 1991, Un tema fuera de programa, Tabaré Areas*

It is important to point out to the crisis of institutional values that Argentinean society had already been undergoing since the military junta of 1976, with its 30.000 disappeared persons, an imprudent war with Great Britain and the endorsement of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The receptivity of public opinion on issues such as Human Rights and individual liberties grew; generating interest in learning more about issues that were hitherto taboo, such as for example, homosexuality.

However the political class - opposed as usual to the progressive processes taking place in the societies they govern - continued to maintain their actions and opinions based on outdated values, without having the courage to move beyond them.

The organization GAYS FOR CIVIL RIGHTS established on 1st October 1991, by the historical activist Carlos Jáuregui³ and a group of friends, with the objective of promoting debate on sexuality and achieving a legislation that would protect all minorities in general and sexual minorities in particular, and its' confrontation with the Cardinal Antonio Quarracino, would play a fundamental role in this direction.

One of the main strategies of the organization⁴ was to expose discriminatory and repressive acts before the media⁴.

The press thus became a key ally. The combination of good personal relations with journalists and novel discourses and images

³ *Carlos Jáuregui, Founder and first President of Comunidad Homosexual Argentina in 1984.*

⁴ *Gays for Civil rights, objectives and programme of action.*

attracted the attention of the media.

Somewhat seduced by the sensationalism and immersed to some extent in the new range of democratic values, the media collaborated and in turn stimulated this new attitude.

In this manner we were able to publicly expose the bastions of fundamentalism, thus encouraging social rejection of those sectors in power, which adopted this attitude: the government, the church, legislators etc. These reports were aimed at ensuring that public opinion, which was in general favourable, would reject and not identify with these reactionary models⁵.

Any event was viewed as an opportunity to make these denouncements. Within the first few months of 1992, a "moral brigade" assassinated three homosexuals and a lesbian, injuring others in the Argentinean Province of Mendoza. GaysDC held responsible not only those who had committed the crime but also those who, with their discriminatory words and attitudes had contributed to the emergence of these fundamentalist groups. A press communication dated 26th February 1992, for example highlighted: This entire situation is not surprising given a scenario where the predominant discourse in certain important sections of society is openly discriminatory or repressive. We must recall, among other statements, the words of Father Lombardero, (a well known, media savvy priest) who admitted that, sometimes killing, when it comes to homosexuals and transvestites, isn't evil. Or the words of the Archbishop of Buenos Aires that discredited homosexuality, as he considered it "a gross and even stupid deviation of nature." Such speeches serve to justify and even encourage murderers.

⁵ *GAYS FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, Conference by. Marcelo Ferreyra, Santiago de Chile, November 1993. Published by the Centre for Sexuality Studies in, "Por El Derecho a La Diferencia, (For the Right to Difference) 1st Seminar on Sexuality and Homosexuality", Publisher Nielol S.A., Santiago de Chile, May 1997.*

Although in the beginning this strategy was used indiscriminately, GaysDC soon found a key ally, who involuntarily became the target of social rejection.

Antonio Quarracino, Archbishop of Buenos Aires from 1990 till his death in 1998, had shared the majority position of the Episcopate, during the dictatorship, avoiding public condemnation of violations of human rights. As the General Secretary of the Latin American Episcopal Council, he publicly denied that there were people who had disappeared in Argentina.

However what made him the organization's choice was not his reactionary ideological views but his predisposition to respond every Saturday, through his weekly programme in the government channel, to every provocation issued by GaysDC, motivated most certainly by the haughtiness and pride that come with high official positions and the awareness of being the spokesman of an extremely powerful institution with multiple resources, fighting against a minority group.

These provocations were neither few nor isolated.

- 22nd February 1992 Press Communication in reaction to the Cardinal's declarations stating that homosexual relations were "gross" and "even stupid".
- 5th March 1992 March by LGBT groups in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral
- 11th June 1992 Press Release in which the Cardinal is held responsible, as the ideological author, for the murders committed by a morality commando in Mendoza.
- 12th June 1992 March by LGBT groups in front of a Methodist Church in which Monsignor Antonio Quarracino is presiding over a ceremony.
- 14th June 1992 Press release responding to declarations by

the Cardinal that homosexuals are not "sinners" but a "deviation from nature".

There was thus an interminable series of events, which over the years, made it very clear that the Cardinal, was engaging in debate with the organization specifically and although he never mentioned it directly, he institutionalized it in such a manner that his television programme came to be referred as "his regular space dedicated to homosexuality". One switched on the television and there he would be, talking about homosexuality. Of course one member of GaysDC would watch his programme every week to be able to draft new replies.

The language in each communication would take from the most reactionary elements of the Cardinal's speech and these would be used against him.

- The Cardinal of Hatred
- Monsignor Quarracino, "Why do you hate us so much?"
- Christ Liberates and Unites. Quarracino Condemns and Discriminates.
- Even Monsignor Quarracino belongs to Nature
- Homosexuality is as natural as the celibacy of priests.
- Even National-Socialism has tried to correct this "deviation from nature".
- Tips for concentration camps.

GaysDC also filed a couple of legal complaints against the Cardinal for violation of the Anti-Discrimination Law (N° 23.592). The aim was not so much to get a direct result but to gain long term political results. The difference in the two judgements is a clear testimony of the social progress that had been achieved.

In February 1993, GaysDC filed a complaint against the

Cardinal because in his programme, while explaining the correct use of the term conversion, he had said that gays were corrupt and perverted. Two months later, Judge Nocetti de Angeleri dismissed the complaint, stating that the Archbishop was justified as he had made this statement "during Lent" and questioned the Anti-discriminatory Law "as confusing", thus placing the Vatican doctrine before the National Constitution itself.

The second lawsuit had much more interesting consequences.

The words of Monsignor Antonio Quarracino in his programme, aired on 20th August 1994 were: "I was thinking why don't we create a large zone where all gay and lesbian persons could live. They could have their own laws, their journalism, their television and even their own constitution. They could live as a different country, and enjoy great freedom. Then it wouldn't be necessary for them to wear masks in their rallies. They could organize manifestations every other day, they could write, publish. I know they will now accuse me of promoting segregation. This is not so. But in any case, this would be discrimination in favour of their liberty. One has to evaluate what one is losing and what one is gaining. However, with all due generosity, with utmost sensitivity and compassion, I would also have to add that in this way a shameful slur on the rest of society would be cleaned".

The declarations by the Cardinal had been made shortly before the terrible Anti-Semitic attack that destroyed the seat of the AMIA (Argentine Israelite Mutual Association) causing the death of 86 persons⁶ and making Argentinean society highly sensitized to issues of discrimination.

GaysDC wasted no time with its press release. Entitled "Tips

⁶ *Anti-Semitic attack that on the 20th of July destroyed the seat of the AMIA (Argentine Israelite Mutual Association) causing the death of 86 persons.*

for Concentration Camps" parodying the name of the Cardinal's programme "Tips for a better world" it declared that all the reasons that Quarracino gave, had been used in Europe at the end of the previous century, when the Jewish issue emerged. Any problem requires a solution and for Adolf Hitler, the answer lay in creating large zones or extermination camps, to provide a final solution.

When this case was initiated, public opinion including the Cardinal's own brother had disapproved of his statement. Sociologist Torcuato di Tella stated: "Contrary to popular belief, I don't think that these declarations will have any negative consequences for homosexuals. What is more, the most serious consequences would be felt by the Catholic Church, which is only discrediting itself with statements of this nature. This kind of an attitude is going to make the church lose many more followers than it has already been losing".

The organization published a petition that, thanks to the number of signatories, had to be published in two successive issues of the Weekly "La Maga", in which it was declared that: "In view of the statements made by Cardinal Antonio Quarracino, in which he advocates the creation of an apartheid for gays and lesbians, the undersigned, citizens of Argentina, hereby express our profound rejection. We are of the opinion that our country must be founded on respect and equality and that the Cardinal's statements discredit the republican democratic conscience, which is the only guarantee of modern societies. All societies (yesterday, today and forever) comprise homosexual and lesbian people, who work, suffer and enjoy peacefully within this great unique family that is humanity" The signatories included, among others, the writers Ernesto Sábato, Marco Denevi, María Elena Walsh, Juan José Sebreli, the cine star María Luisa Bemberg, the brother of the Cardinal, Domingo Quarracino, deputies, councillors and representatives of all political parties, human rights organizations, among other important national

personalities. The cover note entitled "God free us from these priests" was eleven pages long.

Although Judge Ovarbide's sentence was obliged to recognize the discriminatory act without being able to condemn the Cardinal, because the Anti-discrimination Law did not mention sexual orientation, Monsignor Quarracino was made to ask for public pardon in the popular news programme *Tiempo Nuevo*. From this point of time he never again mentioned the issue and any similar declaration was evaluated much more carefully, under risk of transgressing values that had proved to be strongly rooted in social imagery.

When, two years later, the members of the Legislative Convention, which was assigned the task of drafting the Constitution of the City of Buenos Aires, had to evaluate the inclusion of the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation as one of the clauses, the most reactionary segments fled and went into hiding and did not have the courage to state their reservations, publicly and in front of the media. Needless to say the decision in favour of its inclusion was unanimous.

7. Fundamentalist Strategies in the National Women's Meetings in Argentina

Marta Alanís

*Marta Alanís, Catholics for a Free Choice - Cordoba
Argentina*

With regard to policies concerning women, the Catholic hierarchy seems very determined to inflict gender-based violence, and may it be said in the cruelest manner, in the last few National Women's Meetings. Specifically speaking, in 1997 at San Juan, the venue of the national meeting that year, an open provocation was issued in the form of a parallel meeting organized by the local Archbishopric. In this manner, they convert spaces that bring together various expressions of the demands of women in all spheres, into a veritable battlefield between official Catholic conceptions and the feminist viewpoint, especially on issues such as male and female roles, sexuality, reproduction, sexual diversity and families.

In the meetings in Salta, Paraná and the last one held in Rosario, the Church continued with its strategy to disrupt the meetings, by invading the workshops, in particular the workshops on sexuality, contraception and abortion, in some cases bringing poor women with all their children to the workshops, verbally attacking the feminists coordinating these workshops and taking absurd complaints to the press.

In the last meeting in Rosario in 2003, the Archbishop of Rosario and the President of the Argentina Episcopal Conference Monsignor Eduardo Mirás, organized a shock force of parishioners (each parish was given the mission of selecting 10 people) to counter the Meeting with their Catholic proposals and the reaction of the women was the radicalization of their demands, shouting slogans on the right to decide and the decriminalization and legalization of abortion.

The following events took place in the year 2003:

- In the month of February: An appeal for legal protection was submitted to the Federal Justice of Cordoba by "Mujeres por la Vida", an organization linked to the Opus Dei, to suspend the implementation of the National Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation Programme in the entire country. See annexure.
- In May: An appeal for legal protection was submitted before the Federal Justice by a Lefevbrist organization "25th March", prohibiting the production and marketing of 97% of the contraceptives in the entire national territory. See annexure.
- In August: a new crusade of the Catholic Church is launched by the Bishop of Rosario against the XVIII National Women's Meeting.
- During the entire year and in various parts of the country, appeals for legal protection continue to be submitted in the provincial court of Buenos Aires, Rosario and Cordoba to impede the implementation of the National Programme. So far they have been resolved favourably.
- A book by Olga Worman brings to light many such important cases like the case of the Santa Fe Bishop (Storni), where he is accused of and prosecuted for innumerable cases of sexual abuse against Seminarists.

- The case of a priest running a home named "Felices los Niños" who is accused of and prosecuted for sexual abuse of the children in the home, is brought to light.
- More cases are made public, of priests who are accused of and prosecuted for abuse of minors, generally males, who are always protected by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

On 3rd February 2004, we were notified by the Bureau of Legal Entities of a suit filed against us by the Lawyer Jorge Scala, demanding that our status as a Legal Entity be cancelled. A petition filed on the grounds that we were going against the National Constitution, emphasising that the objectives of our organization were not legitimate, by virtue of the fact that our statutory objectives linked to the defence of Sexual and Reproductive Rights also included: "...deepening the debate on the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, widening the debate to include the medical, legal and mainly ethical aspects". (Scala is the coordinator for the Southern Cone and the legal advisor to the Latin American Council for Life and Family VIDA HUMANA INTERNACIONAL that promotes and finances pro-life groups, based in Miami)

We are of the opinion that the statements made in this document clearly show the persecution of and hostility against our organization and its members, with a clear attempt at restricting our freedom of expression and the right to association. This attack can be classified as yet another act of violence against women and women's organizations by Catholic fundamentalists, which is something they have been specializing in over the last 20 years.

Catholics for A Free Choice - Cordoba has had a unique protagonist role in the defence of the National Programme for Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation along with the women's movement and in the last year we responded with timely initiative

to fundamentalist provocations during the National Women's Meeting in Rosario.

The intolerant Catholic fundamentalists are now attacking Catholics for a Free Choice. We must stop these actions from flourishing because they will be followed by others. We have, at all times gathered strength from the timely support we have got from various organizations, public institutions and civil society.

Besides this, we requested an urgent intervention from the Nation's Human Rights Office and today, we have a sentence that clearly endorses CDD Cordoba. This is, at the same time, an endorsement of all those organizations, which have been working for the decriminalization of abortion.

We submitted our defence on the 10th of February and have maintained communication and held meetings with officials from the Human Rights, Justice and National and Provincial Health Departments, in order to ensure that democratic institutions maintain transparency with those of us who are working for common good, the rights of women and social justice.

In Argentina, the right to decide on one's sexuality and maternity is one of the most brutally affected women's rights, as a consequence of the anti-abortion crusade launched by John Paul II in 1978, which has made it's presence felt in all of Latin America.

However some progress has been made within this extremely hostile context:

- The National Law on Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation
- Laws are being added in different provinces
- Neuquen has incorporated a law on tying of tubes and vasectomy on request.
- Law on life-threatening pregnancies

70 - ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS IN FUNDAMENTALIST CONTEXTS

- Law on the civil union between homosexuals and lesbians in the autonomous city of Buenos Aires
- Recently the appointment of Judge Argibay as a member of the Supreme Court of Justice, who initiated widespread debate in society on the issue of decriminalization of abortion owing to her declarations of being an atheist and in favour of the decriminalization of abortion.
- Around 14 drafts adding to the reasons for therapeutic abortion have been submitted, which have not yet got parliamentary status.
- On 28th September many marches were held in favour of the decriminalization of abortion in the major cities in the country.
- The public appearance of the book "Sin Tapujos" by our friend, Priest Mariani breaks the silence and does away with the double speak. It has generated a wide debate on the absurd conceptions of sexuality that the church obstinately continues to maintain. Of course, they have already stated that they are working on the punishment that this merits.

We cannot allow Catholic dogmas and fundamentalist whims to influence the politics of a State that should be secular and respect all people regardless of whether or not they are believers.

8. *The defence of Human Rights of LGBT people in Medellín*

Robinson Sánchez Tamayo

Robinson Sánchez Tamayo Director Corporación El Solar de Medellín. Colombia

Homophobic crimes are testimonies, that remind us that some times death comes disguised as love and takes away those incautious persons who, with no other choice, seek and enjoy love, although for a "few stolen moments".

The human rights situation of LGBT persons is characterized by a unique state of materialization and violation, owing to the specific processes of construction of our sexual identities, in a society that fails to recognize and persecutes sexual diversity, and also owing to the peculiar conditions that we have for social and political empowerment, in terms of the enforceability of our rights. This has led the social movement for sexual diversity in the city of Medellín to construct a different human rights theory for this section of the population, which re-approaches the strategies for the movement's actions and political demands, by questioning the conceptual and material developments on the issue of human rights that have been taking place in this city. Reflections and confrontations that are indispensable to the processes of intersectoral articulation, which must be initiated and consolidated with greater vigour within the country and which this movement must promote as a strategy

to achieve real and effective cultural transformation, to create societies that are for all people.

These special characteristics have had their origin in the consolidation of patriarchal, chauvinistic and heterosexual society, which for thousands of years has imposed itself on western culture, situating human interaction within certain hegemonic power relations, founded on the hierarchy of a dominant elite i.e. the macho, heterosexual, white and proprietary male, adopting a philosophy of exclusion of all that is different and the establishment of rigid standards of conduct that control all aspects of a person's life (economic, political, cultural, emotional, sexual etc.). This system of violence establishes the elimination of the other as way of perpetuating power, which is manifested culturally as different forms of discrimination: misogyny, homophobia and racism to mention only a few.

Sensuality, sexuality and affection are prohibited, influenced by a dichotomic and static conception of these aspects, rejecting pleasure, experimentation, difference, diversity and dynamism, which are very much a part of being human. The body thus becomes a space controlled by agents of power and therefore the object of violence and even war trophies. Given that it is the basic and most intimate territory of the individual, the exercise of power over the body guarantees the submission of subjects. Thus, the struggle for the liberation of the body becomes a motive for the redefinition of these power relations, imposed on us by this dominant class, allowing us to conceive of a truly democratic world, in this way.

Homophobia is thus the cultural expression of this system of discrimination, which prohibits the freedom to love and to

enjoy the body. It can be described as "the violence committed against those men and women who live their sexuality and emotionality in a manner that is different from the patriarchal, chauvinistic and heterosexist standard and that is present in all spheres of human interaction: politics, economy, family, religion, war, health, education, work, culture, public space and even in the most intimate realm that is one's own body."¹

This violence manifests itself in many ways, as homicides, violations, physical and moral aggression, humiliation, exclusion from all social spheres, continue to be constant practices in the city and in the country, being ways in which society reacts to LGBT persons when our sexual identities are revealed. It is perpetrated by various actors: civil, state, ecclesiastical, families, strangers and even legal and illegal armed persons. It is characterized by the cruelty with which it is carried out as a faithful expression of the hatred that inspires it. And it goes unpunished thanks to a society that is an accomplice in legitimizing it and an inert State that victimizes and continues to turn a blind eye to such acts.

Thus homophobic acts directly affect the human dignity of LGBT persons and the rights consecrated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (DESC) and in the Political Constitution, specifically speaking the right to life, to physical and moral integrity, free development of the personality, education, health, work, social security, the vital minimum and family and therefore they constitute a violation of human rights.

¹ *The Corporación EL SOLAR is working on this definition based on their experiences with the struggle against homophobia.*

Likewise, these acts are roadblocks to the construction of peace, owing to effect of the worsening of the situation of armed conflict and armed politics in the country, which result in clear violations of our human rights being termed as acts of war. Therein lies the importance of including this issue in peace agendas that are formulated by states as well as by civil society and also the need to implement a humanitarian agreement, which would prevent such practices during conflicts.

To that end, society and the State must play a more active role in the fight against homophobia, in order to truly establish relations of peace that are democratic and respectful of the human rights of all persons. They should take responsibility for the critical situation of LGBT persons and work towards cultural changes that would help triumph over this society and the models that it imposes. In particular the State, the Catholic Church and Christian Churches, which must with immediate effect, put a stop to steady and public expression of homophobic hatred and violence committed against this section of the population.

But this recognition of the human rights of homosexual men and women, bisexuals and transgender persons must be accompanied by a process of their self-acknowledgement as subjects of rights, with the ability to exercise and demand these rights, regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation. This is because they too have been shaped within a homophobic culture which denies them their rights, resulting, in many cases, in their legitimizing the violence of which they are victims. For this the actions of the social movement for sexual diversity must be strengthened by the social and political empowerment of this group, which is not aberrant, but the object of rejection and persecution, in a situation of permanent conflict owing to the concentration of power.

This concentration of power shall only be heightened with the imposition of the neo-liberal globalization model, which is another roadblock faced by LGBT persons in the materialization of our human rights. This translates into the non-recognition of human rights, mainly of the DESC; into reducing the State's responsibility in guaranteeing the needs of its citizens and into the impossibility of access to basic services, reserving the possibility of a life of dignity only to those who have the capacity to pay for it, none other than the hegemonic agents of power and above all to those who acquire a certain purchasing power. Therefore the movement must engage in a direct fight against this model and participate in the process to design an alternate model.

For all of the above, what is required is a civil and state infrastructure for research, support and follow-up of the human rights of LGBT persons, which has been non-existent in the period in question. Firstly it is because this issue does not have the State's attention. A State headed by high government officials, the Congress and the Armed Forces that, far from fighting homophobia, has continued with a policy of denial of rights to this group and has inflicted all sorts of atrocities on it, in spite of which it is urged to design a policy in this direction. On the other hand institutions and civil persons who have worked on the issue have had major difficulties in developing on this proposal in a suitable manner, owing to lack of economic resources.

This lack of resources, however, has not prevented these organizations and individuals, who are expressions of the social movement for sexual diversity, from drafting reports in which they have analysed the situation and proposed multiple actions to improve the conditions of life of LGBT persons in the city,

with an untiring strength of heart and a fighting spirit which resists and persists in the face of difficulties, in the same way that homosexual, bisexual and transgender love resists and persists in a world that condemns it.

Thus the Corporación Comunidad Amigas Comunes and the Corporación El Solar have been drafting annual reports on the status of the human rights of LGBT persons since 2001, which till date have been oriented more towards sensitization and definition of the context, rather than follow-up and reporting of specific cases. We need to first seek self-recognition and recognition of all that we have referred to, in order to build the foundations of the political force of public condemnation of the transgression of these rights; otherwise these reports will continue to be mere anecdotes about people who are invisible to State and society.

These reports also record some of the reflections on human rights that the social movement for sexual diversity has been constructing, complementing the debate underway in Medellín, on this issue.

They describe a context in which the violation of these rights is a systematic, cultural practice; where in spite of the fact that violence against these persons is common and frequent, homophobia continues to be invisibilized and its victims continue to remain unknown, as if society were refusing to acknowledge just how monstrous it can be and just how much damage it can cause in this quest for power that, like someone said, ends in the non-recognition of the other.

This is thus a context in which, the actions of movements aimed at social transformation and enforcement of their rights,

acquire importance. They work on the basis of two main strategies. The first is the visibility of sexual identities in the context of the social and political inexistence of LGBT persons, a result of the rejection and ostracism that sexual diversity has faced for centuries. The naming and acknowledging of these identities is a prerequisite in the social struggle for their human rights, as merely providing figures corresponding to violations of the rights of someone who doesn't exist or is important to society, doesn't carry any political weight. The second is the fight against homophobia, which is the main obstacle to the materialization of their human rights.

The first strategy finds its main expression in the Sexual Diversity Month that is held in the month of June, framed in the context of the celebrations of the International Gay Pride Day. This has given the city of Medellin an opportunity to experience co-existence within sexual diversity first-hand, allowing LGBT persons and in particular transgender people the chance to externalize their sexual identities, under the astonished gaze of a conservative antiochian population. It has created spaces that facilitate the emotional, sensual, sexual, artistic and cultural expression of these identities, with this being, for many of them, the only opportunity in the year to do so; in an atmosphere of solidarity in a community that being a product of this homophobic society, lacks solidarity within. Therefore this action must be considered an action by the movement for society as a whole and not exclusively for some individuals or organizations and, it must be rescued from the commercial and consumerist image that it has been associated with and accorded the transgressor, libertarian and political character that it has.

With regard to the second strategy, the NO to Homophobia day was a visible and constructive strategy for the elimination

of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sexual identities or preferences. To be able to contribute in this manner to the construction of a society that is respectful and inclusive of human diversity, in all its various manifestations; where sexuality can be a possibility for enjoyment, pleasure, eroticism, love, seduction, co-existence and a strategy to achieve peace. An initiative that was originally started by the Corporación El Solar, this went on to become a collective effort, with the participation of people and NGO's from various social sectors, who understood that homophobia is an issue that concerns society at large, and is not exclusive to the city of Medellin. It is in fact an issue that concerns the world at large, which is why today we are extending an invitation to other cities and countries to associate with this project.

Likewise, as a strategy to reduce the rates of impunity that characterize homophobic acts, we have started a project to weave a quilt, which we have called the COLCHA DE LA PASIÓN. It contains snippets from messages from people who have been victims of homophobic crimes and this is a first step towards creating awareness and condemning such acts that have been invisibilized by society, the State and the Catholic Church, and continue to enjoy impunity. Needless to say it is a painful constant reality in the memories of the victims, families, and friends. Although in this first initiative, we only collected information on violations of the right to life, the idea was to eventually link these with reports on violations of all human rights of those who do not live their emotionality and/or sexuality according to the patriarchal, chauvinistic and heterosexist standard.

This is it extremely necessary to deconstruct stereotypical myths and models created by this culture, to overcome

prejudices, discrimination and intolerance and thus understand each other in all our differences. Thus, what is required are open minds that are willing to change, to abandon the dichotomic and simplistic view of sexuality, and also understand the enormous and complex diversity of human sexuality which, as we go deeper into the exploration, study and practice of it, offers an infinite array of possibilities for pleasure and enjoyment that are open to us. Thus only by understanding ourselves as complex beings, within an infinite pluralism that is not only sexual but also present in all processes of individual and collective construction, can we truly question existing economic, social and political models, thus achieving a real and effective liberation of the body, which is the prime target of domination. In this manner it is possible to destroy the power relations established by the dominant class and thus conceive of another possible world, a world that is sensual², fair, equitable and inclusive, which co-exists in sexual diversity.

² *For the Corporación EL SOLAR sensuality symbolizes the struggle for the liberation of the body as part of its social and political demands.*

9. *On Fundamentalisms in Colombia.*

Sandra Mazo

Sandra Mazo, Catholics for A Free Choice, Colombia

Religious and political powers are at the heart of fundamentalisms, which operate on the principle of controlling and negating thought, desire and the possibilities of constructing realities based on the life needs and ambitions of persons. Thus behind fundamentalist ideas we find fear, silence, conformism, tyranny, alienation, the imperious idea of creating fear and above all blame and hatred.

This phantom known as fundamentalism, is fast garnering attention, but although it is a phenomenon that has manifested itself at different points in human history, today it has emerged with renewed strength and is seeking to destroy one of the achievements of modern thinking, that is to say, reason and the autonomous subject that upholds it.

When we talk of fundamentalisms we are referring to religious and also political postures, which claim to possess the absolute truth and therefore, feel it is legitimate for to them to impose this truth upon their fellow beings. Fundamentalism operates as an intellectual and ideological disease that threatens the very foundation of our culture. It refutes the possibility of adaptation, is opposed to the development of new ideas, aims at regressing to the past and therefore takes recourse to tradition, conservatism, dogmatism and intolerance.

The views of the Colombian Catholic Church are a dominant expression of fundamentalisms, as the Church has maintained an authoritarian image institutionally, accompanied by a vehement desire to recur to the past in many of its teachings. In spite of attempts to introduce modernization in the ecclesial structure and to try and respond to the needs of its followers in a world that is characterized by constant and accelerated change; With respect to the poor, in the social sphere, its populist language and at the same time its connivance with the powerful, that marks the actions of the church, never cease to surprise. There is increasing evidence of its voice that timidly condemns the models of exclusion adopted by "powerful" nations and "certain powerful entities" in the face of the growing demands of poor countries, but its praxis does not wish to compromise its intimate relationship with power.

In our country, reason help those who have protested against the doctrinal arrogance of the Colombian Catholic Church, which rejects the most advanced theological debates and spends enormous amounts on publishing notices to dispute these. With reference to the case of the Jesuit priest Alfonso Llano, his statement that "What is essential, is invisible to the eye" and therefore with reference to Mary's virginity, which was the topic of one of his articles, what is more important than orthodoxy is to recognize emotional life and the importance of sexuality. He thus gives fair importance to an issue that among other things, has over the centuries resulted in the hateful domination of women and the imposition of a model of servility and docility on them, even at the cost of their own lives. The question is clear in Padre Llano's view: "Can the hierarchy continue to protect its less literate followers to the detriment of the advancement of research and of its literate followers, for whom traditional interpretations are no longer acceptable? To choose to protect the weak may seem like an act of charity, but it could also be interpreted as a way of obscuring the truth, when this truth can

offend¹" Fundamentalism and sectarian thinking are fuelled by such attitudes and actions and naturally find a suitable breeding ground among the less informed.

It is worth mentioning here that in Colombia the fundamentalist alliance between the Catholic Church and political power, has resulted in strategies aimed at impeding the development of public policies that are beneficial to women and other sectors that have been historically discriminated against. This is the case, for example, of the recent debates in the Congress of the Republic on the decriminalization of abortion and undesired pregnancies. In effect, public opinion has had to suffer the abundance of admonitions, sensational full page advertisements and gross manipulation of sentiments, by some organizations of the Catholic right-wing who, protected by their strong economic power, are in a position to "make themselves heard" and to spread their intransigent teachings against freedom and the discretion of the informed conscience on an issue that by itself, leads to strong confrontations and polarizes discussions, losing sight of those who are actually affected by the alarming figures of unsafe abortions, which endanger lives of thousands of Colombian women every year.

Some of these organizations such as Unidos a Dios salvaremos a Colombia, Legión de María, Consejo Nacional de Laicos, do not hesitate in using statements that discredit those members of the congress who dare to extend their support to the legislative initiative, stating that what they do achieve is only an increase in the numbers of illegal murders, which are a result of the violence that has afflicted us from the middle of the last century. It is clear that there is no empathy with the reality of abortion and as some of the editorials in the daily *El Tiempo* point out, the debate that this issue elicits is

¹ "Ofensivo para oídos piadosos", by Jorge Aurelio Díaz in *Lecturas Dominicales, El Tiempo, 19th January 2003.p.10.*

loaded with moralism and in view of the strong passions that it awakens, one would think that abortion is a diabolical modern invention, that challenges the solid, absolute and traditional values of the civilized world. The fact that Western laws have also been tolerant is ignored and according to the historian James C. Mohr who informs us that the anti-abortion wave that rose in the XX century, should be viewed as "a deviation from the norm, an interruption of the historically tolerant attitude that has always existed on the issue of abortion"². The article also questions: ¿What is best for a Secular state like Colombia: giving expression in legislation to issues that reflect the respectable, but arguable position of the Church and some sectors of moralistic extremes (we would call them double standards) or trying to establish public policies that would prevent the death of an important number of about 400,000 mothers, many of them adolescents, who undergo clandestine abortions every year...?³

On his part, the President of the Colombian Institute of Bio-ethical Studies stated that a woman who has been raped has the right to redressal of her grievance as a victim, because if she cannot abort she will be forced to carry a pregnancy to term and give birth to the child of a villain for whom she feels nothing but hatred. "In my opinion, if a human being had control over the conditions leading to his birth, then surely the fact that he was conceived under desirable conditions and that his progenitor was someone known, would count as an important requisite."⁴

Another sample of this fundamentalism in the Colombian Catholic Church, is the fact that it continues to insist that the Constitutional Court of Colombia, created by the Constitution of

² "Moralismos que matan ", in *El Tiempo*, 7th June, 2002

³ "Aborto y salud pública", in *El Tiempo*, 29th May, 2003

⁴ "La despenalización del aborto", in *El Tiempo*, 1st June, 2003

1991, is acting in the manner of an enlightened despot merely because it has not declared the norm allowing the cessation of the civil effect of catholic marriages, as unenforceable; A norm which, in our view, is in keeping with the spirit of the National Constitution. Does the Church wish to impose its own views on matrimonial ties, ignoring the sociological reality in Colombia and the normativity that accompanies all modern States. In the same vein, we Colombians who identify as Catholics, but at the same time as citizens of a country that seeks to lay the foundations of tolerance, respect and recognition of otherness, view these statements with surprise, as these are nothing but the clearest expression of interference of the Church in the affairs of the State.

This is why the fact that the Congress of the Republic is debating on the draft proposal for the law on same sex civil unions, has been severely criticized, because according to the hierarchs, this goes against nature. They have been quick to forget the most recent scandal involving Catholic priests and bishops, with multiple documented cases of paedophilia. "Holy Equivocation" is the title of an article in the press, states, with good reason that "one has to be in the most recalcitrant cavern to defend the idea that homosexuality goes against nature, when on the contrary, it is the expression of a person's nature". Evidently we cannot be a civilized nation with such forms of discrimination that go against the legal ordainment.

It is evident that in recent times the Church has wished to influence decisions that are within the purview of the legislative power, through it's invisible yet obvious power, to ensure that these types of initiatives are shelved and relegated to the darkest corners of silence. Actions that enjoy support, owing to the dynamics of the violent context that Colombia lives in, as issues like these take on another dimension, given the aggravated situation of armed conflict in our country.

On the other hand, the level of political commitment and the conscience of the Colombian people, is still in an incipient phase, to be able to support initiatives favouring the demands of women. Therefore, what is being created now in Colombia is a silent manifestation against these issues. Above all, this type of religious fundamentalism is countered by the people in a pragmatic manner, that is to say, people in general do not follow the doctrines of the Catholic Church on issues that are fundamentally linked to their personal life. However, the obvious silence of the Church hierarchs in the face of issues such as the raw violence unleashed on the communities or the ignominious violations of fundamental human rights, is an attitude that Colombians condemn in silence, in rejection of which they will soon speak out and demand that the Church take a stand and involve itself in the real issues that are of vital importance to the majority of Colombians, especially to the victims. It must not be ignored that many of the worst ignominies committed by the paramilitary forces, claim to be founded on illustrious Catholic thinking, which deserve the most rancid neo-conservative qualification.

Now, it is not surprising that the same authoritarian and fundamentalist phenomenon is present in other latitudes, albeit in the distinctly political sphere, which in spite of what some people may think, is significant in terms of the alliances that can be forged between two types of sectarianism against public liberties. In effect, in view of the imperatives of the new world order we have seen how, ever since the 11th September 2001 attacks, the United States has not stopped proclaiming itself as the new international gendarme and therefore is willing to lend an arm to any doctrine that fits into its imperialistic aspirations and into its agenda of political fundamentalism, which it wisely blends with conservative and Manichean religious ideas. In the spirit of the crusades, the United

States, state many analysts, is waging localized wars to eliminate any focus that could represent a threat, at the same time that it is trying to reinstate "democracy" in nations like Iraq that could serve as a platform for extending democracy to its neighbouring countries.

All of this finds its inspiration in a neo-conservative school of thought. The so-called Straussians, followers of Leo Strauss, a Professor of Political Philosophy from an orthodox Jewish family (who died in 1973), who among other viewpoints, maintained that it was necessary to do away with secular democracies in favour of democracies linked to religious confessions, so as to create a true public moral⁵. Some other analysts are not very convinced that effectively a leader like Bush, bases all his politics on his religious convictions, in spite of his support to social programmes with this type of fundament and his repeated demonstrations of religiousness in public, which cause discomfort and create " an image of an arrogant crusade abroad and a fear of invasive moralism at home" However it is necessary to remain alert to alliances, which in the name of any of the fundamentalisms, attack the lives and dignity of millions of men, women and children the world over.

⁵ "USA y el nuevo orden mundial", in *El Tiempo*, 26th May 2003, p.19.

"religious, economic, scientific or cultural, fundamentalism is always political and flourishes in societies that negate humanity in its diversity and legitimize the violent mechanisms adopted to subjugate one group to the other, one person to another. Essentially exclusionary and bellicose, fundamentalisms undermine the construction of a project for the human race, where all persons have the right to have rights, by sacrificing the lives of women at the altar of perversity".

This campaign aims at "amplifying the voices" that oppose discriminatory social practices, discourses and representations. These voices were the inspiration behind the slogan **YOUR VOICE IS FUNDAMENTAL AGAINST FUNDAMENTALISMS**

MARCOSUR Feminist Articulation AFM

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