

Editorial: Abortion and Gay Marriages

Stephen M. Marson, Ph.D., Senior Editor

Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics, Volume 12, Number 2 (2015) Copyright 2015, Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)

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Briefly for background purposes, Kim Davis, clerk of courts for Rowan County, Kentucky, refused to authorize marriage licenses for gay couples. She was found in contempt of court and jailed—for her religious beliefs. I assume readers know the Kim Davis story. As a catalyst for the Kim Davis story, I have two points I want to make that address social work values and ethics.

First, I attended Catholic grade school, Catholic high school, and Catholic college. Although I do not identify myself as Catholic, I must admit Catholic values are embedded in my soul—except for one. Throughout my education, I have taken the pro-choice position (even in high school). In college philosophy classes, I argued the pro-choice position against my professors (who were nuns). They were very heated experiences. However, nuns are women of high integrity. My grades did not suffer because of my position, but my grades reflected my academic performance. Dominican nuns are great teaching role models

My first major experience outside of the Catholic educational influence was my admission to The Ohio State University, where I received my MSW. Even in public institutions of higher education, abortion was an extremely hot topic (more so than today). Professors are expected to challenge students. A professor asked me what I would do if I worked for Catholic Social Services and a client wanted a referral for an abortion. As they should and must, Catholic Social Services has an uncompromising policy opposing any discussion of an abortion from their staff. I replied that I would never gain employment with Catholic Social Services. The conversation went for about 10 minutes and ended with the question, “What if there were



no jobs for you except at Catholic Social Services?” I vividly recall that my reply was lightning fast: “I would pump gas¹ before I would work for Catholic Social Services.” My professor was shocked but nevertheless impressed.

The bottom line on this is: If one’s moral position is contrary to one’s job, one has to find another job. If Kim Davis is facing a moral dilemma as a clerk of courts, she must leave her position. That is the moral thing to do.

Second, what is freedom of religion? “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” The key dimension of the First Amendment is the exercise of one’s religion. Clearly, this “exercise” does not include opposing or oppressing one religious ideology over another. In other words, our Constitution protects homophobia based on a religious ideology. However, it does not permit an individual to force a homophobia religious ide-

¹ Many younger readers will not understand “pump gas.” During that historical point in time, young men could easily find employment at a gas station, where attendants would pump gas into the car. There was no such thing as self-service. It was unskilled labor, but it paid above minimum wage.

ology on others. Simply stated, being opposed to same-sex marriage on religious grounds is constitutionally protected. Forcing one's religious-based opposition to same-sex marriage is not protected.

I find Kim Davis's position very disturbing. On an international level, we are facing the ISIS philosophical position. The ISIS position is to wed Islamic fundamentalism with the rule of law. The organization is radically opposed to religious freedom and desires to instill Islamic ideology on others. As for me, I don't see the difference between Kim Davis's position and the religious position of ISIS. Both demand that we comply with their

religious positions. Yes, Kim Davis's position is no better than the ISIS position. This is NOT a left-wing position! Dr. Ben Carson (Republican running for the presidency of the United States) stated: "I don't care what a person's religion beliefs are or religious heritage is. If they embrace our Constitution and are willing to place that above their religious beliefs, I have no problem with that." Carson was referring to Muslims, but Kim Davis's position falls well within Carson's paradigm!

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