

Homosexuality



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Two billboards were covered up, yesterday, March 9, as the identity of the man responsible for them was revealed. These billboards angered the civic and gay rights leaders tremendously. Located in Staten Island, they condemned homosexuality by using verses from the Bible.

The man responsible for this was Reverend Kristopher Okwedy of the Keyword Ministries in Staten Island. He paid \$1, 800 to post the two signs for one months time. These signs cited four translations of Leviticus 18: 22. It read: Thou shall not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is abomination. These messages were covered up yesterday with McGruff the crime dog and Smokey the bear, when Guy V. Molinari, the Staten Island borough president denounced it, along with local gay leaders.

Mr. Okwedys name had remained anonymous until yesterday, when the billboard company released it, with his permission of course. He felt that the company improperly censored him. In a statement he said: This is the land of the free, home of the brave. You are supposed to protect the rights of free speech. I paid money and did not violate any city laws. Donald Rosenthal, a lawyer for the union that owns the billboards, said that the signs were covered up because they did not disclose who paid for the messages. Mr. Okwerdy said, however, that he was never told that he had to put his name on them. He decided to remain anonymous, but would not have had a problem with revealing his name if asked. Daniel Master, legal counsel of Molinari, said that the message should not have been printed even with the name attached: A responsible member of the business community would not have printed this.

There are a couple of issues being discussed here. First of all, there is the issue of the first amendment. The first amendment gives the citizens of the United States the right to free speech. Does covering up the signs violate that right? Isn't he allowed to say what he pleases just as the billboard for a car or for a food franchise? The second issue is gay rights. Does this man have the right to bash homosexuals? If so, aren't the homosexuals having their rights compromised by this billboard. Should the city allow for making so many people angry, uncomfortable and frustrated just because one man wants to have his say?

I am a very big gay rights activist. I feel that they are people just as heterosexuals are, and blacks and Asians and everyone else for that matter. I hate when their rights as citizens and as human beings get violated by bigots and ignorant people. However, I also feel that the Bill of Rights provides laws for everyone, bigots included. So if a person wants to bash gay people, as long as he is not being violent, I feel that he should have the right to do so. The reason that the city gave for covering up the signs was very weak and implausible. Who cares if the person who put up the signs does not disclose his name? They were just getting a lot of pressure from the gay and civil rights activist, so they found a loophole to cover up the signs. This in no way excuses them from ridding a man his Constitutional rights of free speech and free press.

Bibliography: