

MEMORIES PIZZA

Saturday

April 4, 2015

There have been a growing number of reports in the news about religious freedoms and how they pertain, or don't pertain, to businesses who service the general public. The debate, as I understand it, seems to have started when it became known that "Obama-Care" made it mandatory for an employer's insurance to cover various contraceptive devices, something against the religious beliefs of many people, businesses, organizations, churches, etc. Because of the outcry, the laws were amended to provide certain exemptions, and the matter was resolved, or so everyone thought. However, as we're now seeing, this topic is far from being resolved.

The latest issue garnered national attention when a reporter posed a hypothetical question. The interview was about what to do in the event that the religious rights and/or beliefs of the business owner or employee conflicted with the religious rights and/or beliefs of the customer. Were the owners and/or employers required to abandon their religious rights and/or beliefs for the sake of the customer? Or could they instead choose to refuse to provide service, citing the conflict that providing such service created?

In this particular instance, the reporter asked the owners of Memories Pizza, people who don't believe in gay marriage, whether or not they'd consider catering a gay wedding. To this hypothetical question, the owners replied that, while gay people were more than welcome in their establishment, where they'd be served without issue, Memories Pizza would **not** be catering any gay **weddings**. They continued on to explain that the Holy Bible instructs them to love their neighbor, without judgement, and for that reason, gays were more than welcome in their establishment, where they'd be served without discrimination or judgement, but that catering a gay wedding was an entirely different matter altogether. Catering an event such as a gay wedding places the owners and/or employees in a position of appearing to participate in an event in which they have deep seated religious beliefs and objections against, so for that reason, they want to be able to decide not to cater the event.

Once you get beyond the strong emotions associated with what, at first, appears to be a simple case of discrimination, you begin to realize that it's not quite that simple, especially when you change the nature of the religious beliefs at question.

For example, instead of asking the owners whether they'd cater a gay wedding, ask yourself whether or not **you**, as a Christian, Catholic, Muslim, Baptist, etc., would cater a meal for a religious seminar in which the speakers are touting the positive aspects of the ISIS belief system, which includes promoting the idea that they should have the right to execute people of your religious beliefs if they don't immediately convert. All of a sudden, you want to be able to have the right to refuse to provide service based on your, legitimate, religious beliefs, so why shouldn't the owners of Memories Pizza be able to do the same?

The owners and employees of Memories Pizza, or any establishment, for that matter, are **entitled** to not only the right to hold their own religious beliefs, but also to practice those beliefs, just as you and I are. In the event that those beliefs conflict with a customer's beliefs, they should be permitted to refuse to provide service, but that doesn't mean that this right should be limitless. It's only when the business is being asked to **actively** participate in, or participate in such a way that appears to condone the behavior in question, that a business should be permitted to deny service.

Perfect example: regardless of your beliefs on the matter, prostitution's legal in certain parts of Nevada. Should a heterosexual male prostitute be told that he **has** to provide service to a male? That's **active** participation in something that's against his beliefs and he shouldn't have to do it. Likewise, even though it was a hypothetical question, Memories Pizza shouldn't be forced to cater a gay wedding, something they have strong religious beliefs against. Not only does it give the appearance that they condone it, it also goes against all of their religious beliefs.

I'm curious, what do you have to say about the issue? Perhaps you know of a better way, a way that allows both the business owner and employees to have, and exercise their religious beliefs, while at the same time allowing the customer to have and exercise their beliefs.

Shawn L. Perrot CDCR# V-42461
CMC-East Cell# 6326
P.O. Box 8101
San Luis Obispo, CA 93409-8101