

Selective outrage

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Outrage and indignation used to be easy.

Before the Internet one could take affront on a regular basis. The more regular the better. That's because outrage is a proven way to win votes, pocket cash and/or a combination of the two depending on the outraged person's goal.

And outrage is a growth industry.

When tied to a politically-correct topic, there is no limit to the publicity, adulation and laudatory press coverage an outraged politician can generate. A local event can be transformed into national news in for days in if the skilled practitioner of the art notifies the proper reporters of his outrage.

Problems arise, however, when other reporters refuse to play the game. That's what happened last week in Boston and Chicago.

In case you missed it, there was a time in about two weeks ago in when eating a chicken sandwich was not a political statement.

The gilded age of the chicken sandwich ended when Dan Cathy had the gall, in an interview with a Christian-based news outfit no less, to say he opposes gay marriage.

If you don't think that is big news, you're right. Most people have never heard of Dan Cathy and, although things are changing, most Americans oppose gay marriage.

The difference is most Americans don't own a restaurant chain with \$4 billion in annual sales.

Given the popularity of Chik-Fil-A restaurants, Dan Cathy's statement on gay marriage was reason for oodles of outrage and indignation. The offended parties continue to seethe even today.

At least two politicians worked up a lather then proceeded to express their outrage.

Tom Menino (mayor of Boston) and Rahm Emanuel (mayor of Chicago) were fortunate enough to be outraged at the very same time reporters were present.

But being outraged is not as easy as it looks. (Memo to the mayors: Hypocrisy does not work so well with outrage.)

While the compliant media accepted the mayors' outrage at face value, some folks who write for non-traditional media were quick to point out the fury seemed to be quite selective.

The same day Mayor Rahm was outraged about Dan Cathy, he orchestrated quite the show welcoming Louis Farrakhan to his city.

Now some people can ignore the fact Farrakhan has repeatedly said horrible things about Jews. Being an anti-Semite, after all, is fashionable in some circles. But how could Mayor Rahm ignore that Farrakhan opposes same-sex marriage? Farrakhan, citing scripture, recently blasted President Obama's recent election-year decision to change his mind about gay marriage.

So one guy who opposes gay marriage gets the proverbial key to the city while the other guy who opposes gay marriage is threatened with a lawsuit if he attempts to open a business in that same city.

As astounding as it seems, Mayor Minino's indignation is even more contrived than Mayor Rahm's.

The Boston mayor was outraged last week, at least while cameras were rolling, at Dan Cathy. He threatened, he cajoled, he blustered and he fumed about what a horrible rotten outfit Chik-Fil-A must be and promised to fight any efforts by the business to expand in the Boston area.

But he was much more jovial when he made a congratulatory speech at the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the Islamic Society of Boston's mosque. Islam of course teaches that homosexuality is a sin . . . which sounds surprisingly similar to Dan Cathy's view on the topic.

The difference, of course, is Dan Cathy does not believe nor has he ever said that homosexuals should be killed - more than a few Muslims espouse that is what should happen.

Yet one opinion sparks outrage while the other generates accolades and back-slaps.

Politicians have been able to get away with such shenanigans for years. But that has changed with the reach of the Internet. A billion-dollar news organization is no longer needed to get information to a wide audience. A single reporter can do the job alone.

And that is what happened with the outraged mayors. The major news outlet opted to ignore their selective, and politically expedient, outrage.

And that is outrageous.

DAN HAMMES is publisher of this newspaper.