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History rarely repeats itself, but it often rhymes.

The parallels between the backlash against trans rights and gay rights are astonishing.

This is Anita Bryant, chart topping singer, orange juice promoter - and the face of the anti-gay rights movement in the US in the 1970s. <https://t.co/LIjKLMWe1P>



Anita Bryant was very popular in her time. She topped the Good Housekeeping magazine poll as "Most Admired Woman in America" in 1978, 1979 and 1980.

A Gallup poll listed her in the top 10 most popular women on earth.

As you can see from from Time magazine in 1977, she was presented as the victim of a militant, violent male gay mob, and of what is now called 'cancel culture'. <https://t.co/oT3byIGTOI>

The Nation: The Gaycott Turns Ugly

Monday, Nov. 21, 1977

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Homosexual militants are tormenting foe Anita Bryant

She has received death threats—and been socked in the face with a banana cream pie. When she showed up in Manhattan to tape an appearance for the Today show, NBC was so worried for her safety that guards spirited her out of the building after the performance. She called off a press conference at the nearby Hilton Hotel because of warnings that hostile demonstrators would be in the streets. Appearing in St. Petersburg, Fla., last week, she had to change hotels for security reasons. The victim is Singer Anita Bryant, 37; her tormentors are radical gay activists, mostly male; and their fight, a bitter one from the beginning, has taken an ugly turn.

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The feud began when Bryant led the crusade that last June caused the repeal of an ordinance in Miami's Dade County banning discrimination against homosexuals in housing, employment and public accommodations. Since her victory, gay rightists have used Bryant as the symbol of what they must overcome in order to gain the full rights that are still denied them. Since Bryant promotes orange juice for the Florida Citrus Commission, some gays have been trying to persuade consumers to stop buying the product. The boycott has had only limited success nationally. While sales of orange juice are off about 10% from last fall, growers attribute this to higher prices, resulting from damages to the crop during last winter's severe cold spell. So far, the commission has received some 85,000 letters about Bryant, backing her 3 to 1. This week the commission will meet in Lakeland, Fla., to decide whether or not to extend her contract as its \$100,000-a-year sunshine spokeswoman.

Anita Bryant spoke, at great length, about how she was subjected to death threats, bomb threats, threats to kidnap her kids, and "received hate mail with human faeces and voodoo dolls regularly".

This was used as evidence that the gay rights movement was violent and dangerous. <https://t.co/u31VVc11Ep>

the press. In both books, Bryant devotes several chapters to support her assertion that she became a victim of a vicious smear campaign that included death threats, character assassination, and accusations that she propagated hate and discrimination. The attacks from Bryant's two foes, gay and lesbian activists and the national media, help her to establish an identity and rhetoric of persecution whereby she and other Christians are the victims of denied civil rights and religious discrimination.

She made it clear, by stating time and time again, that her campaign was never about demonizing homosexuals, but rather about protecting her children from them ("I don't hate the homosexuals . . . but as a mother, I must protect my children from their evil influence").²⁸ But by doing so, she exposed her children to a world of hatred and violence. Bryant reported that she and her family endured daily death threats, bomb threats and received hate mail with human feces and voodoo dolls regularly.²⁹ If her sole purpose in entering the political arena was to help repeal a law she thought would endanger her children, how could she fail to comprehend that her battle against gay rights was not saving her children, but in fact, subjecting them to perhaps a more direct kind of danger?

Because Anita refused to back down, radical homosexual activists viciously attacked her. They organized boycotts against her corporate sponsors, aroused activist homosexuals all across America to hold protest rallies, enlisted entertainers to blacklist her, and went as far as hitting her in the face with a pie on one very public occasion. She and her family received death threats, kidnapping threats toward her children, bomb scares, hate mail, and even voodoo dolls.⁷ In her book *The Anita Bryant Story*, she wrote, "But I've learned to obey God regardless of the consequences."⁸ For Anita the consequences were the destruction of her career. The hardships she and her family endured created such pressure that even her marriage crumbled under the weight.

In 1978, the Boston Public Library was the site of a highly publicized police “sting” operation in which plainclothes policemen arrested over 100 men for “open and gross lewdness” in the library’s men’s room and General Fiction area. This provoked several protests by the city’s gay community, and corresponding political counter-attacks by local Christian and right-wing activists, as the story unfolded and the defendants went to trial. Late in the summer of 1978, supporters of conservative Democratic senatorial candidate Howard Phillips invited Anita Bryant to sing her trademark “Battle Hymn of the Republic” at a “Pro-Life, Pro-Family” rally at the Hynes Auditorium on September 1. Gay and women’s organizations quickly formed the “September 1 Coalition” to protest her show, and organized street protests outside the Hynes Auditorium to coincide with the performance, followed by a rally at Copley Square. The Coalition encouraged people to buy tickets for the show and “bring oranges.” Boston’s *Gay Community News* ran a full-page edition with a Anita Bryant’s picture under the headline, “Wanted for Crimes Against Humanity.” Ultimately, only 78 tickets were sold, many to people intent on disrupting the event, and it was canceled. The Phillips campaign cited bomb threats and accused *Gay Community News* of inciting a riot. Anita Bryant sang her anthem on September 1, but at a cocktail party for only 25 people. Later, she returned to her

Anita Bryant did famously have a pie thrown in her face by the gay rights' activist Thom L. Higgins.

That led to the New York Times and some liberals at the time to leap to Bryant's defence, arguing she had the right to her views "without suffering abuse". <https://t.co/kwgUMtiNrb>



Support came from unlikely sources. “She has been threatened with violence, hit in the face with a pie, and called unprintable names. Her views, we think, are benighted,” the *New York Times* said in an editorial, “but she has a right to express them without suffering abuse.” Even old-line liberals came to her defense. “This is exactly what happened during the McCarthy years,” Ira Glasser, the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, told Nat Hentoff, the *Village Voice* columnist. Hentoff agreed. “This time,” he wrote, “the victim is Anita Bryant.”

Now, Anita Bryant claimed that she was not motivated by homophobia or prejudice at all. She declared: "My stand was not taken out of homophobia, but of love for them [gay people]." <https://t.co/h23S97Pmde>

Cynthia Burack, “[M]any conservative Christians may understand both their feelings of sexual disgust and their willingness to extend compassion to those who inspire it as divine mandates on the issue of same-sex sexuality as well as personal virtues” (Burack 2008, 97). As Anita Bryant said of the early Save Our Children victories, “My stand was not taken out of homophobia, but of love for them [gay people]” (Kelly 1978). Indeed, Bryant congratulates herself on her willingness to not only do God’s work but, in her framework, to do it so compassionately. Contemporary anti-gay crusaders make the same claim.

Instead, Anita Bryant claimed to be defending the rights of children. Her coalition was called 'Save Our Children'. She believed that the gay rights movement discriminated against children's rights, and that gay people sought to brainwash and recruit vulnerable children. <https://t.co/Bxa5QfHnoJ>

SOC was founded in January 1977 after commissioners in Dade County, Florida, passed a human rights ordinance that prohibited discrimination on the basis of "sexual or affectional preference" in the areas of housing, employment, and public accommodations. Bryant and SOC protested the ordinance on the grounds that it would "discriminate against children's rights to grow up in a healthy, decent community." SOC reflected the assumption that gays target children, stating that "recruitment of our children is absolutely necessary for the survival and growth of homosexuality—for since homosexuals cannot reproduce, they must recruit, must freshen their ranks."

Anita Bryant set up a "charitable organisation" which claimed to treat gay people - to detransition them, if you will - and to provide inspirational case studies of "ex-gay" people.

Today, of course, we call this conversion therapy. <https://t.co/kwcpnnNeol>

political in nature, its donations were not tax-deductible. Anita Bryant Ministries, however, was a charitable organization with a board of directors comprised of ministers and Christian leaders. Its goal was to build a chain of counseling centers in major cities to help homosexuals "give up their destructive life-style." At first the ministries generated interest and donations, receiving \$968,000 in 1978. Those who donated received a newsletter with stories of homosexuals who had found God and other inspirational accounts, soon followed by more letters asking for additional donations.

Now, today, Anita Bryant is not seen as a victim of a violent "militant" gay rights' movement, but as a villain who made life considerably harder for a marginalised and besieged minority. <https://t.co/bzfvwBaqnj>

DOCUMENTATION: THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN, November 3, 1977

"ANITA TELLS OF THREATS. . . Anita Bryant arrives with her husband, Robert Green, at NBC studios in New York Wednesday. She said militant homosexuals have practically had her blacklisted on TV, forced her to live under guard and otherwise disrupted her life. New York (AP) — Saying she has been

Anita Bryant is still alive today, and has lived long enough to watch the anti-gay laws she championed be overturned, and US public opinion towards gay people dramatically change for the better.

Her granddaughter is gay. <https://t.co/nx914iNXW8>



Another Pie in the Face for Anita Bryant: Her Granddaughter Is Gay



Sarah Green, who is engaged to marry another woman, spoke about her famously homophobic grandmother on a recent podcast.

There's a lack of appreciation today of how bitterly controversial gay rights was once deemed to be, how the gay rights movement was portrayed as a really dangerous, abusive, "militant" and violent rabble.

This is exactly how trans rights is portrayed today.