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—Jonathan Rauch, *Los Angeles Times Book Review*



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OUT for GOOD

OUT for GOOD



DUDLEY CLENDINEN & ADAM NAGOURNEY

The Struggle to Build
 a Gay Rights Movement
 in America

DUDLEY CLENDINEN & ADAM NAGOURNEY

"What Clendinen and Nagourney have created is an invaluable document, impressively researched, remarkably well written, and groundbreaking in scope."

—SHANE HARRISON, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

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advertisement for Colt's latest male skin magazine. Over the next two months, the Task Force met with senior officials from the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Housing and Urban Development, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Costanza would meet with Voeller and O'Leary beforehand to help them plan what to say. If it appeared that a department was not assigning a senior enough person to tend to the Task Force requests, Costanza announced that she would attend the meeting, which ensured that the department head would also attend. "The power of the White House," Costanza said. Often, Costanza would show up just long enough to make sure the department head was there and then leave. In time, many of the critics of the Task Force concluded that the White House meeting and the meetings that followed were more a display of style than of substance—of generally meaningless access, press releases and tinkering with federal regulations. There certainly were no grand shifts in federal policy, but this was one case where appearance may have counted more than substance. "Thrilled to death," was how Troy Perry termed his reaction, and the White House visit became a regular part of his sermons. Jean O'Leary remembered the meeting as the high point of her years at the Task Force. That was the day, Midge Costanza would say, when gay rights became a national issue. President Carter never mentioned it to her, even after she sent him a memo recounting her three hours in the Roosevelt Room. But her stacks of mail began to include letters of thanks from homosexuals and the parents of homosexuals.

Costanza received other reaction as well: livid calls and letters of protest from Christian fundamentalists who had helped elect this Southern Baptist president. She found her desk covered with citations of Leviticus, with its admonition against men lying with men. And as it turned out, the single most significant response to what happened at the White House that day—one that would ultimately dwarf the incremental policy gains of the meeting—came from one of those fundamentalists, 929 miles away, in Dade County, Florida.

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MIAMI: THE FUNDAMENTALISTS AWAKE

March 1977

It was such an exhilarating moment, standing in the White House driveway, talking into the microphones of network correspondents, that no one paid much attention to the questions about Anita Bryant. After three hours in the Roosevelt Room, her campaign to repeal a Dade County homosexual rights ordinance seemed distant and inconsequential. Troy Perry felt a little annoyed when a reporter asked him what Bryant would think of fourteen homosexual leaders being granted an audience in the White House: Why should Anita Bryant care about what was going on in Washington? And why should they care what she thought?

By the next afternoon, the reporter's question was answered. From Villa Verde, the thirty-three-room Spanish stucco mansion on Biscayne Bay where Bryant lived with her husband and four children, the woman known for her Florida orange juice commercials issued a statement demanding to know why the White House was "dignifying these activists for special privilege with a serious discussion on their alleged 'human rights,'" and permitting them to "pressure President Carter into endorsement of a lifestyle that is an abomination under the laws of God and man.

“What these people really want, hidden behind obscure legal phrases, is the legal right to propose to our children that there is an acceptable alternate way of life,” Anita Bryant declared after services at Northwest Baptist Church in Miami, where she taught Sunday school. “No one has a human right to corrupt our children. Prostitutes, pimps and drug pushers, like homosexuals, have civil rights, too, but they do not have the right to influence our children to choose their way of life. Before I yield to this insidious attack on God and his laws, and on parents and their rights to protect their children, I will lead such a crusade to stop it as this country has not seen before.”

That statement displayed for the nation a political force that had been quietly gathering in the four months since a gay rights ordinance had appeared on the calendar of the Dade County Metro Commission. Anita Bryant had made a career of singing at conventions and selling orange juice, and she had never before shown any interest in politics. But in those four months, she had become the symbol for a political crusade, fired by religious passion and single-minded intensity. Bruce Voeller did not even recognize Bryant’s name when he first read that she had forced the Dade County Metro Commission to submit the new gay rights ordinance to public referendum. But that said more about the head of the Task Force and New York than it did about Bryant and Florida. In the South, across the Bible Belt, and among the 13 million Southern Baptists who shared Anita Bryant’s faith and celebrated her emerging leadership, she was nearly universally admired. Each time she closed her eyes and threw her head back to sing a hymn or a patriotic anthem—her face scrubbed, red and glowing; her black-red hair shining; her high, handsome cheekbones a reminder of the beauty queen she had once been—Bryant embodied an idealized vision of American motherhood. She was the kind of woman whose 1959 official biography reported that the nineteen-year-old Miss Oklahoma and Miss America second runner-up “eventually hopes to marry and have a family of six children.” Anita Bryant was a local treasure in Miami: The premature birth of her twins was a running story in the newspapers. At Christmas, the newspapers ran a photograph of the Anita Bryant family, posed in front of the Christmas tree.

She was born in Barnsdall, Oklahoma, the daughter of an oilfield worker, and she decided to become a performer after she “met the creator of Stars, Jesus Christ Our Lord,” at age eight, and He told her to become a singer. Arthur Godfrey made her famous, after his talent scouts discovered her singing on the Tulsa television stations and invited her to perform in New York. By her mid-twenties, Anita Bryant had three gold records, but even then she was more than just another popular performer. Bryant toured seven times with Bob Hope and the USO, entertaining troops at Christmas, and appeared at Billy Graham rallies in Madison Square Garden. Bryant sang at the Super Bowl, and was part of the team of network commentators at eight Orange

Bowls. President Lyndon B. Johnson had her to the White House fourteen times during his five years in office. He led a standing ovation to her after she dedicated an emotional “Battle Hymn of the Republic” to the troops in Vietnam during a 1966 state dinner honoring the United States ambassador to Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge. *Variety* said it was the first time in memory a performer in the White House had been given a standing ovation. Anita Bryant returned the favor; she was unstinting in her support of the president’s Vietnam policy, likening it, not surprisingly, to a crusade. “I feel very strongly that this is a war between atheism and God,” she declared, and when Johnson died she sang “Battle Hymn of the Republic” one more time for her friend the president, at his graveside.

Anita Bryant was a registered Democrat, but both parties embraced her. In 1968 she sang “Battle Hymn of the Republic” at the Democratic convention in Chicago, and “The Star-Spangled Banner” at the Republican convention in Miami. By 1977, she was best known for her employment by the Florida Citrus Commission, which pressed her smile and voice into the service of selling Florida orange juice. “Come to the Florida sunshine tree! Florida sunshine naturally!” she’d sing, proclaiming, “A day without orange juice is like a day without sunshine.” The citrus commission paid her \$100,000 a year. Her total annual income was four times that, from appearances at religious conferences and corporate conventions. She was paid \$7,500 a night at the conventions, and had made \$700,000 in 1976, the Bicentennial year, because, according to her agent, Dick Shack, Bob Green had encouraged his popular wife to accept every one of those \$7,500 invitations.

There had not been much interest in politics among Miami’s sizable homosexual community, either, at least until the summer of 1976, when Jack Campbell, forty-five years old, assembled a group of gay men and lesbians in his home in Coconut Grove to talk about creating a gay rights lobbying organization. Campbell, a former president of the University of Michigan Young Democrats, joined the Cleveland Mattachine Society in the mid-1960s, and soon put his own singular stamp on the movement. In 1965 he and a group of investors paid \$15,000 for an out-of-business sauna in downtown Cleveland. He turned it into a homosexual bathhouse, and business was so good he opened up a second one within the year. The Club Baths were a source of an enormous personal fortune but, Campbell argued, they were also an expression of gay and sexual liberation. His sizable contributions earned him a seat on the National Gay Task Force board, where Campbell would make a point of sitting next to Troy Perry at its meetings. Perry would introduce himself as the founder of the Metropolitan Community Church, where “we have a hundred churches and a total of 30,000 members.” And Jack Campbell would al-

ways follow the same way: "Well, although we only have thirty churches, we have 300,000 members."

The Club Miami, which he opened in 1970, was the twentieth in what would become a forty-two-bathhouse empire. Campbell was openly gay in everything he did, which was unusual in Miami then. He ran for Miami City Commission in 1975, and he campaigned against vestigial laws that prohibited homosexuals from working in or owning bars. In the midst of the race, the city commission abolished the ordinance, leaving Campbell without an issue, and he finished a distant second in a field of four. The next year he donated \$1,800 to the Carter campaign and was rewarded with an invitation to the inauguration. He placed the souvenirs from that trip—a silver-plated peanut and a 1977 inaugural booklet—on display at his home.

The other key person at Jack Campbell's home that day was Robert Kunst, a slick, bearded product of the anti-war and civil rights movements, a chatty bantam rooster with brown eyes. Kunst, thirty-four, had sold encyclopedias door-to-door in Brooklyn and Queens and then in Boston, before fleeing the northeast winters for Florida. He sold program ads for the Miami Toros, a soccer team, and campaigned for Benjamin Spock's presidential campaign of 1972. Kunst was the kind of person who enjoyed seeing his name in the newspapers, and he had become known in Miami for founding the Transperience Center, four rooms over a marine supply shop in Coconut Grove that offered workshops on bisexuality. Kunst believed everyone was a bisexual, and those workshops involved small groups of men and women who stripped and spent three hours, eyes shut, touching their partners' bodies, from head to genitalia to toes. By the end, Kunst reported, no one could tell the difference between the touch of a male or female hand, and the resulting high was "better than a quaalude."

Campbell called the meeting at his concrete-block house, a low-slung bachelor pad behind a green hedge in the flowering, garden-like checkerboard of Coconut Grove, a liberal, bohemian collection of cottages and old estates, pastel-colored homes with pools and a discreet colony of well-to-do homosexuals, like Campbell. The assembly at Campbell's house was an unlikely mix, including members of a gay motorcycle group, the Thebans, Gay Catholics and the lesbian caucus of the Miami chapter of NOW. An election was coming up, and the organization formed at Campbell's house that day—the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays—decided to support candidates who supported gay rights. It mailed two hundred questionnaires; sixty-five candidates responded, and forty-nine provided answers that earned the new group's endorsement. The coalition's resulting support—it distributed leaflets to gay bars and baths, and provided donations and volunteers—was discreet, designed to win attention among homosexuals

without alerting the community at large. On election day, forty-four of its candidates won.

Within weeks of the elections, the coalition asked one of those candidates, Ruth Shack, to introduce at the Dade County Metro Commission an amendment to the civil rights ordinance to bar discrimination based on "affectional or sexual preference" in housing, public accommodations and employment. Shack was a school board administrator making her first run for public office. She had worked in the civil rights movement, and then the women's rights movement, so the gay rights movement seemed a natural next step. She could not imagine how anyone could quarrel with the notion that homosexuals had the same right to a job or a home as anyone else. In December, the Metro Commission took the first step toward adopting Shack's ordinance, voting 9-0 to schedule a public hearing the following month. Barring any unexpected complications, it would become law upon second reading and passage.

Robert Brake, a fifty-one-year-old lawyer, read about the Shack ordinance in local newspapers at the end of 1976. Brake, a Roman Catholic who went to church every Sunday and sent his children to Catholic schools, never wavered in his devotion, so when his Protestant friends related their "born-again" experiences to him, Brake would look at them quizzically: Why would anyone need to be born again? Brake, a conservative Democrat, had been among the first to enlist in the fight against abortion rights, even before *Roe v. Wade*. Homosexual rights was an issue he had never really considered. When he served in the Judge Advocate's Office in the air force during the Korean War, Brake had encountered a few soldiers who disclosed to him they were homosexual, and he always responded with the same advice: "Don't tell anybody. You don't know my sexual tastes and I don't know yours." He didn't want to know what they did in their off-hours. That always struck him as the way homosexuality should be handled—by "indirect social control," as he liked to put it.

Brake had spent two years on the Dade County Metro Commission, so he understood its procedures, and kept close track of everything it did. Shack's ordinance would, he determined, apply to parochial schools in Dade County, and it could force schools like St. Theresa's, where two of his four children studied, to hire open homosexuals. Everything about the law bothered Brake: the way he thought it threatened his family, its explicit endorsement of a practice he found immoral, the way he believed it would force him to associate with people he did not wish to know. The bill had passed its first hurdle by a 9-0 vote; clearly, homosexuals had become a force to contend with. But this was not a lost cause: Brake knew the county charter, and he knew there was a way to force the commissioners to submit their vote to the electorate. It was a matter of gathering names on petitions.

Anita Bryant learned of the proposed ordinance from her pastor, the Reverend William F. Chapman of the Northwest Baptist Church, who came to her home one afternoon to talk about this worrisome development. Chapman said the bill would force parochial schools to hire practicing homosexuals—schools like the Northwest Christian Academy in North Miami, which all four of Bryant's children attended. Bryant had never taken too much of an interest in local elections, but had made a small exception in one race that year: The wife of her talent agent had been a candidate for the Metro Commission, and Bryant had recorded a radio commercial on her behalf and contributed \$1,000 to her campaign. Bryant's agent was Dick Shack and his wife was Ruth Shack, and Anita Bryant realized that afternoon that she had lent her name and money to the woman who was leading the fight for gay rights in Dade County. Chapman wanted the religious community to rise against the bill and told Bryant she was the person to lead the crusade. You have a "mother's heart," Chapman said, as a warm breeze blew in off the bay, "and it takes a mother to do this."

At first, Anita Bryant wrote a letter. "If this ordinance amendment is allowed to become law," Bryant argued to the Metro Commission, "you will in fact be infringing upon my rights or rather discriminating against me as a citizen and a mother to teach my children and set examples and to point to others as examples of God's moral codes as stated in the Holy Scriptures." She called Ruth Shack, imploring her to withdraw her bill, which she said had embarrassed her at Northwest Baptist. Shack told her husband's client that the ordinance was nothing more than an attempt to guarantee equal rights for all people, adding: "The first thing any politician does upon getting into office is disappoint." Bryant ended the conversation by saying she was praying for Ruth Shack, and warned that she was condemning herself to damnation with this bill. Bryant had intended to keep her involvement low-profile. But she changed her mind before the hearing and decided to become a leader of the campaign. The conversion came, Bryant later explained, as she was driving in Miami with her nine-year-old daughter and they came upon a three-car accident at 136th Street. Had they been there moments earlier, Bryant said, they might have perished, and she thanked God for sparing them. It was then, Anita Bryant said, that her daughter asked: "Mommy, if God can help you like this, can't he help you in the Metro Commission?" Anita Bryant said she burst into tears. "Yes, Barbara, he can," she said, and decided to accept the Reverend Chapman's calling. That story was embraced by Anita Bryant's supporters as nothing short of a message from God, proof that their campaign was divinely inspired. Bryant's opponents saw her entry into the fight as part of a calculated plan by the singer and her husband to promote her career, inspired by a quest for more bookings rather than by a vision taken from a chance car wreck. Whatever her motivation, by the time the Metro

Commission gathered for its public hearing at the Dade County Courthouse on January 18, 1977, Bryant was in the audience with a Bible and a speech. The hearing room was filled to capacity a half hour before the commissioners took their seats; people, bused in by their local parishes, were three and four deep against the wall. There were a hundred people outside, waving placards:

"God says NO: Who are you to say Different?"

"Protect our Children: Don't Legislate Morality in Dade County."

Bob Kunst was completely unprepared for this show of force. The front row of the courthouse was the only place to sit and he found himself seated at Anita Bryant's elbow. When Ruth Shack arrived, walking up the steps to the 1920s-style courthouse, she heard curses and hoots from the churchgoers assembled outside in the unseasonably cold air. Each side was limited to forty-five minutes of debate. During those ninety minutes eight different books of the Bible were quoted on both sides of the argument. "As an entertainer, I have worked with homosexuals all my life, and my attitude has been live and let live," Bryant said. "But now I believe it's time to recognize the rights of the overwhelming number of Dade County constituents." There were shouts of "Amen!" from the audience. The gay rights ordinance had passed unanimously on first reading in December. It passed again the second time, but by a 5-3 margin. The fundamentalists had changed a few votes, but not enough to overturn the decision. "We are not going to take this sitting down," Bryant declared as the commissioners hurried from the room. "The ordinance condones immorality and discriminates against my children's rights to grow up in a healthy, decent community."

Even before the vote, Robert Brake had been prepared to gather the ten thousand signatures needed to force a referendum. He had expected to do it alone, but after hearing Bryant speak, he knew he wouldn't have to. He walked across the room, introduced himself to Bryant and asked if she would head his petition drive. She looked at her husband, Bob Green, and then at her pastor, Bill Chapman. Both nodded yes.

Villa Verde had its own waterfall and fountains, and a private altar on the second floor of the mansion where Anita Bryant went to pray. It also had a pool, a sunken heart-shaped double Jacuzzi, a tropical garden with banyan trees, a goldfish pond and a dock for the family boat, *Sea Sharp*, as well as a replica of the Anita Bryant bust that was in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. Most of the dozen people who showed up for the first organizing meeting of Save Our Children, Inc., had never experienced such opulence before, save for the glimpses of the celebrity mansions on Key Biscayne that could be caught from the road across the bay. Robert Brake came expecting nothing more from Bryant than the use of her name, and was immediately struck by her devotion to the fight. Bob Green cut a less impressive figure that day. Green and Bryant

had met when she came to perform in 1959 in Miami Beach, where he was a disc jockey, one of the first to play the new rock and roll format. She was taken with this man who drove a white Thunderbird with his name painted on the side, who wore silk suits and always seemed to have a pretty woman on his arm. Anita Bryant was certain of her attraction to him—he looked like Robert Redford, she later said—and he was the first man she went to bed with, by her account. But she worried he was not devout enough. The night before their wedding in Oklahoma in 1960, Bryant insisted that her fiancé stay up to pray for salvation. Green began to describe himself as born-again after that night, and he converted from Lutheran to Baptist. Still, it was his interest in Miss Oklahoma that led him to prayer rather than any newfound spirituality, and now, seventeen years later, as he surveyed the religious leaders in their home, Green knew that he was out of place in this room. Some of the people there that day were suspicious of Green, noting that the publicity from a referendum would surely help them win religious bookings. Bob Green later said he had some doubts about the very cause that supposedly united them: He agreed that homosexuality was immoral, but not any more or less immoral than, say, adultery. He said none of that then, though. Anita Bryant was like a freight train once she set her mind on an issue, he liked to say: single-minded and obsessed. When she told him that “God spoke to my heart,” Green knew there was nothing that would stop her.

It would prove to be a remarkable assembly: clerics and professional conservative political operatives, joined by their shared opposition to homosexual rights. There were representatives from major religious denominations in Dade County: Catholics, Baptists, Orthodox Jews, Spanish Presbyterians and the Greek Orthodox Church. And there were political professionals like Mike Thompson, a thirty-seven-year-old advertising executive and Republican state committeeman. Thompson was chairman of the Florida Conservative Union, and had been a GOP convention delegate for Richard Nixon in 1972 and Ronald Reagan in 1976. He lived next door to Robert Brake, and Brake had decided that the religious devotion of the fundamentalists and Anita Bryant would get them only so far. Thompson knew how to handle reporters, how to construct a campaign message, how to make an advertisement, and Brake had invited him to join the campaign. A campaign like this, Thompson thought, would surely fail if its leaders did not take direction from someone with his experience. As the group quibbled line by line over the statement Anita Bryant would make announcing the petition drive, Thompson suggested that he be allowed to write it alone. He quickly scribbled a few paragraphs and handed them to Bryant, who read them with a burst of emotion that left no doubt in Thompson’s mind about the talent of the Save Our Children spokeswoman. Afterward Bryant said to Thompson: “Stand up. I want to hug you.” She went over, embraced him and kissed him on the cheek.

“You kiss real good for a girl!” Thompson said. Anita Bryant froze for a minute, then realized it was a joke. Everyone laughed.

Save Our Children needed a campaign that, as Thompson and Brake described it that day, was honest but brutal. It would, Brake said, be a “dignified campaign,” that did not engage in name-calling, but that would address the issues forcefully. There was no time for subtlety. So when Bryant appeared before the press a few days later to read the words Thompson had written for her, there was a new crispness to the group’s attacks. Bryant, surrounded by clerical leaders, stood under a banner that read, “Save our Children from Homosexuals,” inviting people to “sign petitions here to repeal Metro’s Gay Blunder.”

“The homosexual recruiters of Dade County already have begun their campaign,” she said, displaying a piece of literature she claimed had been recovered from one of the local high schools. Homosexuals, she said, are “trying to recruit our children to homosexuality.”

Six weeks later Save Our Children submitted its petitions to the Dade County Elections Department. Ten thousand names were needed. By their count, the coalition forces had gathered 64,304, so many signatures that county officials stopped counting at number 13,457. The Metro Commission, in a 6–3 vote, put the referendum on the ballot in a special election called for June 7, 1977.* “By its action today, the commission, for better or worse, has made Dade County a national battleground in the fight for civil rights of parents and their children,” Bryant said. “Homosexual acts are not only illegal, they are immoral. And through the power of the ballot box, I believe the parents and the straight-thinking normal majority will soundly reject the attempt to legitimize homosexuals and their recruitment plans for our children.

“We shall not let the nation down.”

Jack Campbell liked to boast that Miami Beach was a gay playground—“beaches, bushes, fun, sand, sex” and, of course, his own very popular gay bathhouse. But for all Miami’s gay pleasures, there wasn’t much in the way of gay politics. Ruth Shack realized that at the public hearing for her ordinance in January. As she watched preacher after preacher denounce the bill, she couldn’t understand why the local gay community hadn’t found its own cleric or local civil rights leaders to speak for the bill. There was little choice but to turn outside for help now. The National Gay Task Force seemed the obvious place, but its leaders were not inclined to make this fight; that, Ron Gold ar-

* The referendum was worded: “Shall Dade County Ordinance No. 77-4, which prohibits discrimination in areas of housing, public accommodations and employment against persons based on their affectional or sexual preference be repealed?”

gued, could elevate a passing local storm into a national referendum on gay rights. The Task Force was sanguine in its assessment of the Dade County referendum and scornful of its spokeswoman. "Bryant is really the perfect opponent," it said in an April 1977 mailing to its members. "Her national prominence . . . insures national news coverage for developments in the Dade County struggle, while the febleness of her arguments and the embarrassing backwardness of her stance both makes her attacks easier to counteract and tends to generate 'liberal' backlash in our favor. Her 'Save our Children' campaign vividly demonstrates just why gay rights laws are needed—in order to protect our people against the sort of ignorant, irrational, unjustifiable prejudice typified by Anita Bryant. We can make her rantings work *for* us just as Sheriff Bull Connor's cattle prods and police dogs ultimately aided desegregation in the South."

But in California, an alarmed David Goodstein had a different view. Like it or not, this was a national battle, he said, and Anita Bryant was anything but "the perfect opponent" the Task Force perceived. The homosexual community needed to dispatch all of its resources to help the besieged leaders of Dade County. "Save Us from the Anita Nightmare" read the cover of the April 20 *Advocate*. "If the orange juice cow and her bigoted cohorts have their way in Dade County," Goodstein wrote, "you can rest assured they'll bring their hate crusade to your front door in Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Chicago or wherever you think you're living in relative safety." He added: "If Hitler had been stopped in Czechoslovakia, World War II would not have occurred. The analogy is exact.

"At best, her campaign is a publicity stunt for her . . . sagging career," Goodstein said. "At worst, it is the beginning of an organized conspiracy to turn us into America's scapegoats. Some of you may think you're safe in your closets. You are not." Goodstein and Jack Campbell agreed there was a need to import professional political consultants into Dade County, ideally campaign operatives who were openly homosexual. In the spring of 1977, there were probably just two people in the country who fit that description: Ethan Geto of New York, now open about his homosexuality, and Jim Foster, now one of the most powerful political organizers in San Francisco, gay or straight.

Geto and Foster arrived in Florida seven weeks before the vote. The Dade County referendum was not without precedent: In May 1974 voters in Boulder, Colorado, had overturned a gay rights ordinance 13,107 to 7,438, and recalled the councilman who had sponsored it. But that vote had been barely noticed outside the West. By contrast, the Dade County referendum was exploding into a national story. "Anita Bryant is a fine Christian lady," Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina said as Geto and Foster arrived in Florida. "She is fighting for decency and morality." A confident Bryant was already talking about bringing her crusade to Congress and to other states. If

Anita Bryant wins, Elaine Noble said, "it will not be long before they turn up in California, New York and Massachusetts trying to do similar things."

The stakes could hardly have been higher, and the situation that Geto and Foster found in Florida could hardly have been bleaker. Save Our Children, Inc. had evolved into a political juggernaut, with its emotional rallying cry and a network of churches and synagogues that could rival any party machine in the country. By contrast, Miami's homosexual community was unsophisticated and fragmented. There was no campaign plan, no organization, no strategy. The Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays had been paralyzed by a dispute over whether it should align itself with the national orange juice boycott that had been launched to punish Anita Bryant. For homosexuals outside Florida, this was an obvious tactic. But a boycott was certain to provoke a backlash in Florida, and Campbell opposed it. Bob Kunst had broken off from the coalition and was now promoting the boycott on his own. But it was Kunst, as much a sexual liberationist as a gay liberationist, to whom newspaper reporters turned when they needed a quote, as Geto and Foster soon realized—to their dismay. Geto would talk about human rights, while Kunst would talk provocatively about oral and anal sex, activities he suggested were enjoyed equally by heterosexuals and homosexuals. Gay people were much more psychologically healthy than heterosexuals, Kunst proclaimed in one interview. The gay rights activists were only trying to "put the community on the couch" and force it to deal with its sexual hang-ups. "Am I a role model?" Kunst said to a reporter during the campaign. "Sure. I'm an absolutely positive role model." Geto tried to tone Kunst down. "Bob, this is counterproductive," Geto told him. "People can't process this, people can't understand it, it's too confrontational, it's scaring them, it's easy for Anita Bryant to say gays are militant." Kunst ignored him, as Geto discovered when Governor Reubin Askew, a Democrat, announced his support for Bryant. "If I were in Miami," the governor said from Tallahassee, "I would have no difficulty in voting to repeal that ordinance. I would not want a known homosexual teaching my children." Geto offered reporters a carefully considered response to Askew, asserting it was dangerous when "someone in your position arbitrarily decides who in this society should have their human rights and who in the country should be the victims of bigotry." Bob Kunst simply blasted the governor of Florida as "sexually insecure," which was the quote that made it into the newspapers the next day.

Geto and Foster had twenty-five years of professional political experience between them. Jim Foster had worked in the presidential campaigns of George McGovern and Jimmy Carter, and the San Francisco campaigns of George Moscone, Dianne Feinstein and Richard Hongisto. Geto had worked for some of the best-known liberal Democrats of the 1970s: McGovern, Hu-

bert Humphrey and Birch Bayh. Foster and Geto had seven weeks to design, finance and launch a campaign against an opposition which seemed to have the winds of victory at its back. To complicate matters, the idea of bringing in two out-of-towners was stirring new tensions among the activists already there, and provided ammunition to the opponents, who began referring to them as carpetbaggers. Geto made no effort to smooth over bruised feelings. He pushed people he considered incompetent off the coalition's executive board and forced the Floridians to change the name of the organization, the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays, to the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights. The word "humanistic" was pretentious, the New York consultant said, and better that the word "gay" not be in the name. Geto could not have been more culturally different from his new political associates. Everything about him shouted New York—his Bronx accent, his rough sense of humor, his close-cropped gray beard and intense, deep-set eyes, accented by dark circles that suggested Geto preferred long hours of work and play to sleep. People mistook Geto for Italian because his name ended with a vowel, but Geto was a Russian Jew. He was a strange match with the activists in Dade County. When a woman showed up at one meeting carrying a gun, saying she needed it for self-protection, Geto decreed that no guns would be allowed in the offices of the Dade County coalition. Geto could barely hide his disdain for the Florida activists.

What Geto found at the Dade County coalition in mid-May was not that different from what Mike Thompson had found at that first meeting of Save Our Children. In both cases, men who made their living at politics were working with people unfamiliar with the mechanics of running a campaign. The first thing both Geto and Thompson did was order a poll to determine the best way to proceed. The two polls reached similar conclusions about the Dade County electorate and this issue. Voters supported the ordinance, albeit without enthusiasm. Jewish voters in particular, who made up 20 percent of the electorate, rallied behind a measure that was presented as a law to protect a class of citizens from discrimination. The main difference between the two polls was that Thompson got his results in early March, giving him a two-month head start over Geto. The poll finding that struck Thompson—and guided everything Save Our Children did from that day on—was how overwhelmingly women voters supported gay rights: by a 2-1 margin, more than enough to counterbalance the opposition to the measure among men. He had some theories for why Dade County women held homosexuals in high regard. The homosexuals whom most women encountered, he said, were hairdressers, dress designers or dog groomers. "They love their dogs," Thompson would say of women with pets, "and they love the people who love their dogs." There were also women who enjoyed the social company of gay men, for din-

ner or a movie. Thompson learned that these women were known as "fag-hags"—they sought out the company of male homosexuals, he explained to his associates at Save Our Children, because they were charming and expected nothing at the end of the night. The key to winning was forcing women to reconsider their notion of homosexuals as harmless. Thompson suggested, half jokingly, that they change public opinion by filming the sexual activity that went on in Campbell's bathhouses. But Save Our Children did not have to sneak a camera into a bathhouse to suggest there was, as Thompson put it, more to homosexuality than poodle-grooming and hairdressing. All it had to do was show an event that homosexuals themselves viewed as a celebration of their lives: Gay Freedom Day in San Francisco. The resulting television commercial turned up on Dade County airwaves in late spring. It began with a clip of the Orange Bowl Parade, high-school marching bands and apple-cheeked youngsters. "Miami's gift to the nation," the announcer said. "Wholesome entertainment." The image was replaced by a videotape of a San Francisco Freedom Day Parade. Instead of majorettes, viewers saw men wearing skimpy leather outfits and snapping whips, topless women on motorcycles, men in dresses and the most bizarre forms of drag. The camera lingered on that picture as the announcer underscored the contrast: "In San Francisco, when they take to the streets, it's a parade of homosexuals. Men hugging other men. Cavorting with little boys. Wearing dresses and makeup. The same people who turned San Francisco into a hotbed of homosexuality . . . want to do the same thing to Dade." The advertisement was devastating. "That commercial," Thompson boasted then, "is just driving them nuts!"

The other way to force women to reconsider their view of homosexuals was to present gay men as a threat to children. Since homosexuals don't procreate, Anita Bryant said, the only way to increase their numbers was to recruit, and what better place to do this than in the schools? "Some of the stories I could tell you of child recruitment and child abuse by homosexuals would turn your stomach," Bryant told reporters. The newspaper advertisements were equally direct. "This 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," read one. "And who qualifies as a likely recruit: a 35-year-old father or mother of two . . . or a teenage boy or girl who is surging with sexual awareness?"

The Save Our Children forces stumbled across a powerful weapon to underscore this attack, courtesy of the gay movement itself. The afternoon mail brought a copy of the gay rights platform homosexual leaders had adopted in Chicago in 1972, including the plank calling for the abolition of age of consent laws. Steve Endean had presciently warned that the plank would one day be used against the movement. Now it was reprinted under a line saying "What the homosexuals want," part of a full-page advertisement in

the *Miami Herald* headlined, "THERE IS NO 'HUMAN RIGHT' TO CORRUPT OUR CHILDREN," which included a montage of newspaper headlines, such as "Teacher Accused of Sex Acts with Boy Students." The ad copy underscored the point: "Many parents are confused, and don't know the real dangers posed by many homosexuals—and perceive them as all being gentle, non-aggressive types. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HOMOSEXUAL COIN IS A HAIR-RAISING PATTERN OF RECRUITMENT AND OUTRIGHT SEDUCTION AND MOLESTATION, A GROWING PATTERN THAT PREDICTABLY WILL INTENSIFY IF SOCIETY APPROVES LAWS GRANTING LEGITIMACY TO THE SEXUALLY PERVERTED."

In the midst of this barrage, Geto and the coalition decided on a more subtle campaign, a decision made in part because a May poll showed them winning, with voters supporting the ordinance by as much as a 62–38 margin. But the poll also showed that while Bryant's supporters would surely turn out on election day, only 15 percent of the ordinance supporters were likely to vote. Most voters, it appeared, had no problem with the ordinance, but had difficulty seeing homosexuals—with their fancy clothes and homes and cars—as victims. Geto and Foster designed a campaign to alarm their supporters into turning out. Their supporters, the poll found, tended to be older, from New York, people who considered themselves liberal and tolerant. And many of them were Jewish, who had fled to the United States to escape Nazi Germany. "By making the campaign a human rights issue, it was something all people could identify with," Foster explained then. All they needed to do was "hit people with the fact that if the rights of one minority are threatened or taken away, their rights are also jeopardized." The only problem with that approach was that Mike Thompson had made the same discovery about Jewish voters two months before. He had already recruited one of Dade County's most prominent rabbis—Phineas Weberman, secretary to the Orthodox Rabbinical Council—to head a council of Jewish leaders opposed to the gay rights ordinance. And as soon as the first ads appeared comparing the gay rights plank to the discrimination Jews had suffered, Jewish leaders at Thompson's side were ready with a rebuttal: "Tell us about human rights?" they demanded indignantly. "What right is there to corrupt our children?"

Ethan Geto began to wonder if they were going to lose, and quietly made a few decisions that reflected his concern. He took to spending as much time talking to reporters from outside Miami—from the *New York Times*, the news-magazines, the networks, even from Europe—as with reporters from Dade County. It was not what he had been hired to do, but Geto decided that even if they lost the vote in Miami, they could still sway opinions elsewhere. He was

also concerned about turning the campaign into a daily debate that associated homosexuals with child molesters. Geto, thinking as much about how the campaign was playing outside Florida as he was about the contest at hand, took the opportunity to offer a sober and academic rebuttal to the notion that homosexuals were predators on children. He flew in experts to hold press conferences discussing the issue. John Spiegel, the former president of the American Psychiatric Association, for example, asserted that sexual orientation was established at a young age, by three or four, before children entered school. But the coalition ran no television advertising engaging the attacks by Save Our Children. A week before the election, Geto told a Miami reporter: "I could easily put together newspaper clips of heterosexuals molesting children. And I'd have 10 times as many clips." But he never did it.

As election day approached, Bryant posted guards around her home, and Campbell wore a bulletproof vest. Jim Foster told Geto that one night, after he stopped his car at a red light, a group of men pulled up in a car next to him, pointed a shotgun out the window at his car and said: "We're gonna blow your fuckin' brains out." They sped off into the night when the light turned green. One afternoon a suspicious two-inch-thick manila envelope with a Manhattan postmark arrived in the mail at Bryant headquarters. The bomb squad blew it up, and everyone looked a little sheepish as gay rights leaflets came raining down. The newspapers and television stations ran so many stories on homosexual child molestation cases that Geto became convinced the local media were out to inflame the electorate. "This is really a sewer," Geto thought of Miami. "They're against us." (It was not a groundless concern: The Sunday before election day, the *Miami Herald* ran a United Press International story headlined "Homosexual Ring's Ad Lured Boys: 17 to Face Charges in New Orleans," about a two-year-old scandal in New Orleans with no obvious news hook.) When the coalition tried launching its own barrage of newspaper advertisements, the *Herald* and *News* refused to run many of them. They would not print a swastika as part of an advertisement aimed at the county's sizable Jewish population which reprinted this 1936 decree from Heinrich Himmler, the head of Hitler's Gestapo: "Just as we today have gone back to the ancient German view on the question of marriages mixing different races, so too in our judgment of homosexuality—a symptom of degeneracy which could destroy our race—we must return to the guiding Nordic principle, extermination of degenerates." Foster discovered a series of three pictures of Anita Bryant wearing a skimpy, fringed, cowgirl outfit while performing what appeared to be a sexually provocative number at the 1971 Ozark Empire Fair in Springfield, Missouri. The cutline on the photos, discovered in a Chicago trade newspaper that year, was: "Strip Tease? Not Quite." Foster did not use them because, he said later, "We didn't want to get down in the gutter with them."

For all the problems in Florida, homosexuals across the country were rallying to the cause of gay rights in a way they never had before. "Every gay bar in town has agreed to stop serving orange juice altogether, or squeeze their own California oranges," said Lenny Mollet, president of the San Francisco Tavern Guild. The Florida Citrus Commission wavered over whether it wanted to keep Anita Bryant on (until an uproar from her supporters forced it to back off). Homosexuals disrupted Bryant's performances. In Washington, D.C., activists staged a Bryant roast at the Pier Nine disco. And in San Francisco, the writer and columnist Armistead Maupin noted the sight of homosexuals climbing into cars and driving to Miami with a "campy defiance" he had never seen before. "There was never anything for them to identify with before," he said. "Who wanted to get on a flatbed truck with a bunch of drag queens?" Indeed, Jack Campbell found that most of the money the coalition collected came out of San Francisco, where men walked down the Castro wearing T-shirts proclaiming, "Squeeze a Fruit for Anita." "Nothing has ever grabbed the gay community like this one," said Chris Perry, president of the San Francisco Gay Democratic Club. Campbell encountered Bryant at a commission meeting in Miami toward the end of the campaign and went over to thank her for unifying the nation's homosexual community. Bryant looked bewildered, until Bob Green rushed over: "Don't you know who that is?" Green demanded, and pulled her away.

In the final weeks, Bryant's speeches became increasingly emphatic. She proclaimed that God had inflicted a drought on California because the state was tolerant of gays. She referred to homosexuals as "human garbage," and said the Dade County ordinance would protect the right to have "intercourse with beasts." She cheered when the Reverend Jerry Falwell of the Thomas Road Baptist Church of Lynchburg, Virginia, a fellow Southern Baptist beginning to tie together his church and his conservative politics, proclaimed at a Save Our Children rally at the Miami Convention Center: "So-called gay folks [would] just as soon kill you as look at you." Bryant rejected the idea that homosexuals deserved sympathy or dispensation because they were born that way. "Homosexuality is a conduct, a choice, a way of life. And if you choose to have a lifestyle as such, then you are going to have to live with the consequences. It's not a sickness, but a sin." When a reporter asked her if she would also like to see other morality laws enforced, including ones that forbid out-of-wedlock fornication, adultery and cohabitation by unmarried couples, Anita Bryant responded: "I would, yes." Bryant was a singer, not a politician, Mike Thompson realized; she worked best when reading from a script, and he tried to avoid spontaneous engagements in the daily campaign. Bob Green considered his wife sincere but politically naive. He told her to tone down the

rhetoric; he was getting uncomfortable complaints from religious friends who found her extreme.

Even so, by the beginning of June, Anita Bryant and Save Our Children were steamrolling the opposition. Their polls attested to the success of their strategy: women had decisively swung against the ordinance. Ruth Shack found a wholesale defection by Dade County's liberal community—people she had worked with for years on civil rights and women's rights—over this issue. And Bryant herself was an elusive target. She was a woman, she was devout, and she was almost impossible to attack.* At one memorable campaign face-off at a Kiwanis Club luncheon, Bryant and Bob Kunst were each given twelve minutes to speak. Bryant spoke for six of them, and then threw her head back and burst into song: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," the start of six minutes of "Battle Hymn of the Republic." The performance left even Kunst applauding—what else could he do?—and nearly speechless. In one last indignity for the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights, Bryant's campaign turned the main source of coalition support—the city of San Francisco—into an argument against gay rights. Sheriff Richard Hongisto, who spent a week in Miami campaigning against repeal, tried to explain to Dade County voters why homosexuals were such an asset to San Francisco. "They seem to work," Hongisto said, refurbishing "drab" houses and raising property values. Mike Thompson called a press conference to rebut Hongisto and present his own picture of San Francisco as a "cesspool of sexual perversion gone rampant. We cannot believe that the people of Dade County want to pattern our community after the debased standards of that city." Added Green: "San Francisco may be completely gone. There may be no saving it. They even have a gay sheriff there." Hongisto, who was heterosexual, returned home to report that the vote had turned into a referendum on San Francisco itself.

The high-minded campaign envisioned by Geto and Foster was collapsing, and the two out-of-towners found themselves under attack. Jack Campbell told Geto he could not understand why things had gone so wrong. "You showed me a poll that said we could win," Campbell said to Geto in one angry exchange before the two men ceased talking to each other completely. Steve Endean thought Campbell and Geto were naive, taking the high road while the other side effectively played to voters' fears. Kay Tobin and Barbara Gittings had questioned why they were sending down a New York ideologue like Ethan Geto to do battle with Anita Bryant. Why not send Troy Perry, the

* Bruce Voeller, among others, made this argument; Morris Kight argued the opposite was true: that men were harsher to her because she was a woman. If this was true, it was in private; she was barely attacked during the campaign itself.

minister who grew up in Florida, and fight "fire with fire?" said Tobin, imagining how Troy Perry would match Anita Bryant, Bible quote for Bible quote.

On the last Sunday before election day, religious leaders across Dade County devoted their sermons to attacking the gay rights ordinance—"This is the Lord's Battle and it will be the Lord's Victory," the Reverend William Chapman declared from the pulpit of Bryant's church—while the *Miami Herald* devoted five news stories to it, including an editorial that called for repeal. "We believe that the ordinance, while well-intentioned, is unnecessary to the protection of human rights and undesirable as an expression of public policy," the *Herald* editorial said, in an about-face from the previous January, when it commended the Metro Commission and Ruth Shack for "mustering courage to hold fast to the principle of non-discrimination" in approving the ordinance. The mood among gay activists was grim as voting day approached, and the leaders of the gay coalition decided to use their fundraising surplus to assure their election night festivities were as grand as possible. They rented the biggest ballroom at the Fontainebleau Hotel and played host to almost one thousand people, including as large a national press corps as anyone had seen at that hotel since George McGovern stayed there in 1972. It turned out to be a very short night. The first returns showed the ordinance losing by 2 to 1, and the margin never narrowed. Dade County was united in its opposition: 45 percent of the electorate had turned out, and the ordinance was defeated in virtually every neighborhood (Jack Campbell's Coconut Grove being one exception) and every ethnic group (including Jewish voters). The final vote was 202,319 in favor of repeal to 89,562 against; almost 70 percent of the voters had voted against gay rights. Leonard Matlovich, the air force sergeant discharged in 1975 for being homosexual, reminded the Fontainebleau crowd of Bryant's promise to take this campaign across the country. "But when she gets there, she's going to find us waiting for her. We shall overcome." With that, the thousand people at the Fontainebleau started to sing "We Shall Overcome," adding a stanza to the civil rights anthem: "Gays and straights together, we shall overcome, someday."

Anita Bryant embraced her victory at the Zodiac Room in the Holiday Inn on Collins Avenue. She was dressed in powder blue, glistening and happy as she emerged to read her written victory statement to her audience of reporters and supporters. "Tonight the laws of God and the cultural values of man have been vindicated. I thank God for the strength he has given me and I thank my fellow citizens who joined me in what at first was a walk through the wilderness. The people of Dade County—the normal majority—have said, 'Enough! Enough! Enough!' They have voted to repeal an obnoxious assault

on our moral values . . . despite our community's reputation as one of the most liberal areas in the country.

"All America and the world have heard the people of Miami," she said. "We will now carry our fight against similar laws throughout the nation that attempt to legitimize a lifestyle that is both perverse and dangerous to the sanctity of the family, dangerous to our children, dangerous to our freedom of religion and freedom of choice, dangerous to our survival as a nation."

The next morning Jean O'Leary, who had come down to Miami in the final days of the campaign, boarded a plane for New York, escaping a city which had offered her "all the evidence anyone could need of the extent and virulence of prejudice against lesbians and gay men." Once aloft, she opened the *Miami Herald*: There on page one, was a quarter-page head shot of Anita Bryant and Bob Green, kissing. "This is what heterosexuals do, fellows," Green said. O'Leary felt suffocated by the defeat.

Gay leaders tried to throw the best light on the disheartening results. "We've taken one step backward and two steps forward," said Campbell. "It did bring the entire gay community together." David Goodstein said that the election had trained homosexuals in how to deal with this kind of public referendum. "We had an army of recruits," Goodstein wrote. "Now we will have an army of veterans." In defeat, Ethan Geto agreed that they might have made some mistakes. Should they have rebutted the child molestation advertisements on television? Had he paid too much attention to the out-of-state media? "While we might have done some things differently or better," Geto wrote Shack three weeks after the vote, explaining the strategy he and Foster had employed, "with hindsight I feel the campaign was not winnable—with more time and a slightly different strategy, we might have done better, but we doubt the outcome would have been very different." He noted the "very little spade work done in Dade County by the gay community prior to the final, active phase of the election campaign," and concluded, "We are not ashamed of the campaign that was waged in Dade County."

Shack didn't even try to sugarcoat the debacle; it was, she said, "three times worse than I ever expected. They came out of the woodwork. It was a huge step back nationally. We even lost among Jewish liberals in Miami Beach." Indeed, it seemed that Anita Bryant could not have hoped for anything more. There was a new movement afoot, of fundamentalist conservatives, and it had found a rallying point, a cause that seemed likely to stir more passions than the fight against abortion rights or for prayer in schools. The vote seemed to be a repudiation of homosexuals by the American public. And the Dade County results revealed that the movement remained painfully unsophisticated, divided and dominated by extreme personalities, and apparently unprepared for the fights that lay ahead.

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Bella Abzug was asleep in her townhouse on Bank Street in New York's Greenwich Village. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning, four and a half hours after Anita Bryant had read her victory statement, when Abzug awoke to noise outside her window. "Martin," she said, to her husband sleeping next to her, "I hear someone calling my name."

"Go back to bed," he said. "You're dreaming."

But the chants from outside on Bank Street grew louder: "Bel-LAH! Bel-LAH! Bel-LAH!" The former representative, roused from bed, opened the second-floor window to the street outside. More than three hundred gay men and lesbians had made their way to the doorstep of the woman who had introduced the first gay civil rights bill in Congress. Abzug put on a nightdress and went outside. It was hard not to feel sad for this crowd, and Bella Abzug cast about for some encouraging words. This will end up being a good thing, Abzug said, grabbing the outstretched hands, her loud voice booming up Bank Street. It will create more determination and a more mature political movement among homosexuals. "And now it's time to go to bed," she said, bidding them good night.

In one way, Abzug was right. The results in Dade County that night roused many homosexuals, and the gay movement, as nothing had before. It was a turning point for gay men and lesbians who years later would trace their own coming out or interest in gay politics to the Anita Bryant victory. In the days after the repeal, there were marches in cities large and small, from Los Angeles to Indianapolis; from San Francisco, where thousands of people marched through to Union Square chanting "Out of the bars and into the streets," to New Orleans; from Boston to Houston. Gay Pride marches that month saw record turnouts. Jeanne Cordova always marked the vote as the beginning of a migration of lesbians back into the gay rights movement. Gay organizations popped up all over the country; existing ones saw their membership rolls swell. The National Gay Task Force saw its membership double in just four months.

Indeed, it soon became clear the referendum had not quite inspired the national reevaluation of homosexuality that either Ethan Geto or Anita Bryant had expected. There were limits on how far the gay rights movement could go, but there were also limits on how far the emerging religious right could take its campaign to restrict homosexuals. "Let Miss Bryant and her own militant crusaders not misinterpret their victory: No mandate has been given to put the gays on the run, or to repress their right of free expression," wrote William Safire, the conservative *New York Times* columnist. "She has turned back a danger posed by wrongheaded gay activists, and deserves credit for that; she does not deserve to be matriarch of a new movement that would pose a new danger to those homosexuals who want to be left alone." Safire drew an

important distinction in how society should deal with homosexuals. The gay activists in Dade County wanted "the seal on their housekeeping to say 'good.' That is a moral judgment they have the right to make, but not to insist upon from the rest of society."

Still, it was a tense and gloomy atmosphere, and the gay rights movement turned on itself and its more visible members. "Democratic issues are won and lost on simple public relations and ours is shameful!" complained a letter-writer to *The Advocate*. "How easily the Save Our Children could get footage of 'Cockapillars' and queens for their emotional television attack." When the black movement got "hot and heavy," the writer said, "you did *not* see Uncle Toms and Stepin Fetchits" showing up with watermelons to push for black civil rights. "Why do *we* let them? . . . Think about the next time a 'friend' starts a comment with, 'Listen, Mary.' Mary isn't listening. Anita is!"

The political professionals drew a less emotional lesson: Homosexuals should avoid taking their case to the public. "In 1965, if the federal civil rights act was voted on in Selma, Alabama, what would have happened?" Ethan Geto said, in a round of sometimes defensive interviews after the vote. "Of course they would have taken away blacks' civil rights. A referendum is a lousy vehicle to extend or expand the rights of a minority."