

Striking Parallels of Abuse

Clips Guest Commentary

Our guest author follows up on his previous commentaries on Penn State by pointing out the striking parallels of sexual abuse at Penn State and in the cases of abuse in the Catholic Church.

By Frank G. Splitt, 07-14-12

Having heard all of this you may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you did not know.—William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

Orin Starn, chair and professor of cultural anthropology at Duke, was quoted by Allie Grasgreen in the July 12, 2012, *Inside Higher Ed* piece, "Culture of Complacency: Freeh report faults Penn State athletics culture,"[1] as saying:

"Comparing the structure of athletics programs to the Catholic Church, he added, "They're certainly systems where once abuse happens, because they're so hierarchical and because such fealty is owed to the head coach, that they very quickly get into cover-up and not owning up, a lack of transparency."

Therein, Professor Starn illuminates the striking parallels between the pedophile abuse at Penn State and the pedophile abuse in the Catholic Church.

It is difficult to differentiate between the behavior of the Catholic Church when it was confronted with many hundreds of worldwide pedophile cases and the behavior at Penn State University detailed in the July 12, 2012, Freeh Report that made liberal use of phrases like "extremely poor leadership," "irresponsibility," "creating dangerous situations for children," "repeatedly concealed facts" and "showing no concern for the victims." [2]

The behavior at both institutions was characterized by conspiracies of silence and structures of deceit, denial, corruption, cover-ups, as well as the shockingly callous disregard for the victims of the abuser.

As the AP reported: "The NCAA said yesterday it expects Penn State to answer a handful of crucial questions stemming from the child sex-abuse case against Jerry Sandusky, any of which could result in sanctions against the school. See "NCAA looking for answers from PSU." [3]

The NCAA can't really be serious. It's tantamount to a mother fox looking for answers to explain the dead chickens killed by one of her well-trained kits.

Answers are difficult if not impossible to obtain from colleges and universities because of the of the federal Family Education and Privacy Act (FERPA). The NCAA and its member institutions employ FERPA to avoid scrutiny of the academic performance and bad behavior of its so-called student-athletes. For example, Iowa's highest court just ruled that the University of Iowa can withhold hundreds of documents related to its inquiry into a dorm-room assault in a case pitting safeguards for student privacy against calls for transparency about campus crime. See Joe Palazzolo's July 14, 2012, Wall Street Journal article "Iowa College Can Shield Student Data, Court Rules." [4]

For more on conspiracies of silence see Chapter 12 of Garry Wills' book, *Papal Sins: Structures of Deceit*. Also see, "Collegiate Athletics Reform: Lessons from Penn State" [5] and "Collegiate Athletics Reform: Lessons from Penn State Redux." [6]

Web Links

1. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/07/13/freeh-report-faults-penn-state-athletics-culture>
2. http://www.thefreehreportonpsu.com/REPORT_FINAL_071212.pdf
3. <http://www.bostonherald.com/sports/college/football/view.bg?articleid=1061145435&srvc=sports&position=recent>
4. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303740704577525251728937004.html?KEYWORDS=Iowa+college+can+shield+student+data+Court+Rules>
5. http://thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Penn_State.pdf
6. http://www.thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Redux.pdf

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