

Judith Lynne Hanna ©

Legislatures respond to vocal constituents, often a **Segment of the Politically Active Christian Right (SPACR)** that wants to eliminate exotic dance. Why?

Biblical injunctions concerning the use of the body, modesty, a male-female polarity and patriarchy are part of the answer. So too are beliefs about the inherent uncontrollable nature of men. Consequently, "sexual jihadists" are struggling to reorganize American life and impose their own political organization, a Scripture-based theocracy. Some current legislators are members of SPACR, seeking to destroy the separation of church and state. It is irrelevant to them that their laws and proposed laws violate federal and state constitutions. Of course, some members of the Christian Right eschew political engagement and choose to engage in, e.g., fighting poverty.

My first lessons about the assault on exotic dance began in 1995 when planner Bruce McLaughlin (from Tampa, Florida) and attorney Gil Levy (from Seattle, Washington), asked me to be an expert court witness in Seattle in a First Amendment case related to exotic dance. They wanted me to apply the same approach that I used when I studied dance in African villages and cities and U.S. schools and concert theaters. Being a strong free speech advocate -- and excited to apply my knowledge to a world I did not know -- I agreed.

I had to break through "Washington Together Against Pornography!" demonstrators to begin to discover what went on inside exotic dance clubs. Women and children picketing the club held screaming banners of denunciation. A Christian church was behind opposition to the adult entertainment. In the more than 100 successive cases nationwide that I conducted research for, a pastor or church group was spearheading efforts to wipe out the alleged "moral cancer" of "toxic" exotic dance. Yet exotic dance is a form of dance, art and theater that communicates within its own aesthetic. What I keep learning frightens me and is under most people's radar. The implications of the outcome of attacks on exotic dance are frightening for all of us who believe in American democracy.

Bases for SPACR Antagonism to Exotic Dance

SPAR views exotic dance as perilous to the biblical patriarchal social order: the "ungodly" exotic dance clubs destroy femininity and undermine men because they draw women out of the home and into "demimonde" employment. Single dancers compete with married women for men's attention and admiration, challenging their self-esteem, and with men economically, challenging their sense of masculinity. Thus the outrage when a "passive," "modest" woman steps out of the domestic realm into the public arena where she shamelessly removes her clothing and moves her nude, or semi-nude, body for sexual fantasy, commercial purpose and economic independence. Existence of the exotic dancer signals the males' insufficient surveillance (only the husband should see the woman's nude body) and weakened masculinity.

Men's uncontrollable nature is due, says SPACR author Tim LaHaye, to their "constant production of sperm and seminal fluid." The male sex drive is "almost volcanic in its latent ability

to erupt at the slightest provocation." Women are "candles among gunpowder" and must dress so as not to "blow up the fire of men's lust."

Because sexuality outside of marriage is threatening, SPACR has "prudential" lifestyle rules that interdict behaviors believed to lead a person to perdition, e.g., being tempted by adult cabarets. The notion is that after the fall, humans were left with a powerful sinful nature, so prudent Christians must keep themselves from drifting astray.

SPACR Battle Plans and Attack Strategies v. Adult Cabarets

Prominent in the CR is Dominionism. This is a political religious movement that has what its leaders call a grand design to supplant our constitutional democracy with a scripture-based Christian governing theocratic elite. Political activism is considered a duty.

Note that the CR is the base of the Republican Party which lost the presidency and congressional seats in 2008 -- but not power at the state and local levels. However, SPACR has a searing rottweiler-drive to regain national power to better achieve its goals. The pro-censorship crowd is fighting on all political levels.

A website of an active Christian Right group with affiliates across the U.S. says:

Welcome to the Citizens for Community Values of Indiana Website. Citizens for Community Values is an educational organization devoted to protecting families from the harms of the porn/sex industry in all of its forms... We believe that there is a great culture war for the soul of our nation being waged by many kinds of sexual revolutionaries that oppose the principles governing human sexual relations established by God.

Expansion of state control over sexuality is a key to creating a salutary environment for their children and making way for their ideal state. SPACR fights adult entertainment by harnessing an organizational network fueled by technology, money, lawyers, public relations outfits and "researchers."

From Psalm 127, an emphasis is placed on militaristic imagery, including arrows. Children become the arrows of the parents, part of their tools of war, in order to go out against the enemy. The language of the SPACR is filled with metaphors about the use of excessive force and violence against God's enemies. Christians' task is to recruit soldiers in the army of Jesus Christ. Clergy are known to speak of themselves as generals or admirals and their evangelist followers as soldiers, powerful warriors.

SPACR lobbies local governments to pass adult cabaret restrictions to drive them out of business. Members of SPACR burrow into government as "holy hires" or get elected so they can legislate and adjudicate against exotic dance. In addition, SPACR attorneys are hired to help draft and defend restrictive laws. Most prominent is Scott Bergthold, likened to an old-time snake oil salesman riding the circuit. I have seen him in courtrooms everywhere reading from a hymnal of spin to defend challenged regulations he drafted to destroy the adult hospitality business. Double dipping?

Part SPACR's mobilization effort is an "electric church" network of TV preachers who appear on

some 1,300 radio and TV stations and claim audiences of up to 130 million and profits of \$500 million to billions. An e-army inundates legislators with emails for or against proposed bills. SPACR widely distributes its model anti-adult cabaret legislation to governments everywhere. Voter guides are sent to churches and prayer-action groups transform into political action committees. Grassroot members go door-to-door with petitions to try to bring certain issues to a vote. Anti-club combatants also engage in physical threats and assaults on property.

In addition, SPACR unstintingly publicizes the misconception that the clubs cause crime, property depreciation and disease (adverse secondary effects, and thus summons public outrage and support for regulations to marginalize and punish those who don't adhere to Scripture-based moral values. The misinformation acquires a cachet of truth. Consequently, the myth provokes broad public denunciation that inadvertently supports SPACR's efforts to break down the walls separating church and state. SPACR, not surprisingly, ignores social science research that has shown that the clubs do not cause the alleged harm.

SPACR uses the coercive power of local and state government against exotic dance to:

- instigate raids on clubs on false pretexts,
- deny club licenses,
- impose restrictive zoning,
- require costly and discriminatory registration for dancers.
- impede dancers' creativity
 - by specifying costume, body parts that can show, even requiring dancers in licensed sexually oriented businesses to cover more of the body than is seen at the beach,
 - determining dance styles and movements,
- regulate the manner in which patrons may tip dancers,
- ban simulated nudity and simulated sex -- whatever these terms mean.
- use eminent domain to take club property
- tell clubs when they can open,
- specify distance between dancers and patrons,
- dictate the arrangement of the interior space of clubs,
- mandate bright lights inside the club,
- impose sin and pole taxes,
- demand unnecessary security
- continually pass laws against clubs and when one law is complied with or overturned in court, another law takes its place.

Sometimes SPACR pays government expenses in lawsuits that adult cabarets bring against the government's unconstitutional regulations. Exotic dance opponents are well-armed with financial and communication resources to do battle. According to *Church and State* (2007), Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family radio/publishing outfit brought in \$137 million in 2005. With a budget of \$10.8 million in 2006, Tony Perkins' Family Research Council lobbies for the Christian Right agenda in Washington. Dr. Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network operated with \$236 million in contributions in fiscal year 2005. Rev. Donald Wildmon's American Family Association has a radio empire with revenues of \$17 million annually. Jeff Sharlet in his 2008 book, *The Family*, speaks of an "invisible" association with a house in Washington, DC, organized around public men, conservative Republicans, would-be theocrats. He quotes director Doug Coe: "The more you can make your organization invisible, the more influence it will have.... We work with power where we can, build new power where we can't." The Family has operated under many

guises; its Fellowship Foundation alone has an annual budget of nearly \$14 million. Moneys are often given to affiliates.

SPACR attempts to strip the First, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, corset the exotic dancer, micromanage businesses, and assault women by dismantling a club industry through local and state government actions and "street" tactics (like those against abortion clinics). I could go on and on about this steamroller, but I think you get the idea.

Not surprisingly, some politicians of any religious persuasion periodically, especially at election time, use adult cabarets as a red herring to divert attention from government failure to cope with the real problems of education, crime, health and traffic. These politicians prey upon and reinforce stereotypes about adult cabarets and attack female exotic dance performers. Thus the politicians show their constituents that they are working on their behalf to merit being returned to office -- even if their jurisdiction doesn't even have a club!

Defense

So, how do you stop this juggernaut against the adult cabaret industry? Free speech advocates, consumers and involved businesses fight back to preserve free speech, women's rights and free enterprise most effectively through well-funded organizations. The problem is an unending marathon, not a sprint. Adult cabarets will continually be facing SPACR as well as the taxes!

The costs of club proaction -- e.g., squashing bills before they surface -- is far less costly than going to court. The BACE battle in Ohio is said to have cost around \$4 million to date. Organizations such as the New Jersey Adult Cabaret Association have thus far built up networks, a knowledge base and some successes. NJACA won small cases and prevented hostile bills from getting out of committee. But now NJACA faces the new *New Jersey Family Policy Council, Inc.*, associated with the powerful *Focus on the Family* and recipient of over \$890,000 to combat adult cabarets.

Obviously NJACA will require substantial contributions from its members and other exotic dance stakeholders, e.g., beverage suppliers, architects and patrons. Adult cabaret associations with such "protection money" have been successful in defeating SPACR. But they must be forever vigilant and proactive.

Judith Lynne Hanna (Ph.D. Anthropology, Columbia University) has become the world's only expert court witness on dance as nonverbal communication, from ballet to stripping. She has worked with 56 attorneys on 118 legal cases in 26 states and the District of Columbia on First Amendment and other cases related to exotic dance. Her testimony is quoted in court decisions and the media, and her research appears in numerous articles. She is completing a book tentatively titled *Naked Truth: A Christian Right, Strip Clubs and Democracy*. For more information visit her web site at www.judithhanna.com.