

FAU's Corpus Christi Offends Florida Senators

By Michael James

The Florida Atlantic University production of the play Corpus Christi has attracted the heated attention of several Florida Senators, including Debby Sanderson (R-Fort Lauderdale) who said, "It's absolutely tasteless. It's very upsetting to me."

The senators asked Anthony Catanese, president of FAU, why he would allow such a production to take place while the senate was deciding on budget amendments, including one for several programs at FAU. Catanese responded during that telephone conference that the play would continue its full run of performances citing academic freedom. The final scheduled performance was April 1.

Democratic Senator Skip Campbell of Coral Springs told the Herald, "If this is



Debby Sanderson
Florida Senator

something that is going to be viewed poorly by the majority of the population, and going to polarize the community, then it is my belief that they should not be using state funds."

Although none of the senators that they had any plans of changing their budgeting decisions due to the play, they left the door open for possible action. Campbell stated that they had no intention at seeking retribution and that they would evaluate the situation.

Catanese said, "The theater department made the decision to stage this play under the principles of academic freedom that have been a bulwark of higher education."

He went on to say, "I will not go to see this play. This is not an academic position, but a personal stance."

The senators were made aware of the play after a letter was sent out by William

Donohue, the president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. In the letter Donohue wrote, "It is one thing for Catholics to endure bigotry but quite another to make and subsidize it with their tax dollars."

Campbell stated about the play, "I have never heard of it, I have not read it. But if it is what has been presented to us, I think there are a lot of senators that will be very upset..."

Senator Dan Webster (R-Orlando) said, "We need to be asking - is this one of our priorities? We've already had to cut a lot of funding. Maybe the school's art and cultural program funds are better spent somewhere else..."

Senator Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Weston) said, "The last thing we want to do is censor the last great marketplace of ideas, a public university."

Corpus Christi is a play about a gay Christ-like figure living in Texas who is "crucified" in a "government-sanctioned lynching to rid society of what is perceived as a homosexual cult," wrote Jack Zink, Sun-

Sentinel theater writer.

The play was written by Tony award-winning playwright Terrence McNally and was first produced in New York in 1998. McNally said he was influenced to write the play after the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming.

When the play opened in NY it was the subject of criticism and debate, as well as praise. The Catholic League, which has been flaming the opposition threatened violence at that opening.

FAU officials made it clear that the production cost around \$1,000 to produce, a cost that was paid for by the students. The set is little more than a few benches and the cast wore street clothes.

Zink stated that "the carefully sculpted drama is far less controversial than the synopsis suggests."

Corpus Christi, directed by J. Barry Lewis, is the first leg of a five part International Drama Series at FAU. Future productions will include works by Henrik Ibsen and Pulitzer-prize winning playwright Lanford Wilson.



Cellucci Confirmed By U.S. Senate as Ambassador to Canada

By Norm Kent

Despite opposition from anti gay family groups, and Senator Jesse Helms, the United States Senate approved Massachusetts Gov. Paul Cellucci's nomination to be ambassador to Canada late Thursday night. The voice vote came without debate.

Cellucci's support of GLSEN educational training in schools on homosexual issues was one of the reasons family groups and Jesse Helms so vigorously opposed him.

President Bush, though, was a longtime friend, and had wanted Cellucci confirmed in time for the April 20 Summit of the Americas in Canada.

"The Governor looks forward to serving his nation and serving the President that he admires greatly," Cellucci's spokesman, Jason Kauppi, said after the Senate vote.

Lt. Gov. Jane Swift of Massachusetts will become acting governor when Cellucci resigns to accept the new post, which could be as soon as this week. Her career in government began in 1991 when, at 25, she was the youngest woman ever elected to the Massachusetts State Senate. In an interview on Friday, she stunned gay rights groups by stating unequivocally she would not support, extend or propose any bills that support same sex benefits to gay couples.

The nomination had passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee earlier in the day, despite a dissenting vote and criticism from chairman Jesse Helms.

Helms indicated he would not block Cellucci's nomination because he was

President Bush's choice, but said he had misgivings about Cellucci's positions on social issues. Conservative groups had lobbied against Cellucci, saying his support of gay rights was "antifamily."

Helms said he agreed to support Cellucci after asking for and receiving a statement from Cellucci pledging not to use his position to advance his personal views.

But after the foreign relations committee's vote on Thursday, Helms issued a statement saying he dissented.

"I have at hand reports regarding Mr. Cellucci's tenure as Governor of Massachusetts reports that, quite frankly, have raised my eyebrows, as have his positions on the sanctity of human life, parental rights and the defense of traditional family values," Helms' statement said.

"These positions," the statement continued, "are out of sync not only with my own views, but with the President's stated positions on these important matters."

After hearing of Helms' vote, Cellucci's spokesman John Birtwell said, "The governor has great respect for Senator Helms and how he has worked to move this nomination along expeditiously."

One of the Senate hearings on the Cellucci nomination was briefly disrupted by an activist from Public Advocate, a self-



Paul Cellucci

described anti gay rights group based in Virginia.

A man who later identified himself as Jack Clayton of Mt. Vernon, Va., interrupted questioning from Senator Dodd when he stood up and announced: "I can't stand to be in the same room as Paul Cellucci." He then stormed out of the room.

It was the second Massachusetts Governor whose ambassadorship Jesse Helms attempted to derail. In 1997, Helms

sabotaged a bid by Weld, Cellucci's predecessor, to be Ambassador to Mexico by refusing to schedule a hearing on his nomination.

But Cellucci breezed through a 40-minute confirmation hearing Wednesday, fielding just six questions from the four members of the Foreign Relations Committee who attended. Helms was not among them. There were no questions about Cellucci's stand on social issues.

20% OFF
COMPLETE PAIR OF PRESCRIPTION EYE GLASSES OR SUNGLASSES*
DOWNTOWN OPTICIANS
Fine Eyewear & Personal Service

LYNN D. GRACZYK
 Licensed Optician/Owner
 Cumberland Building
 800 East Broward Boulevard
 Fort Lauderdale
 954.764.6962

SMITH'S
PICTURE FRAMING AND ART GALLERY
SINCE 1954

719 E. Broward Blvd.
 Fort Lauderdale,
 Florida 33301
(954) 462-4391