



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on August 26, 2013

## Christian Businesses Targeted Over Refusal to Serve Gay Weddings

A bistro and art gallery in Iowa is the latest target of a discrimination charge from angry homosexuals after the owners of the business refused to accommodate a pair of gay men who wanted to use the facility for their “wedding” ceremony.

Dick and Betty Odgaard are owners of the popular [Görtz Haus](#), an art gallery and bistro located in a stately old former Lutheran church in Grimes, Iowa. In early August the homosexual men approached the Odgaards about holding their marriage ceremony at the Görtz Haus after the hotel the couple had originally scheduled for the event went out of business.



However, the Odgaards, who are Mennonite Christians, politely declined, explaining to the men that their religious convictions would not allow them to hold the homosexual ritual in their facility. “To us, marriage is a sacrament that exists only between a man and a woman,” said Betty Odgaard. She emphasized to Des Moines’ KCCI Channel 8 news that their decision did not come from “an angry place,” but was based “on our religious beliefs. We want to honor that. We want people to know that is our stand that comes from our faith, our convictions. I think we should just stand by that no matter what.”

According to the [TheBlaze.com](#), the homosexual men, identified as Lee and Jared, have reportedly filed a complaint with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, which deals with possible violations of the state’s anti-discrimination measure. A homosexual activist group calling itself [One Iowa](#) believes that the Odgaards are guilty of discriminating against the homosexual men. The group noted that the Iowa Civil Rights Act stipulated that it is “unfair or discriminatory” for a business to deny services to a potential customer based on sexual orientation.

One Iowa spokesperson Donna Red Wing said that her group “respects and appreciates that Mr. and Mrs. Odgaard are Iowans with deeply held religious beliefs and convictions. At the same time, we need to separate our respect for the Odgaards’ religious beliefs from the Iowa civil rights code. While religious institutions are protected by religious freedoms, it’s important to note that the Görtz Haus is a public venue. It cannot be confused with a religious institution. The Odgaards provide a service to the public that must accommodate all Iowans, including [homosexuals].”

Apparently, not all gay and lesbian Iowans are as polite in their opposition to traditional morality as is One Iowa. The Odgaards told the Blaze that since news broke of their refusal to accommodate the homosexual wedding, they have been targeted by scores of hateful and vicious e-mails. “Betty said that some people have promised that the furor won’t stop until the business, which is a bistro, flower shop, and a wedding destination, shuts down,” reported the Blaze. “Detractors have called Betty and Dick



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'haters.'"

The news site noted that the Odgaards' business "has already experienced the impact of its decision. Betty said that two weddings are canceled for next summer and that some people want their down payments back. Additionally, an artist has pulled out from working with Görtz Haus Gallery."

The couple pointed out that they have former staff members and friends who are gay, and they hold no animosity against them, but said their faith won't allow them to condone the homosexual lifestyle. "We would serve them in every other way," Betty told the Blaze. "We simply don't want to take part ... it just comes down to that final line of taking their vows in our facility."

The Odgaards are certainly not the first Christian business owners to be targeted for declining the business of homosexuals. In [March 2012](#) a Kentucky homosexual group filed a discrimination complaint against Hands on Originals, a custom apparel company in Lexington, after the business declined to print gay-themed t-shirts for the group.

Five months later [Masterpiece Cakeshop in Denver, Colorado, was boycotted](#) by the area's homosexual contingent after the owner refused to bake a wedding cake for two homosexual men. The boycott appeared to have backfired, however, as the shop's business doubled as fair-minded Denver residents heard about the attack against it.

In April of this year Washington State's attorney general, Bob Ferguson, filed a [discrimination lawsuit](#) against elderly florist Barronelle Stutzman, owner of [Arlene's Flowers](#) in Richland, Washington, after Stutzman graciously declined the business of a homosexual man who wanted her to provide the floral arrangements for his same-sex marriage.

Perhaps the most notorious and potentially far-reaching attack against Christian business owners who decided to follow conscience over "law" has been the New Mexico Supreme Court's August 22 ruling that Christian photographers Elaine and Jonathan Huguenin, owners of Elane Photography, had discriminated against two lesbians when they declined to provide the photography for their same-sex ritual.

In 2006 Vanessa Willock approached the photography studio to photograph her "commitment ceremony" in Taos, New Mexico. The Huguenins cited their Christian beliefs in declining the business, and Willock moved on to another — and more reasonably priced — photographer. But the refusal apparently galled her, and Willock ultimately filed a discrimination complaint with the New Mexico Human Rights Commission (NMHRC). The Huguenins were ultimately found guilty of discriminating against Willock and fined thousands of dollar. The couple appealed the ruling, which led the case to the state high court.

In its ruling, the state supreme court upheld the 2012 appeals court decision, declaring that "a commercial photography business that offers its services to the public, thereby increasing its visibility to potential clients, is subject to the anti-discrimination provisions of the [New Mexico Human Rights Act] and must serve same-sex couples on the same basis that it serves opposite-sex couples."

The court said that in refusing to serve the homosexual couple, Elane Photography "violated the NMHRA in the same way as if it had refused to photograph a wedding between people of different races."

Amber Royster of the homosexual groups Equality New Mexico applauded the ruling, insisting that "it's about discrimination. It's not religious rights versus gay rights. We have a law on the books that makes



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it illegal to discriminate against LGBT persons. It makes it illegal for businesses to do that, and this business broke the law by discriminating against this couple.”

[Alliance Defending Freedom](#) (ADF), which represented the Huguenins in the case, called the ruling a “blow to our client and every American’s right to live free.” ADF Senior Counsel Jordan Lorence said that “decisions like this undermine the constitutionally protected freedoms of expression and conscience that we have all taken for granted. America was founded on the fundamental freedom of every citizen to live and work according to their beliefs and not to be compelled by the government to express ideas and messages they decline to support.”

Lorence told [Fox News](#) that “if Elane Photography does not have [its] rights of conscience protected, then basically nobody does. What you have here is the government punishing someone who says, ‘I, in good conscience, cannot communicate the messages of this wedding.’”

Lorence told Fox News that his group is considering an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. “This is very coercive, very authoritarian to crush those who do not agree and make public examples of them, and in a free society that simply should not be,” he said.

Ken Klukowski of the [Family Research Council](#) said that the state ruling may ultimately have national implications. “This decision may bring to Americans’ attention the serious threat to religious liberty posed by overbearing government agencies when it comes to redefining marriage,” Klukowski said. “Rather than live and let live, this is forcing religious Americans to violate the basic teachings of their faith or lose their jobs.”



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