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What Would Jesus Do? Oppose The Bathroom Bill, Texas Group Says

BY CRAIG MALISOW

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2017 AT 11:31 A.M.



As the great Paul Westerberg sang, "Mirror image, see no damage/See no evil at all/Kewpie dolls and urine stalls will be laughed at/the way you're laughed at now."

[flickr/Mr. TinDC](#)

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A Houston pastor and a Pearland mother of a transgender child are featured in an online media campaign that kicks off Wednesday against the so-called bathroom bill pending in Austin.

Launched by [Texas Impact](#), which describes itself as the state's "oldest and largest interfaith advocacy network," the four 30-second spots take the wacky notion that Christianity calls for treating everyone with dignity and respect, and suggests that the renegade rabbi from antiquity, Jesus Christ, would have probably thought the bill was lame.

Houston Police Department Chief Art Acevedo and other law enforcement officials certainly find the bill, which would require transgender people to use certain public restrooms that correspond with their sex at birth, [pointless](#). The bill passed the Senate July 25, in a 21-10 along party lines.

"It may be great political theater, but it is bad on public safety," Acevedo said at a July press conference, joining police chiefs from Dallas, San Antonio, and Austin in denouncing the bill. As the *Houston Press* [wrote](#), the chiefs said "that regulating what bathrooms people use is largely unenforceable, and that asking police to even try to do it would steal their valuable time away from doing actual police work and stopping crime....The chiefs made clear that men are already prohibited from assaulting, harassing, and filming women in bathrooms."

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According to a recent University of Texas/*Texas Tribune* poll, 51 percent of Texans don't think the legislation is important, compared to 39 percent who do. At the same time, 54 percent said "Texans should use the public restrooms based on their birth gender, while 31 percent said they should base their choice on their gender identities."

Texas Impact's ads are pretty much the opposite of the bombastic fearmongering campaign waged during Houston's battle over the "HERO" equal-rights ordinance in 2015. One [ad](#), which resembled those black-and-white "re-enactments" in true

crime shows, depicted a ponytailed girl walk into a women's restroom, where a pedophile has patiently been waiting in a stall, waiting on his prey. The

nightmarish scenario suggested a dystopian future where, thanks to the passage of an equal rights ordinance, men could invade women's restrooms with impunity.

On the flip side, Texas Impact's subdued, straightforward ads feature actual people who are actually talking.

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In one, Jim Bankston, the former senior minister at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Houston, says, "It's not easy to understand what it means to be

transgender, but as Christians, we're called to treat everyone with dignity and respect...We're all God's children – let's live by Christ's example, and spread God's love to everyone."

"Love"? "Dignity"? Who does this guy think he is?

Our favorite might be the one featuring Kimberly Shappley, a Pearland mom whose daughter is the kind of shiny, white, blonde Christian the senators profess to protect. But Shappley says the best way to protect her daughter is by not passing a discriminatory law in the first place.

Sitting in a church pew, Shappley hits all chords that would resonate with many Texas conservatives, saying "I'm a mom, a Christian, and a conservative Republican. I follow Scripture and believe in small and sensible government."

Just when you think Shappley's listing these credentials as a precursor to saying, "and that's why I think all transgender people should be exiled to Tasmania, and we could even call it 'Transmania,'" she evokes that radical old Jew again: "My faith teaches me that we should treat everyone the way Christ would have them be treated – with dignity and respect... As the mom of a transgender child, I'm urging our leaders to protect my daughter and oppose these harmful bills."

Texas Impact's executive director, Bee Moorhead, said in a press release announcing the campaign that "Mainstream faith communities across our state, from the people in the pews all the way up to national denominational leaders, oppose these bills. A few extremist individuals who support this legislation have been working hard to convince legislators that they represent the unified voice of the faithful, but that's simply not the case."

Will these ads resonate with most Texans? We will see.



Craig Malisow covers crooks, quacks, animal abusers, elected officials, and other assorted people for the *Houston Press*.

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