

Catholic charities must cover birth control for employees

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

The California Supreme Court today rejected the Roman Catholic Church's argument that its charitable organizations should be exempt from a state law that requires employers to cover the cost of birth control pills for women.

In a clash that pitted reli-

gious rights against government efforts to fight gender discrimination, California's high court found that a five-year-old law applies to Catholic Charities, a statewide network of programs that provide millions of dollars in social services each year, from health care to education.

The decision applies to thousands of Catholic Charities workers statewide, the majority of them non-Catholics, and could strengthen government's ability to regulate religious organizations as long as laws do not cross the constitutional line.

The law, passed by legisla-

tors in 1999 in response to concerns that women were being unfairly denied coverage for contraceptives, exempts strictly religious organizations, but the Supreme Court concluded that Catholic Charities is not entitled to the exemption because it serves a secular purpose and employs a

majority of non-Catholics.

Catholic Charities argued that it should be exempt from the provisions because they conflict with the moral teachings of the church. The court voted 6-1 to apply the law to Catholic Charities, finding that the law was narrowly crafted to protect religious organizations while

protecting the rights of the state's women workers. Justice Janice Brown issued a dissent that accused her colleagues of trampling on religious freedoms. "This is such a crabbed and constricted view of religion that it would define the ministry of Jesus Christ as a secular activity," Brown wrote.

Nation of Islam leader demands reparations for slavery legacy

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scholars ever talk about the transatlantic slave trade?" he said. "If the prophets in the sacred books saw the beginning to the end don't you think they saw what happened to our people? History records our people experienced the worse slavery in the history of the world. Yet none of the scholars are talking about what happened to us. Is it they are not talking because we don't exist in the hearts and minds of these people?"

"Does God not grieve for us? Listen to me. Who needs a God that does not care for the suffering of our people?"

Farrakhan says America and Europe needs to pay reparations or deal with the wrath of God. "Allah promises judgment," he said. "He says he will spend all of his arrows on the nations that judged us. And some ask what does America and Europe owe. They owe everything to Africa. All of Europe and America need to repent or be destroyed."

"In order to get reparations a people has to appeal to government. I want the privilege of taking the black man's case to the government of the U.S..."

James Muhammad, the secretary of Muhammad's Mosque 36 in Charlotte, says Farrakhan's speech was very timely.

"Basically for those who don't understand reparations he's laid the foundation for the case of reparations spiritually and morally," he said. "A lot of attention goes to the economic side of repa-

rations. A lot of time hasn't been spent looking at the spiritual and moral obligations."

"I'm totally in agreement with him. A lot of us think money but we need to deal with the psychological effects of slavery. We were dehumanized. The de is a prefix, which is used to remove or take away the human factor out of black people. When you remove the human side that man becomes an animal. And if you check out our behavior do we act like civilized black

men and women or do we act like animals? If you want to answer that question then check out the nightclubs Saturday night at Mingles and Mythos and tell me how we are acting. All of these things have come from slavery. We have become a morally lax person."

Muhammad says Farrakhan's stand that God requires justice is true and supported by one of Ameri-

ca's founding fathers. "In a book Thomas Jefferson says 'I tremble for my country when I reflect on if God is a just God then his justice can't sleep forever.' I definitely believe in reparations. By bringing it up we're actually helping this country. America needs to repair the damage done by their fathers then maybe the sins of the father won't be passed to the children."

Haiti's trouble

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the good of the nation.

Aristide was tremendously popular, but his support sagged after flawed legislative elections in 2000. International donors froze aid, and, as poverty deepened, opposition grew. Aristide denies charges that he uses police and armed militants to crush opposition.

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