



# URBAN CURRENT

## A tale of two mayors

It was the worst of times, it was the worsening of times.

**“Chick-fil-A doesn’t belong in Boston,”** Mayor Thomas Menino told the *Boston Herald* on Thursday, July 19. **“You can’t have a business in the city of Boston that discriminates against the population.”**

**“Chick-fil-A’s values are not Chicago’s values. They’re not respectful of our residents, our neighbors, and our family members. And if you’re gonna be part of the Chicago community you should reflect the Chicago values,”** said Mayor Rahm Emmanuel on Wednesday, July 25.

These statements were in response to Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy’s comments essentially articulating the Judeo-Christian belief, held by billions for a cumulative 7,000 years.

Chicago values, Mr. Mayor? And just what are these Chicago values?

Would they be the values of the single-party political organization that has dominated Chicago for decades known around the world as an unbeatable bastion of corruption? The values of “wink, nod, and ‘Here’s the envelope?’” No one has told these parties they aren’t welcome in Chicago. What values are we talking about? Where’s the list? Where do we go to get a copy?

And what about the issue of someone’s opinions, not to mention deeply held religious convictions, versus actual offensive, illegal, or inappropriate action? No one is suing Chick-fil-A for discrimination. There is no track record of discriminatory practice toward employees, customers, or the community. It’s not action or behavior that is at issue here. The business seems to be Exhibit A of living out the values of consistent respect and outstanding business practice while making major contributions to the community. Disenfranchising indi-

viduals or groups who do not agree with us is not an expression of enlightened, open-minded perspective. However, the Chicago powers that be don’t care. Hateful things are being said, a business being blocked. The speech amounts to hate-speech; the actions amount to bullying. Where’s the tolerance?

When this story broke over my neighborhood (Logan Square was Chick-fil-A’s new location choice) and our city, I had to choose how to approach the issue. Anyone who knows the preacher named Lyons knows where he stands on marriage and sanctity of sexual intimacy. I don’t think we win the culture to biblical thinking through denunciations, pronouncements, protests, etc. Don’t get me wrong, I’ve been involved in many. But the purpose of those was not to change a cultural mindset. This time, I felt the vulnerable spot in this red-hot story was the blatant hypocrisy in excluding everybody that didn’t follow the beat of the blue drum. The first rule of communication is to speak the language of the people you want to communicate with. There were so many glaring, gaping holes in the mayor’s position it was hard to know which one to go after first.

I chose to respectfully chide the mayor, appealing to him to recognize what he called “Chicago values” were the values of *some* Chicagoans, not all. (Statement text and audio on Armitage Baptist Church Facebook.)

My argument went something like this: Andy Griffith is dead and Mayberry even more a fantasy now. No thinking person claims the contemporary urban community is monolithic in its belief system. We live in a pluralistic age. Of course there are many points of view. Of course these are deeply and passionately held. True community is not about driving everyone into their corners, it’s about calling all to the center to identify what they have in common to pursue for the good of the whole. This is a holistic approach. This is an open-minded approach. There is no room for disrespect of

other people’s beliefs that lead to denigration, attack, and hostility.

I poked at the mayor about being biased in what values he valued and the exclusionary character of his approach. I made a plea for diversity and the need to acknowledge different belief systems. Thousands of faith leaders and hundreds of thousands of those who follow those leaders in Chicago are as much Chicagoans as anybody else. We deserve respect and a seat at the table as surely as those who we do not agree with.

Make no mistake about it, this is all about “How do I advance the cause of truth and the gospel? How do I get a platform for speaking truth in love and love in truth?” I am not one of those who thinks we’re going to “get America back.” I never heard Jesus talk about “getting Jerusalem back.” I do believe we can be sons of Issachar, understanding the times and knowing what to do. I do believe we can be wise as serpents. We can be a voice of righteousness and reason, which with God’s favor breaks the caricature of us created by bigots and radicals. We can seek the welfare of our city. I do believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. We can demonstrate the love of God standing on His truth, winning some here and winning some there. ChiTown and BeanTown both need Jesus.

By the time you read this maybe the tale of two mayors will have played out to some conclusion, satisfactory or otherwise. More than likely it’s just another chapter in an unfinished story.

Remember what we city slickers deal with today, everybody else deals with tomorrow. Better start a Chick-fil-A stash!



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