

Marjorie Silva, a (Christian!) baker against hate

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One baker [doesn't want to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple](#). Another baker [doesn't want to decorate a cake with the words "God hates gays."](#) Are the two cases comparable?

The differences may be obvious, but they're also complex. As creeds go, "God hates gays" is as flimsy as it is nasty. Yet the legal system that protects people from discrimination based on creed is understandably reluctant to distinguish between good creeds and bad ones. Meanwhile, the status of gays and lesbians as a protected class is [a bit of a work in progress](#).

What's more, Marjorie Silva—the anti-anti-gay baker—didn't exactly slam the door in Bill Jack's face. She offered to make him a cake to his specifications and then give him the frosting with which to freely express his religious views on top. This wasn't enough for him and his rights.

But let's say the situations are more or less the same, pitting a cake baker's rights against a cake buyer's. Even then, I find [this quote from Focus on the Family's Jeff Johnston](#) pretty irksome:

Just as a Christian baker should not be required to create a cake for a same-sex ceremony, this baker should not be required to create a cake with a message that goes against her conscience.

It's a mild statement, and on the surface a pretty sensible one. But did you catch the subtext? "This baker" is an individual with her own individual views formed independently by her conscience. Whereas "a Christian baker" would naturally be opposed to making a cake for "a same-sex [wedding!] ceremony," because *that's what Christians believe*.

But *Silva* is a Christian—[she said so in the initial news report](#). Hers is not a secularist objection to Christianity; it's one Christian's objection to another's idea. Maybe she

supports LGBT rights; maybe she doesn't but also doesn't think God hates people. Either way, it's hardly a fringe view. She's joined by a whole lot of American Christians.

We're a group with internal disagreements, frequent and public ones. Of course we are; we're the majority faith in an openly democratic culture. So while I have a measure of sympathy for some of the religious liberty arguments conservatives have been making, I have little patience for the suggestion that they're being made on behalf of the Christians vs. the other people.

The reality is that American Christianity is endlessly diverse, and American pluralism offers a place for these diverse expressions to coexist unthreatened. Gay Christians are getting married, in churches! Other churches have every right not to do this, just like they have every right not to ordain my wife. What they can't do is speak for Christians generally.

The last couple years have seen same-sex marriage opponents retreating from fights over defining marriage and to a defense of their own rights of conscience. (A trend that will be solidified if the Court [decides for marriage equality this spring](#)—something [many GOP lawmakers will no doubt welcome](#).) Whatever the strengths of such an argument, it doesn't stand or fall on one's membership in some faithful remnant persecuted by secularists. It comes from one's rights as a participant in American pluralism—a pluralism that also includes Christians like Silva.