

Did God send that grounder to punish Daniel Murphy?

The Mets second baseman's error is no one's favorite moment of the World Series. Well, almost no one's.

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

November 2, 2015

I'm a Cub fan but also a National League fan, so I was disappointed to see the Mets lose the World Series this week. And when [an error on a routine play](#) contributes to the outcome, that's just rough—not the best way to lose or, for that matter, to win. Seeing the ball go under Mets second baseman Daniel Murphy's glove is going to be no one's favorite moment of the series.

Well, almost no one. [Mark Joseph Stern kind of loved it](#). That's because this spring, Murphy said some things to a reporter that, according to Stern, establish him as “perhaps the most explicitly and unabashedly anti-gay figure in major league sports today.” So Stern is “thrilled that...Murphy played a crucial role in bringing his team to an embarrassing defeat.”

In case you're not a baseball fan or otherwise missed this, here's what happened back when Murphy “unloaded,” as Stern puts it, his thoughts on the subject:

- Mets beat writer Mike Vorkunov [covered an event](#) at which Billy Bean, a gay former ballplayer and Major League Baseball's inclusion ambassador, met with the team.
- Vorkunov got some comments from players, including Murphy.
- Murphy was quoted indirectly as indicating that he was “ready for a gay teammate” and that the meeting with Bean was “an opening for a conversation” (Vorkunov's words).
- Murphy also said he “disagree[s] with [Bean's] lifestyle...with the fact that Billy is a homosexual.”
- Still, Murphy would want to “invest in him and get to know him.” He indicated it was possible to “accept” a gay teammate without agreeing with “the lifestyle.”

- He also stressed the importance of loving people you disagree with, and he noted that while he sees homosexuality as a sin, he also has sins of his own to deal with.
- “I want everyone to know,” [Bean said later](#), “that [Murphy] was respectful of me” in their meeting.

Yes, many Americans disagree with Murphy’s views here; I’m one of them. And even some who share his views know better than to refer to being gay as a “lifestyle.” Still: Murphy didn’t seek out an avenue to make his feelings on the subject known; he showed up to work and someone asked about them and he replied. And there just isn’t a shred of aggression or vitriol in Murphy’s comments. It’s important to recognize that even a statement like Murphy’s can hurt people, whether he intends to or not. But it’s also important to acknowledge that Murphy’s awkward, ambivalent musings are not the same *kind* of thing as, say, [Yunel Escobar’s aggressive slurs](#).

Stern doesn’t seem to be the least bit interested in making such a distinction: Murphy has the wrong opinion, so Murphy is bad, and his embarrassing error on the field is a victory for the good people.

From [Rod Dreher’s response to Stern’s piece](#):

I don’t know whether I find it more troubling to contemplate the backlash to this aggression, or to contemplate the likelihood that there will be no backlash, but that society will come to agree that Christians like Daniel Murphy are thought criminals who do not deserve to have careers in athletics.

As a regular and often frustrated Rod reader, I infer from the phrase “Christians like Daniel Murphy” a skepticism that a person could also be a Christian—a “real” one, with a thick religious identity, not hopelessly compromised by secular culture—and yet support gay rights. Still, Rod is right about this one. Recent years have seen serious gains for LGBTQ people, in the public square and in many churches. Those of us who celebrate this need to do better than to dismiss all dissent as hatred beyond the pale.