

The Tea Party's bitter seepage

by [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

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We are witnessing the Tea Party's bitter seepage. They've been redrawing voting districts and running people for office, taking over state and local governments. We've watched, aghast as the Koch cronies took seats in Washington. But there, they seem to be just stopping legislation and appointments, gleefully making sure that they don't allow the President to pass anything so that government stays in gridlock.

On the local level, however, they get things done. The Tea Party has done virtually nothing to stop the Big Banks' power. (Remember? That's why they first coalesced during the Bush administration?) Instead, the Right's going after women's rights and LGBTQ rights, and they're using the blunt force of religion to do it.

This is not a pro-life movement. Not at all. This is an anti-sex-without-consequence movement.

- If this was a pro-life movement, they would care about women's health, instead of trying to close down Planned Parenthood clinics, where women get STD testing, pap smears, breast exams, and HPV vaccinations. **You cannot be pro-life and then close down the place where poor women get cancer screening and prevention.**

- If this was a pro-life movement, they would not be trying to use religion to stop contraception use. It's simple. Any sixth grader can tell you that contraception keeps unwanted pregnancies from occurring. Contraception cuts down the number of abortions. **But they don't want to stop pregnancies. They want to stop sex without consequence.**

- And, of course, **gay and lesbian relationships are a threat to a sex without consequence stance.** So, North Carolina and Mississippi are passing discriminatory laws against LGBTQ people.

As a person of faith, I'm horrified that people use Christianity to put women's health at risk. I'm anguished that my LGBTQ friends face religious discrimination. Oppressive views, held by a religious minority, should not dictate our democracy.

I have been writing a foreword for an electronic reprint of Eleanor Roosevelt's *Moral Basis of Democracy*. I'll let you know when the book is ready, because it's extremely important as we sort out the relationship between democracy and religion. Roosevelt states that Democracy has a basis in the balance of love of neighbor and love of self. We love ourselves, and do not dissolve as we would in a totalitarian dictatorship. We love our neighbors, which became [demonstrated](#) when Franklin Delano Roosevelt reached out to 3000 clergy to assess their response to the New Deal and found overwhelming enthusiasm. In *Moral Basis*, Roosevelt lifts up a quote (edited for gender inclusion):

No one ought to be molested on account of his or her opinions, not even on account of his or her religious opinions, provided his or her avowal of them does not disturb the public order established by the law.

When religious opinion means that women in Texas can no longer have access to cancer screening and prevention, it has disturbed the public order. When religious freedom denies access to birth control, because a certain religious minority believes that women should have the consequences of pregnancy and poverty, it has disturbed the public order. When religious freedoms allow for the discrimination of people based on their sexual orientation, they have profoundly disturbed the public order.

There is a moral basis to our democracy, and that includes the love of women and our LGBTQ neighbors. And so in this muddled confusion over what Christianity is, let me proclaim that my religion affirms that God created sex for enjoyment and to strengthen the loving bonds between two people. My religion affirms that women are made in the image of God and should have full access to medical care. My religion affirms that LGBTQ people should be able to celebrate their covenant and commitment to one another, without fear of discrimination.

Christianity calls us to love, not to discriminate.