

A Sermon on Raising Awareness

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for May 23rd, 2021 (and beyond)

When activists speak of raising awareness on any issue with the goal of attention to themselves and their message, how do you differentiate between something you (i.e. general public) can or should address and something personal with existing remedies at law? This sermon is to help everyone with critical thinking, including self-proclaimed activists regardless of cause or issue. The examples are also in dialogue format.

ISSUE: PRETEND THIS ISN'T LEGAL

Activist says: I want you to change your personal habits even if you do nothing illegal at this time. It is important to me that you grow your own cotton, process it, turn it into thread, and make your own clothes to avoid supporting sweatshops or other unethically sourced products. You care about the workers and don't support labor violations. You will make your own clothes for the certainty it brings that you in no way are participating in abuse of labor. I made everything I'm wearing. You can too.

Bystander says: Where did you get the seeds to grow the cotton? Who made the equipment you use to process it? What other materials, including needles or sewing machines were used? Where were they made and under what labor conditions?

Activist says: That's not the point. What you are wearing should be illegal! You should make more ethical choices.

Bystander says: So, instead of paying for clothes knowing some of the money will go to pay the workers who made them, the cotton growers who grew the cotton, the processors who processed the cotton, and the manufacturers of tools used to assemble the final product, I should invest in my own cotton farm, process it myself, and not worry about where the tools come from I use to make my own clothes. And, that means I need to move to a region where cotton grows and wait and hope there are no droughts or storms that take out my crop or else I just go naked and risk being arrested for indecent exposure. Is that your suggestion? How long does it take you to make one outfit? How long did it take you to make that outfit?

Activist says: Once all the farming, processing, spinning, and weaving the fabric was complete, the outfit took me less than an hour to assemble.

Bystander says: How much did it cost you to buy the farm, processing equipment, spinning equipment, weaving equipment, and sewing equipment without considering your labor?

Activist says: \$485 for 1 acre of cotton farm. \$60 for the cotton gin. \$10,000 for the spinning machine. \$1000 for the weaving loom. \$200 for the sewing machine. And, my labor of love. So, about \$11,745.

Bystander says: Where'd you get the money to pay for that? And, for \$11,745+, I'd expect a more impressive outfit.

Activist says: It was my inheritance. My trust fund.

Bystander says: And, where did your inheritance come from and how was it accumulated?

Activist says: My father was leadership at Bain Capital.

Bystander says: Bain Capital owns Yum! Brand foods including Taco Bell and Pizza Hut last I checked. Bain Capital also owned some abusive behavior modification programs where kids died.

Activist says: What's your point?

Bystander says: I work for Pizza Hut and wear the uniform I'm required to wear by the source of your little self-sufficiency exercise. Where do you eat and do you grow your own food too? Do you build your own cars? How self-sufficient are you? I understand you rely on equipment for much of your work. Does anyone help you with picking, processing, and weaving? If so, how much do you pay them?

Activist says: It's a nonprofit small organic farm. People volunteer and gain skills in picking, processing, and weaving cotton while knowing they are helping to stop labor exploitation in sweatshops.

Bystander says: So, with your inherited wealth you created a tax-shelter where you now use emotional manipulation to guilt others into working for you for free in the name of stopping labor exploitation. Is that right?

Activist says: You are really a negative person and quite toxic. What Pizza Hut do you work for? I'm calling to report you. But, if you have any free time, please consider volunteering at the farm.

Bystander says: Sure, \$13.69/hour plus tips is slave wages. I'd rather volunteer and work for you for free while being nagged constantly about bullshit.

Activist says: You are right about that. You would start with fertilizing the back 40. Absolutely.

Bystander says: I don't really work for Pizza Hut. I just wanted to see what you would say. I work for a competitor and actually believe being paid for my work is supporting worker's rights in being paid for our work.

Activist says: But, you'll feel better about yourself if you are totally self-sufficient and self-reliant. Are you sure you won't volunteer?

Bystander says: In what way have you ever been self-sufficient or self-reliant? Your money comes from your inheritance likely attributable in part to some labor exploitation. Your tools for processing and manufacturing come from the work of others. You have volunteers who do the bulk of the work for you as a result of some co-dependency or something. And, to my knowledge you sewed one outfit for yourself, which took less than an hour.

Activist says: Exactly. I made it myself.

Bystander says: I might report you for labor trafficking. But, if I do that and your “volunteers” are too brainwashed, intimidated, coerced, or co-dependent to confirm they are victims of modern slavery who aren’t being paid and have been misinformed therefore kidnapped by fraud, I could potentially get in trouble for filing a false complaint though I honestly believe that’s what you are doing.

Activist says: You are totally clueless. This is an effort to combat modern slavery and labor trafficking. Are you stupid? My volunteers love it and are free to leave.

Bystander says: What do you say when one leaves or wants to leave?

Activist says: Never happens. They believe in what we do.

MAKE THIS ILLEGAL

Activist says: Support this ballot initiative by signing the petition and/or write your legislators about this legislation and ask they endorse or support it.

Bystander says: Will Ex Post Facto or the US Constitution hinder passage or implementation of your suggested changes? The Bill of Rights? What would SCOTUS say? Are you aware Franklin D. Roosevelt ran on a “Repeal Prohibition” slogan and won in a landslide?

CONSUMER ADVOCACY

Advocate says: Here is my investigative report on this product or service. Based on my findings, I’d advise against it.

Consumer #1 says: But the company says something different and there are positive reviews on the company’s site. And, I feel I really need the product or service advertised. I’m willing to give it a shot.

Consumer #2 says: Thank God I found your report. I had misgivings about this product or service and your investigative report confirmed my worst suspicions. I’m most certainly not doing business with them and have shared your report with others. Thank you.

VICTIM ADVOCACY

Advocate says: Are you a victim of a crime and/or tort or multiple crimes and torts?

Victim #1 says: Yes to multiple crimes and torts.

Advocate says: Tell me when and where you were harmed.

Victim #1 says: 20 years ago in either Arizona or New Mexico, I'm not sure.

Advocate says: In jurisdictions I've checked, it appears the statute of limitations on labor trafficking is 10 years. The statutes of limitation vary depending on crime. If you were raped under the age of 16 and taken against your will across state lines, maybe the FBI can help because that would constitute kidnapping of a minor under age 16 which has no statute of limitation at the federal level, particularly if it was for the purpose of raping the minor. Do you know the name or names of the perpetrators?

Victim #1 says: They need to be exposed. I'm going to write a book, make a film, do a social media campaign, and make sure everyone knows my story.

Victim #2 says: I just escaped. I'm at a public library in California. I'm staying at the local mission. I don't want anyone to freak out. I was being trafficked and wanted some help. Instead of asking the local mission, I searched and found you. Can you help?

Advocate says: Where did the trafficking occur?

Victim #2 says: Baja/Tijuana/Rosarito Beach Mexico. The program's on your watch-list.

Advocate says: We've assisted two families from retrieving family members from that region with the help of the State Department. I can give you the number for the Rosarito Beach police which is who would need to investigate because it is out of jurisdiction for US law enforcement agencies. However, it is my understanding that things may be lost in translation.

Victim #2 says: So, I'm not real keen on returning to that area again ever. I don't want to return to testify. Can I sue since they advertise in the US?

Advocate says: It is my understanding that the one you are referring to is a location where those in charge use aliases. Do you know the legal names, location, and can you identify them effectively for a civil suit or to press criminal charges in Mexico? I can give you and/or any attorney all the research we've done on it and all documents in our possession. The State Department and other victims have the same information.

Victim #2 says: Thank you for your help. I'll be in touch when I've decided how to proceed.

Victim #3 says: I was kidnapped and held against my will while being trafficked for labor by a cult masquerading as a treatment center in Texas.

Advocate says: Here's a list of ways for you to take legal action along with the statutes of limitation that apply in Texas.

Victim #3 says: I reported it and now the people running it have been indicted for child trafficking.

Advocate says: Excellent. You along with victims #1 and #2 have been added to respective contact lists for those seeking to connect with victims of the specific perpetrators that harmed you. This may include law enforcement, lawyers, and journalists seeking to interview victims or witnesses.

Victim #1 says: Advocate doesn't care. If Advocate cared, I'd get more personalized attention and support. Advocate is unsupportive.

Victim #2 says: Funny, I found Advocate informative, cautious, and helpful. Understandably cautious and respectful towards my own sense of caution. I do not want to return to Mexico, period. Advocate gets it. And, I can contact Advocate any time and there's even a toll-free number.

Victim #3 says: Advocate was helpful. Law enforcement is very helpful. Law enforcement rules.

END OF HYPOTHETICAL DIALOGUE

If something is a crime, report it to the correct law enforcement body if you wish crime to be investigated and laws to be enforced. If you are doing something prima facie unethical or illegal yourself such as Activist in the first "PRETEND THIS ISN'T LEGAL" example, you are a hypocrite. You are claiming authority you do not have over others you should recognize as your equal at law and in the eyes of God. And, you are not holding yourself to the standards you claim to hold or to which you wish to hold others.

Before you even suggest legislation of any sort, study the US Constitution. If what you wish to do requires the government to violate the rights of other citizens (corporate or individual) as provided in the amendments to the US Constitution, then you are a threat to national security and it is reasonable to label you as such. No search or seizure of private property or citizens without a warrant/court order unless said voluntarily agrees to inspection or regulation without a court order/warrant. Congress is not a court. The judicial branch of government examines evidence and then when warranted orders searches, seizures, arrests, restitution, jail time, and/or damages in civil suits. So, Victim #2 understands their choice not to pursue is a personal one and Victim #3 is on the way to seeing justice served and fully realized. Victim #1 needs a shoulder to cry on and is welcome to contact Survivor Support or seek attention elsewhere.

And, Victim #1, raising awareness about your own traumatic life experiences is not activism. You are similar in personality type to the Activist in the first example "PRETEND THIS ISN'T LEGAL". I will never kiss your ass in hopes such will be rewarded at some point whether you have a trust fund or not. And, I will never be silenced by your bullshit either. I will be honest with you and support you in pursuing justice or accepting delayed reporting more often than not results in forfeiting justice. If you find echo chambers helpful and supportive, I understand there are plenty on Facebook and other social media sites. I wish you well. And, consumers along with most everyone else considers reports/complaints that are more than 5 years old irrelevant. A 20 year old complaint is as relevant to a consumer considering doing business with someone who harmed you as the 1993 E. coli outbreak at Jack In The Box that killed people is when you consider eating at that restaurant. Maybe the 1999 Hepatitis outbreak at Subway would be closer to the example. Ever eat at Subway? Not only was there a Hepatitis outbreak, the spokesperson Jared Fogle is in prison now and plead guilty to the sex crimes including child pornography. Even if you are not totally disgusted to the point you now think "I'm NEVER eating at Subway again, maybe Jack In The Box, but NEVER Subway," you may need a few before considering it again. I understand. But, sometimes it is the only option. Ever been on a road trip and that's the only place to get any food you've seen for miles and is connected to a gas station that doesn't have a convenience store nor vending machines? Well, never say never until you've been on that trip and didn't think to bring enough snacks.

If you need me to cite which passages of the Holy Bible are relevant to the above, you need to read it. Here's your test. E-mail me at rev@cope.church and tell me what passages you feel the above sermon are an updated version of in any way. Check Jesus on hypocrisy. Some hints may be at <https://www.cope.church/support.htm> in regards to the first example. If you do it with the subject "Post My Feedback", it will be shared publicly. I look forward to your response(s).

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>