

Activists Spread Radical Gender Ideology to Small-Town America. Powerful groups have been working to have drag queens dance for children in every town in America

By Jackson Elliott

August 14, 2023

https://www.theepochtimes.com/mkt_app/us/activists-spreading-radical-gender-ideology-into-small-town-america-5460645

Left-wing organizations are recruiting radical groups to pressure small towns into accepting their pushing of transgender ideology onto children, according to locals.

In Fillmore, California, a local activist group put on a drag show in front of children, drawing backlash from parents. Fillmore has only 16,657 residents.

“We’re a small, small town,” local mother Christina Marotti said. “Everyone knows everyone. Everybody helps everyone out.”

But like many towns across the country, Fillmore faces a wave of radical activism that harnesses government organizations to marshal young gender activists, according to experts.

“They’re building the Red Guard in America,” Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice told The Epoch Times.

The Red Guard was a student-led Chinese communist revolutionary organization that helped communist dictator Mao Zedong maintain power, destroyed symbols of China’s pre-communist past, and publicly shamed, beat, and even killed people they deemed to be “counter-revolutionary.”

According to Mrs. Marotti, the drag event shocked local parents, and 16 of them attended a July 11 city council meeting to complain.

The group told the city they were upset because two city council members attended and supported the drag event, Mrs. Marotti said.

“That agenda isn’t consistent with small-town values and many people here want to protect childhood innocence,” she said.

1 Step at a Time

The drag show didn’t appear out of nowhere, she said. A local activist group, One Step a la Vez (OSALV), invited the drag queen to dance for teens while wearing a pink leotard and thigh-high boots.

According to the group’s website, its name “was chosen by the youth to remind them to take ‘one step at a time’ toward self and community improvement.”

“It was started as an after-school program for troubled youth, so they were pulling kids off the streets and helping them out,” Mrs. Marotti said. “Since then, it has turned into an indoctrination camp.”

OSALV, a nonprofit dedicated to providing “a safe place for teens to get services, or help with whatever problems they might be facing,” was founded in 2008 by Lynn Edmonds, its website says.

In Fillmore schools, it’s been active as a tutoring, anti-bullying, and service-providing group.

These activities helped the community, Mrs. Marotti said. But some of OSALV’s programs introduced children to radical gender ideology.

The group’s website announces not only LGBT acceptance, but also making heterosexuality not the norm for teens. Its programs are “Aimed at Dismantling Heteronormativity and Combatting Transphobia,” according to the website.

To achieve this goal, OSALV will target local schools, according to its website. It intends to give “LGBTQ cultural competency trainings” to teachers, parents, and doctors.

The group also says it will “foster more support, events, and visibility for the LGBTQ+ community.”

One of its groups for Fillmore High School (FHS), Project Pride, partners with Planned Parenthood. OSALV’s Instagram page includes pictures of Pride and transgender flags.

“Project Pride centers the voices of LGBTQ+ youth and bridges youth to many of the local resources aimed at improving their physical and mental wellness,” OSALV’s website reads. “These resources include free counseling, access to health care, sex education, and psycho-social education with curriculum built for topics raised by youth.”

It appears that drag performances for children fit this agenda, Mrs. Marotti said.

She added that although FHS said it wasn’t affiliated with OSALV’s choice to put on a drag show for children, the school advertised the event through its Wellness Center.

“The public school claims they did not endorse it in any way,” Mrs. Marotti said.

Already, OSALV has succeeded in an impressive number of radical gender ideology endeavors, its website said.

It won keyless access to “all-gender bathrooms” for high school students in neighboring Santa Paula, added books with “queer authors and people of color” to the FHS library, organized a countywide forum for LGBT teens to “identify unmet needs,” created two “LGBTQ+ youth support groups” in Fillmore and Santa Paula, and created an FHS anti-bullying and social equity club for LGBT students.

The Epoch Times reached out to OSALV on July 28 but received no comment by publication time.

The Epoch Times also reached out to FHS but received no comment by publication time.

Small Towns, Big Politics

OSALV’s agenda is just the beginning, according to Carrie Broggie, a former mayor of Fillmore.

While Fillmore is slightly more Democrat-controlled than Republican, it’s in the far-left state of California, she said. When the town doesn’t move politically with the rest of the state, it faces pressure from outsider activists who travel there to attend local meetings, Ms. Broggie said.

In 2017, during Ms. Broggie’s term, the town was debating how to approach marijuana.

“We were addressing the legalization and how we were going to bring marijuana, or if we were going to at all, outside of what California stipulated that we had to allow,” she said. “So that brought in people from all over the place on the marijuana issue.”

Ms. Broggie said she sees the same pressure today around LGBT issues.

“Any of these hot-button social issues, there’s a movement across the country to ‘empower’ all [of these] communities,” she said. “They want all communities on the same page, onboard and believing and thinking the way that they do.”

For more conservative communities, the threat of consumption by progressive ideology threatens local control, Ms. Broggie said. Small towns nationwide face this pressure, she said.

“I think it’s true all across the country, not just California,” she said. “In most situations, California usually starts something off, and then it filters throughout the rest of the country.”

This mindset has also brought more political money into local politics, Ms. Broggie said.

“I first ran for city council in 2014,” she said. “And there was no partisanship. There were absolutely no outside entities coming in. In 2018, we saw a complete reverse of that, where there was a lot of assistance from the Democratic Party in the races that were going on. And then again, in the last election, 2022, there was even more.”

This “one-size-fits-all” style of government doesn’t work for small towns, Ms. Broggie said.

“They’ll pass a bill that might work in the city of Thousand Oaks, but for small communities like Fillmore, we have to abide by the same mandate, whatever it happens to be,” she said. “It doesn’t work.”

Outside Influence

At the city council meeting, Mrs. Marotti and others who opposed the drag show told the city council they had no problem with transgender-identifying people but that a drag show was inappropriate for children.

Two people from OSALV said the concerned parents “hate trans people,” Mrs. Marotti said.

But at a July 18 school board meeting, locals in favor of the drag event summoned assistance from radicals to support their agenda.

LGBT group Fillmore is Proud shared a “call to action” on Instagram, inviting “all allies and LGBTQIA+ community members” to attend the meeting to support the drag performance for kids.

“A conservative group will be there on Tuesday, pushing the District Board to cut ties/communication with OSALV,” the Instagram post reads. “They will do it under the guise of harming/sexualizing children and try to point to the drag performance at Pride Resource Fair.”

Among the groups that answered their call was Conejo Valley Antifascists, an Antifa-style radical left-wing group, social media posts show.

Many advocates for the drag event made trips of more than 30 minutes, Mrs. Marotti added.

“Not only are they bringing special interest groups in, but now they’re bringing in groups that are hateful, and that have an agenda, and are violent,” she said.

Mrs. Marotti said she believes the push to bring in activist groups is part of a broader left-wing effort to control the town.

“Up until a couple of elections ago, outside money was not involved in our elections, and now outside money is being involved in our elections.”

After parents spoke out against the drag show, FHS refused to stop working with OSALV, resident Kathy Meza said.

“The Fillmore school district came alongside them and actually did a disclaimer after we all complained,” she said. “Basically, they’re going to keep supporting OSALV.”

Meza said it has been painful for the locals who are trying to protect children to receive such accusations of hate.

“They turn it around,” she said. “All of a sudden, you’re the bad guy if you speak up against something like this.”

Nationwide Gender Grooming

According to experts with the parental rights group Moms for Liberty, it doesn’t matter if a town is small, conservative, or out of the way. Activist groups there are likely working to radicalize children.

“So many times people are like, ‘But this is a red county!’” Ms. Justice said. “That doesn’t mean anything. The school system itself is captured, the institution is captured. And parents have largely been pushed out of the education system.”

The less parents raise their children, the more the government, activist groups, and others will, she said.

“There is no end to the amount of money the federal government will spend on community schools because there’s no end to the amount of care that any given child needs,” Ms. Justice said. “And if you completely remove the parent from being responsible for that care, you’re going to have to substitute that with something.”

The activists have won control of the school system because they have mastered organizing to win children’s minds, independent researcher Kelly Schenkoske, who speaks for Moms for Liberty, said.

“There’s a wide variety of public–private partnerships that are working to implement these programs into the schools or introduce them into the schools,” she said.

Left-wing nonprofits often partner with local schools and get even more funding through taxpayer grants, Ms. Justice said.

“They’re going to partner with the school system and get a grant from the federal government,” she said.

In 2020, OSALV received \$552,772 in government grants, its 990 files show.

This number is 10 times the amount it raised in 2019 and 20 times the cash it received in grants and contributions in 2021.

When nonprofits partner with a school district, they can introduce children to topics they say are “safe, healthy, and inclusive,” Ms. Schenkoske said.

Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Education define “safe, healthy, and inclusive” to mean teaching about sexual orientation and gender identity.

According to the CDC’s website, supporting LGBT youth includes giving teachers lessons on “concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity, including appropriate language.”

The World Health Organization, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and other powerful groups all support “comprehensive sexuality education” that educates children on gender identity and gender expression, Ms. Schenkoske said.

Fighting Back

Since the drag event, Fillmore parents have come together to protect children, mother and author Noelle Mering, who lives in nearby Ventura, said.

“I think we’re seeing a real backlash from parents,” the author of “Awake, Not Woke” said. “Over the last couple years, I think the landscape has utterly transformed as far as parental awareness and activism in reaction to this ideology.”

It’s not just Republican or religious parents who feel morally opposed to radical gender ideology, Mrs. Mering said. Nonreligious and Democratic parents also want to defend their rights and protect their children from overly sexualized material.

“Once that turns toward the kids, it’s become something that awakens a sleeping giant,” she said.

Fillmore’s parents face a state Legislature that is more strongly in favor of child sex changes than most.

In California, a current legislative bill proposes that not affirming a child’s chosen gender identity should be classified as child abuse.

But for parents, the legislative threat of having their children taken away if they don’t allow gender transition makes parents more eager to defend them, Mrs. Mering said.

“Oftentimes in blue states, you see parents who are more galvanized because they know the stakes are so high, and they know that they could easily lose,” she said.