# Ding Dong, Anita Bryant is dead



Anita Bryant, a prominent and widely hated enemy of the gay community and former beauty queen and singer, has died at the age of 84 at her home in Edmond, Oklahoma.

Born on March 25, 1940, in Barnsdall, Oklahoma, Bryant's career flourished after she became a runner-up in the 1959 Miss America pageant and gained fame for her singing, particularly known for patriotic and Christian ballads. She achieved significant commercial success as the face of the Florida Citrus Commission, starring in memorable television adverts that helped boost the sale of Florida orange juice. Her signature jingle and the enthusiastic tagline, “Breakfast without orange juice is like a day without sunshine!” became iconic during this period. Besides her advertising work, she connected with audiences through performances at the Rev. Billy Graham's crusades.

However, Bryant's trajectory changed dramatically in the late 1970s when she became a central figure in the backlash against gay rights. Her opposition intensified following the consideration of an ordinance in Dade County, Florida, which aimed to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in hiring and housing. Motivated by her interpretation of biblical teachings, she led a delegation against the ordinance, which ultimately passed. In response, she formed the group Save Our Children to campaign for a repeal. Reflecting on her motives, Bryant stated, “God drew a circle and more or less asked me to step into it.”

Her activism significantly altered public perception of her, transforming the once-celebrated ambassador of Florida oranges into a deeply polarising cultural figure. Supporters from the evangelical community hailed her, while others viewed her as a bigot. As she gained notoriety, she became involved in the larger cultural wars that characterised American society during the late 20th century.

Critics quickly mobilised against her efforts, leading to widespread boycotts of Florida orange juice in the LGBTQ+ community. Notable moments, including a protester throwing a cream pie at her during an event, highlighted the tensions surrounding her forthright views. The November 1977 referendum succeeding her campaign resulted in the repeal of the ordinance, with Bryant declaring the victory a vindication of “the laws of God and the cultural values of man.”

Despite her temporary success, the fallout from her political stance proved detrimental to her career and personal life. Major partnerships dissipated—organizations that once supported her cut ties—and she faced substantial backlash from the very community that had previously idolised her. This culminated in a decline marked by financial struggles, leading to bankruptcy, as well as personal tragedies including her divorce in 1980 after two decades of marriage.

Bryant's influence on gay rights activism extended beyond her lifetime, with her campaign contributing to the galvanisation of LGBTQ+ advocacy efforts across the United States. A ban on adoptions by gay couples in Florida, which was partly inspired by her initiatives, remained in effect until it was overturned in 2010.

In later years, Bryant attempted to rekindle her career through various small engagements but faced ongoing challenges. She eventually remarried, but continued to express her lack of regret regarding her past positions. “I’ve never regretted what I did,” she said in a 2011 interview.

Survived by her four children and several grandchildren, Bryant's life story is intricately woven with the history of LGBTQ+ rights in America, serving as a complex chapter in the landscape of cultural and political change.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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