

# INTRODUCTION

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The *Review of Law and Social Change* is a law review published by students at the New York University School of Law. It is dedicated, as its title would indicate, to issues of law in society and to issues that are on the frontier of the legal, constitutional, and social world. It is not surprising that the *Review of Law and Social Change* should have become the sponsor, therefore, of the Colloquium that you are going to hear today. This is the second such program, and if the past is a prologue, you will be hearing a very stimulating discussion.

One year ago we had a program which I think was responsible for launching the entire social awareness of the relationship of feminism and the question of women's rights and women's dignity to the issue of pornography and obscenity. Few who were here last year would forget the intensity of that debate, and the extent to which men and women who were committed to first amendment freedoms and also to the concept of equality with regard to gender distinctions, could still differ so intensely on an issue of that kind. Here again, this morning, we have a topic which seems to divide those who have a commitment to first amendment values. There are few principles more basic to our society than those expressed in the first clauses of the Bill of Rights: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . . ." <sup>1</sup> It was no accident that James Madison chose to start the Bill of Rights in that way. He recognized that a society which does not respect free thought and freedom of religion is, in the final analysis, a society which will have no respect for other types of freedom of expression, particularly freedom of political expression. We find, at this moment in our history, that a dispute has developed concerning the actions and beliefs of groups claiming the protection of those clauses, and the extent to which, consistent with the religion clauses of the first amendment, the government may restrict or regulate the activities of these groups.

As one looks through the list of today's panelists, one can only take great satisfaction that so many informed and talented individuals have seen fit to grace us with their presence. I, like you, look forward to hearing what they all have to say. I congratulate, again, the editors of the *Review of Law and Social Change*. Thank you very much.

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1. U.S. CONST. amend. 1, § 1.

