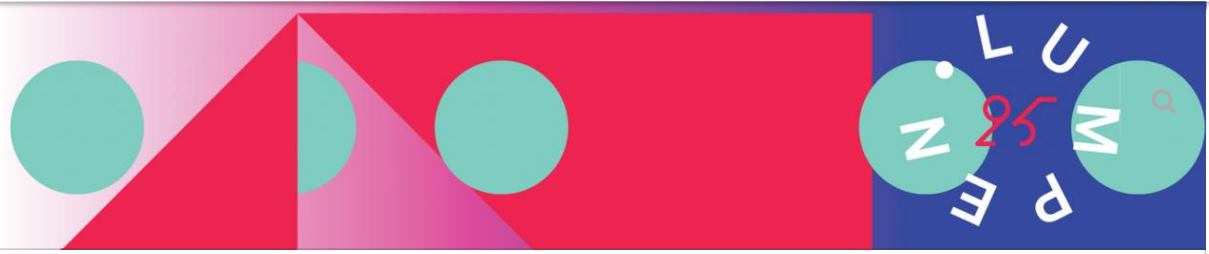


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BY LUMPENMAGAZINE · AUGUST 25, 2015

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Jagoff of The Week: The Old Navy Street Preacher

by Marc Fisher

The tagline for George Romero’s 1978 zombie film *Dawn of the Dead* famously read, “When there’s no more room in hell, the dead will walk the earth.” For those who believe that hell is real, one of the reasons it might be filled to capacity is because Samuel Chambers—who many know only as The Old Navy Street Preacher—has been damning people to hell for decades. It doesn’t take much to be deemed hell-worthy by this State Street fixture. Gays,

is a silent fundraising drive where you buy our stuff and we use the profits to pay our bills.



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lum·pen / adj.

1. Of or relating to dispossessed, often displaced people who have been cut off from the socioeconomic class with which they would ordinarily be identified: lumpen intellectuals unable to find work in their fields. A member the underclass, especially the lowest social stratum.

2. Vulgar or common; plebeian

prostitutes, smokers, and fornicators are obviously fucked, but this preacher’s general tactic seems to be to assume that everyone is a gay, smoking, prostitute fornicator, until otherwise proven heterosexual straightedge and deemed safe for entry into heaven.

Samuel Chambers is so strongly associated with Old Navy, having continued to preach in front of the store even after they moved across the street (lest he become known as The Target Street Preacher) that he appears in some of the store’s Yelp reviews. He has also been given his own Facebook page, and you can find numerous videos of his rants on YouTube. Being told you are going to hell by Chambers is about as much a part of visiting Chicago as a photo in front of ‘The Bean,’ a walk down The Magnificent Mile™, eating a hot dog smothered with a bunch of shit, or stuffing your face with a deep dish pizza. A 2004 article by Emily Nunn in the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Chambers has been standing at State and Madison for 35 years. The article also states that he has eight children, and a wife (who works, because standing on a corner telling people they are going to hell doesn’t pay the bills, shockingly).

Not everyone likes hearing the preacher’s judgments, and he has been physically assaulted on multiple occasions. Usually my own response, which is like a reflex after years of walking past him, is to simply reply, “You are such a hateful piece of shit” and keep right on going. One day, as I braced myself for his usual slurs or assumptions about my conduct, he caught me off guard with, “If you’re bald, you’re going to hell.” I had nothing, and he knew it; I couldn’t help but smile. You can’t teach an old dog new tricks, but apparently even a homophobic jagoff like the Old Navy Street Preacher can sometimes learn new ways of antagonizing passersby.

This originally ran in our special *Lumpen Field Guide to Chicago Jagoffs*

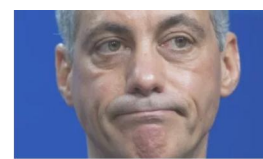
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