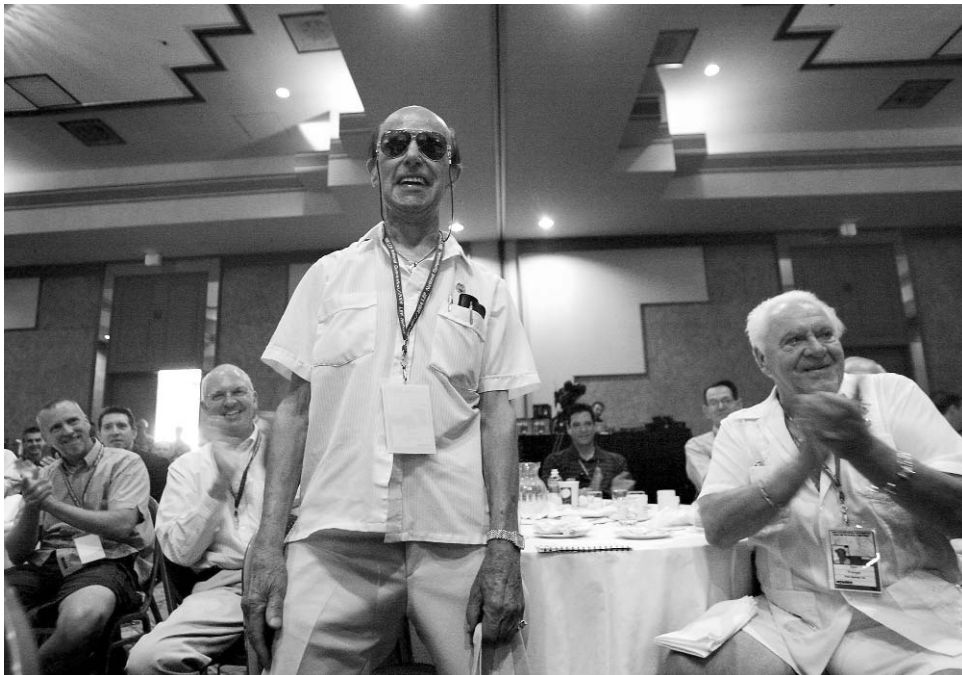


# The Public Eye

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David McNew/Getty Images

The Log Cabin Republicans called its 2004 convention in Palm Springs, California, the most important one in its history because of the push for the civil rights of gay Americans. Here Richard Sousa, standing to the left of his partner of 52 years, Geri Pranger, receives applause during a discussion of gay marriage.

## Churches Under Seige

### Exposing the Right's Attacks on Mainline Protestantism

By John Dorbauer

In February of the year 2000, in South St. Louis, Missouri, the 300-member Redeemer Evangelical United Church of Christ got a new pastor. His name was George Dohm. Soon after he arrived, he told select members whom he called his “disciples” that within five years he’d be able to take the church out of the denomination, which he considered degenerate for failing to embrace the inerrancy of the Bible or to attack gays. We know of his vow to remove Redeemer Evangelical from the denomination because the church organist happened to overhear his remarks.

In February 2003, Rev. Dohm resigned, but told his “disciples” that he would come back if they completed the takeover of the church. We know this because he was then working part-time as the UCC’s

Churches Under Seige continues on page 5

## Gay Conservatives Unwanted Allies on the Right

By Pam Chamberlain

In the high-adrenaline, and heavily heterosexual, world of Beltway lobbyists, the gay Log Cabin Republicans have their work cut out for them. Ostracized by the Republican Party which continues to receive their fierce loyalty, the LCR is the group that represents the dilemma of gay conservatives: they want to be players on the Republican team, but who is willing to put them in the lineup?

Log Cabin Republicans was founded in 1977 to recruit gay Republicans to oppose the Briggs Initiative, which was an attempt to prohibit gays and lesbians from teaching in California schools. It opened a Wash-

ington office in 1993 with hopes of maintaining a Republican gay lobbying presence on Capitol Hill. At first it waged an uphill battle, viewed by liberals as a political oxymoron. How could it be that a group with second-class status, long associated with liberal or even radical politics, would choose to support the political party that seemed so unfriendly? Rich Tafel, the first national president of Log Cabin Republicans, presented an alternative view in his 1999 memoir, *Party Crasher*.

I...realized that average gay voters were very different from the gay lead-

Gay Conservatives continues on page 11

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## — TO THE EDITOR —

### Why Distort History?

Fred Clarkson's piece on "Why the Christian Right Distorts History and Why it Matters" was terrific, very educational, right on target.

But there was something important missing from this piece—or perhaps, an important set of ideas that should be a companion piece to this one.

The "companion ideas" are matters such as the motivations of right-wingers for propagating these lies, and methods of exposing and stopping them.

I assume that one motivation is that these folks are somehow profiting from their lies—either monetarily, or in some other way, such as amassing power of some sort. So if their "base motivations" were exposed and publicized, I believe more people would disregard what they said.

Bear in mind, in past decades, lots of politicians espousing "patriotic" motives and views, and religious motives, were subsequently found to be common criminals, and convicted and sent to jail. Given human nature, I suspect that some of today's crop of right-wing liars have the same motivations for their lies.

Thanks, and keep up the great work.

*Howard Karten  
Massachusetts*

### A Breath of Fresh Air

I read your article ["History is Powerful: Why the Christian Right Distorts History and Why it Matters" by Fred Clarkson] in the most recent *Public Eye* with great interest. I'd heard the comment about the United States being a Christian nation many times during my breaking with the worldview of my parents and their church-going friends. I'm now approaching my 65th birthday, so those discussions happened a long time ago—but they still have a kind of hold on me, as do many such perspectives learned in one's formative years.

So I found your article a breath of fresh air, and one that targets an important ideological prop of the dominant culture today. Also, you take pains to argue on grounds that the Christian Nationalists will have a hard time finding fault with—quoting Jefferson, the Constitution, and various religious leaders of the revolutionary period.

But I was troubled by one aspect of your article and wanted to share my concern with you. In arguing against Christian Nationalism, you inadvertently give them purchase for their arguments right at the outset—by taking at face value that the United States is essentially a *European* nation. It seems to me that seeing relevant history beginning with the Jamestown landing accepts, and locks

To The Editor continues on page 16



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ISSUE 56

# Defense Against the Dark Arts

By Doug Muder

It's easy—maybe too easy—for a Democrat to be optimistic these days. Unless you're over fifty, you don't remember the last election night as enjoyable as 2006: 1964, when LBJ apparently crushed the far Right for good.

In 2006 Democrats won the close races, took Congressional seats in red states like Indiana, and swept countless contests too obscure to get national coverage. In my own state, New Hampshire, Democrats now control both houses of the legislature for the first time since the Grant administration. And 2008 hangs on the vine like a firm green tomato. Our Senator Sununu, like Republican incumbents nationwide, can only cross his fingers and hope that things work out. He can't separate himself from an unpopular president and a disastrous war without alienating his own base of support.

As delicious as this moment is, liberals like me need to step back from it and ask this question: Will 2006/2008 be a historic turning point, or just a Watergate-like stumble in America's decades-long march to the Right? Are we witnessing the final unraveling of the Reagan coalition, or just the personal tragedy of George W. Bush?

The answer, I believe, depends on what we do now. Sooner or later—maybe sooner than we think—a slate of Republican candidates unstained by the Bush/Iraq/Abramoff legacy will try to rekindle the Reagan magic. Will we have a counter-spell by then or not?

At Hogwarts, the Reagan spell would be taught in Transfiguration class: Lower-wage workers who coincidentally belong to conservative churches are transmuted into

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*You can read Doug Muder's essays on his own blog and under the name Pericles on The Daily Kos. He is active in the Unitarian-Universalist church and lives in Nashua, New Hampshire.*



Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

*It is easy to celebrate 2006's election upsets, like Montana farmer Jon Tester's defeat of Republican Senator Conrad Burns. But what should those worried about the Right do next?*

moral crusaders who coincidentally have bad jobs. The progressive working class becomes the religious Right, and the band plays "Onward Christian Soldiers" instead of "Joe Hill" or even "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?" And liberals—compassionate,

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**Liberals have to shake  
off their illusions about  
working class  
evangelicals.**

---

decent people that we think we are—are transmuted in their eyes into soul-destroying monsters.

Thomas Frank chronicled the effects of the spell in *What's the Matter With Kansas?* and George Lakoff has deconstructed the magic words "family values" in a series of

books beginning with *Moral Politics*. But through it all, most liberals have remained in denial. It just seems *wrong* that laid-off factory workers fight to protect Paris Hilton from the estate tax. Minimum-wage earners are just *stupid* to care more about abortion and gay marriage than their own lack of health insurance and their children's dwindling educational opportunities. Eventually, we think, things will get so bad that folks will have to wise up.

They haven't. Iraq and Mark Foley may have weakened working-class evangelicals' faith in current Republican leaders, but the underlying family-values dynamic is still firmly in place. James Dobson is less influential today than two years ago, but the Religious Right didn't die after the Scopes Monkey Trial or the failure of the Clinton impeachment, and it's not dead now either.

We need to be ready when, like Lord Voldemort, it rises again.

Before liberals can banish conservative working-class evangelicals' illusions about us, we have to shake off our illusions about them.



The first image to banish is the self-satisfied moralist standing in judgment over the failures of others. As Ron Sider makes clear in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*, Religious Right families aren't all Ozzie and Harriet. They suffer their share of divorce, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted disease, unwanted pregnancy, and all the rest of America's social dysfunctions. Far from the smug, self-righteous stereotype, Religious Right voters are often perversely unselfish and idealistic. Their votes defend the Ozzie-and-Harriet archetype that lives in their heads, sometimes at the expense of the troubled or broken family that eats at their table.

Lakoff gets this. His writings focus not on real-life families, but on the dueling images of family in the American imagination, and the ways that political rhetoric invokes a liberal or conservative family image. But as much as Lakoff tries to be detached and non-judgmental, his descriptions of the "strict father" and "nurturant parent" stereotypes promote a second illusion: the harsh and compassionless religious conservative.

In reality, liberals who immerse themselves in religious-right communities are often surprised by the warmth they find. Two examples of this near-seduction are James Ault's *Spirit and Flesh* and Tanya Ezren's *Straight to Jesus*. In each book, a liberal social scientist discovers unexpectedly complex and sympathetic human beings—Ault in an upstart Baptist church and Ezren in an evangelical program aiming to turn gay men heterosexual.

Ault in particular provides a needed adjustment to Lakoff's strictness/nurturance dichotomy. The key distinction Ault sees between his own worldview and that of the fundamentalists he studies is "the chosen" versus "the given." Ault's portable professional skills give him a plug-and-play worldview, which challenges him to find a community and a set of social roles he can commit himself to. By contrast, his working-class Baptists see themselves as enmeshed from birth in roles whose obligations—to family, community, and God—are inescapable. Their only "choice" is whether

to fulfill their duties or renege on them.

“Choice” indeed! If congenital and inescapable obligations to family, community, and God are the ligaments that hold society together, then each choice to renege causes more of the world to come apart and puts a greater strain on the ligaments that hold. Liberal “freedom” is easily painted as an invitation to drop your obligations and lead a life of self-indulgence, community be damned.

The genius of this dark magic is its topsy-turviness. The more ligaments snap, the more important it is that the remaining ones hold. So the *worse* the conservative family model is performing, the more strictly it must be adhered to. And who is

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**The liberal agenda  
sounds like a magician's  
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worry about the  
collapse of society.  
Look at this paycheck.”**

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to blame for its failure? Liberals! If *even Ted Haggard* reneges on his God-given roles and duties, how much more pressure falls on the rest of us? Damn that Nancy Pelosi!

Of course, any actual liberal knows that the disconnected libertine is not a liberal ideal. The implication seems too absurd to dignify with a denial. Much better, we imagine, to ignore this misdirection and change the subject to something meaningful like jobs, healthcare, or education.

It hasn't worked for thirty years. And without the left-blowing wind of war and scandal, it won't work again. Because once the ligament-snapping dystopia has gotten into your head, it's the liberal agenda that sounds like a magician's misdirection: “Don't worry about the collapse of society. Look at this paycheck.”

To undo our transfiguration and cast off our monstrous image, liberals need to attack the spell head-on. We must stake our claim as the upholders of society, not its destroyers. And, rather than changing the subject, we need to explain how our positions on the hot-button issues reinforce our claim.

Can we do that? Yes, because the true liberal ideal is the committed citizen, not the libertine. Liberal freedom is not about individual indulgence at society's expense. It's about leaving a social role where you fit badly so that you can find one where you fit well. *Choice* is only half of liberalism. *Commitment* is the other half.

We should tell the stories that back this up. The 15-year-old who chooses abortion and school over motherhood can come back at 30 to raise wanted children in a secure home. The gay couple who adopts a child isn't just exercising their new-found freedom to choose parenthood, they're *picking up the slack*—building society up, not tearing it down.

None of that will make working class evangelicals slap their foreheads and say, “Oh, I get it now.” But it will tell them that we see the dystopia they fear and have our own plan for averting it. We are not monsters.

And once that transfiguration is broken, we will not need to change the subject back to jobs, education, and healthcare. They will raise these issues themselves, and demand our answers. ■

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### **The Anti-Immigrant Backlash**

Doug Brugge's review of anti-immigrant organizing in the United States is as relevant as ever—including his insight that liberals' ambivalence paves the way for great right-wing influence on the issue.

**From the Summer 1995  
*Public Eye***

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CHURCHES UNDER SEIGE *continued from page 1*

regional youth director, and, when confronted about it at his last regional staff meeting, he admitted he'd made that promise.

Within five months, he was back preaching in the church as a guest supporting an upcoming vote of the members about leaving the denomination. In that sermon, which a congregant taped, he told the story of a father offering his children brownies cooked with a touch of dog poop as a way to teach them a lesson. The UCC, Dohm continued, is the dog crap cooked into Christianity—a little bit wrecks the whole thing.

In November, a majority of church members indeed voted to leave the denomination. Now with a diminished membership and restless congregation, the church has become a casualty of a 25-year-old campaign of right-wing conservatives to disrupt the mainline Protestant denominations and thereby diminish their power in support of social justice.

### The Campaign Begins

It is not as if there was no warning.

On December 29, 1982, Avery Post, the President of the United Church of Christ, warned in a letter to every UCC minister in his denomination that a strange new adversary was emerging. It had already targeted the National Council of Churches (NCC), and it was not going away any time soon.

Rev. Post wrote: "We must not wait for this attack to be launched in the congregations of the United Church of Christ. I urge you to move quickly to tell the ministers and members of the churches about this campaign to disrupt our church life."

Hardly anyone took notice. We continue to pay a high price for that.

The Institute on Religion and Democracy is a well-funded, under the radar

organization bent on fomenting dissent within and demoralizing from without Mainline Protestant denominations. Its allies have grown since Rev. Post wrote his letter, as has its power base. The IRD functions at the behest of funders like the Adolph Coors Foundation and the Scaife Family Foundation simply to keep those churches occupied and their prophetic voices silenced.<sup>1</sup> It works by turning internal disagreements away from dialogue and into all out battles at which the very life of

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What political heavyweights like Coors, Ahmanson, Mellon-Scaife and others are looking for is the guarantee that a new Martin Luther King, Jr. will not emerge.

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a congregation is at stake. Even if a church remains within a denomination, too often its social justice agenda is silenced.

IRD claims on its website to be able to reach and represent 2.4 million church members through publications, magazines, newsletters, and mailings produced by their built-in alliance with over thirty "renewal" groups. Renewal movements have theological disagreements with mainline churches—they are uncomfortable with debate about how to interpret the Bible, seeing religious truth as unambiguous. They emphasize a person's direct relationship with Jesus in the fashion of evangelicals, and so oppose the dominant Protestant church tradition of freedom of the pulpit and the freedom to express one's own theology without the constriction of a mandate from above. But with the sup-

port of the IRD, these renewal movements also are concerned with politics—conservative politics challenging economic justice, egalitarian family arrangements, reproductive rights, and other wedge issues.

Leading the organization is Jim Tankowitz, former director of convicted Watergate felon Chuck Colson's prison mission, and a member of the Presbyterian Church in America, which split from the Presbyterian Church USA over the ordination of women. Its board consists of people identified more for their right-wing politics than their theology: Robert Novak of the American Enterprise Institute; Mary Ellen Bork, wife of former Bush Supreme Court Nominee Robert Bork; Roberta Ahmanson, the millionaire philanthropist of the Christian Right; and *Weekly Standard* editor Fred Barnes. One of its principal founders was one Penn Kemble—a player in the Reagan-era Iran-Contra scandal.

What political heavyweights like Coors, Ahmanson, Mellon-Scaife, and others are looking for is the guarantee that a new Martin Luther King, Jr. will not emerge. What they entrust to the IRD is the task of creating a mechanism that effects the silence of the more timid, the marginalization of the more courageous, and the dampening of the collective will of the body to engage in matters of weight, import, and controversy.

In some ways, the United Church of Christ (UCC), where I serve as the equivalent of a "bishop" in the St. Louis area, is lucky because the IRD does not have dedicated staff people focused only on attacking us. The organization reserves that honor for the Episcopalians, Methodists and Presbyterians—the Protestant denominations with the biggest memberships and the biggest treasuries (see box). Still, the IRD has succeeded in putting our congregations and pastors on the defensive for supporting gay rights, abortion access, and economic justice—issues I feel are rooted in our history of preaching the social gospel. And the UCC's decentralized structure can make it difficult for our denomination to coordinate a response.

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*Rev. Dr. John C. Dorbauer is a staff member of the United Church of Christ's Missouri Mid-South Conference and coauthor of Steeplejacking: How the Christian Right is Hijacking Mainstream Religion.*

For over a decade, I have witnessed the fruits of these sustained attacks on both my denomination and the local churches that comprise it. When I started my work as a regional official over four years ago, I was immediately thrown into the cauldron of conflict and dissent that erupts in churches that have been targeted for attack by trained IRD activists. I have spent the last four years learning everything I can about the IRD, their alliance with renewal groups, their funding sources, their tactics, and their motivations. They have identified me as a target because of my work.<sup>2</sup>

Given the covert nature of the organization, discovering all the ways in which their tactics have reached into the hinterlands of this denomination has not been easy. The IRD's training sessions are by invitation-only and its allies within churches meet in secret. At best, we are able to present strong circumstantial evidence that what is happening in our local churches and to our denominational leaders is the direct byproduct of the covert tactics of the IRD and their trained insurgents.

We have few smoking gun moments: moments where the fomenters of dissent acknowledge their cooperation with or even awareness of the IRD. (In many ways, the IRD's ability to effect cooperation even from those who don't know they exist shows the success of its initiative.) But one smoking gun moment came recently when the executive summary of the IRD's four-year plan leaked out of its secretive networks into the hands of its enemies. Dating to late 2000 or early 2001, the summary outlined IRD's aim to "translate (recent) victories into real influence for conservatives within the permanent governing structures of these churches." The 11-page document predicts that the four-year cost "for influencing the governing church conventions" will be \$3.6 million. The report states that the IRD briefing of just the Methodist church currently reaches 275,000 Methodist households, and is expected to grow to over 500,000 by the start of 2004.

And it confirms what pastors across Protestant denominations have long felt, that our denominations are being attacked in a coordinated fashion—that we are not just falling into conspiratorial thinking. There is a conspiracy. The document outlines how IRD's alliance with the Association for Church Renewal (ARC), a coalition of 30+ groups within various Protestant denominations promoting conservative theology, "allows us to synchronize strategies across denominational lines."

What strategies might those be? "Preparing resolutions for local and

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**As an officer of the United Church of Christ, I have witnessed for over a decade the fruits of sustained attacks on both my denomination and the local churches that comprise it.**

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regional church conventions;" "focusing on positive proactive initiatives that unite traditional religious believers and discredit the Religious Left;" indemnifying "electable conservative candidates for national church conventions;" helping to "train elected delegates to be effective at church conventions;" assisting "conservatives who serve on the boards of key church agencies so as to have direct influence over the permanent staff."

A few pages later, the IRD names even more strategies, including the training of conservatives and moderates for the debates on marriage and human sexuality.

We intend to conduct invitation-only training seminars and consultations for church leaders covering biblical, theological, scientific, psychological and sociological aspects of human sexuality. Our trainees will

promote our legislation at their local and regional church conventions in preparation for the larger battles at national and church conventions.

A little later they report that

...we have crafted resolutions for our supporters to submit to their local Annual Conferences... These resolutions are supporting the Christian Declaration on Marriage<sup>3</sup>... *The process of submitting and supporting resolutions is an excellent training device for conservative activists, even if resolutions are not approved* (italics added for emphasis).

Direct lines and links can be drawn from the known leaders of the IRD and every group in the Association for Church Renewal (ACR). "We are the chief organizer of this coalition [the ACR] of conservative/evangelical renewal groups in all the major denominations," states the Executive Summary. Press releases, fundraising letters, and letters written to elected officials on IRD letterhead often list the names and titles of every single ACR representative. The Executive Summary informs us that "ACR leaders meet twice a year, issue press releases and statements, share research materials, and cooperate on special projects."

### Renewing the Church

Renewing the church sounds both noble and innocuous. It is neither.

"Renewing the church" consists of a mission to return the church to an image of better days, when the authorities got along and adhered to rigid moral codes generated by a unanimity of thought around key passages of scripture, all literally interpreted.

Renewal movements focus largely on highly controversial issues—we refer to them as wedge issues. In many of our churches today, the wedge issue is human sexuality, focusing primarily on homosexuality. In past years, activists have driven wedges with such issues as Communism, feminism (taking the form of intense debates over the ordination of women and

## The Public Eye

what renewal activists refer to as “Goddess worship”), and abortion. In more recent days, both stem cell research and homosexuality have emerged as the item *du jour*.

Renewal groups are quick to argue that, with each wedge issue, there is really only one choice for people of faith: If you are pro-choice, if anything you do or say can be portrayed as sympathetic to communist or socialist agendas or causes, or if you support the full inclusion of gays and lesbians in the life of the church or the culture, you are then castigated as immoral, heretical, and apostate. You are not to be trusted, and you are publicly defamed and excoriated.

Trained activists distribute pamphlets, brochures, treatises, essays, and books arguing their case in local churches, and search out allies among the congregation. They then arrange secret meetings with members, where they brainstorm and

recruit supporters. Then the outsiders use every argument to enrage them over the issue of the day. If enough of a coalition can be built, then recruits try out new tactics at the local church level that will begin to erode the spirit of a congregation. Together this creates an ethos of intolerance that breeds contempt of those whose thoughts and theologies cross over lines they have drawn, of boundaries they have established, of boxes they have constructed.

A perfect example of how this works is in the church in the South St. Louis that came under attack by a trained renewal activist during the summer and fall of 2003 and ended up voting to disaffiliate with the United Church of Christ in November 2003. The “wedge” driven between the members of the church and the denomination had to do with homosexuality.

Someone spread a rumor among congregants that they would not get financial support from the denomination unless they hired a gay pastor during their current search. Renewal activists printed that accusation in their newsletter – it was false, but it was very difficult to prove otherwise to a group of very angry and highly motivated people intent on fomenting dissent between their local church and their covenant partners.

In this church, we also saw another favored tactic: the research committee. Renewal movements use nuggets of controversy and take quotes out of context to create propaganda hoping to discredit the denomination and foment dissent. They publish this propaganda in renewalist newsletters and websites, in their occasional fundraising letters, or in pamphlets they hand out on speaking tours. You see



JD Crowe/caglecartoons.com



it in press releases that they will coordinate with the IRD.

The renewalists in the south St. Louis church drew on this body of work for a 46-page “exposé” they published in the church newsletter attacking the denomination. Two UCC seminary professors earned their scorn—Dr. Steven J. Patterson of Eden Seminary, and Dr. Burton Throckmorton of Bangor Seminary. The article quotes Dr. Patterson as saying, “The Bible is relevant today because it tells us the religious conviction of the earliest Christians; but to say it is inerrant or infallible is simply absurd.” Dr. Throckmorton is quoted as saying: “There is no reason... that I can see why the church can’t add to its Scripture—delete from its scripture. I think the church can do with the scripture what it wants to do with the Scripture.”

Four pages of analysis follow those quotes, arguing that the denomination is clearly out of touch with “Christ’s use of Scripture,” with the “Apostles,” with “Christ and His Work,” and other such topics.

When yet another church in eastern Missouri came under attack in 2005, its members formed a research committee to investigate the United Church of Christ teachings and whether to stay affiliated with the denomination. Some strong support-

ers of the church’s historic ties to the denomination—for the first time in my own experience—actually took over the process from the agitators. Being very careful to actually research the questions being asked about the teaching of the denomination by consulting a variety of church officials and covenant partners, they produced their own 65-page research document. It looks very, very different from the findings of those churches whose research is handed to them by outside agents and trained activists.

### The Matrix

Even before we read the IRD’s memo, those of us on the receiving end of the two-decade attack on mainline denominations managed to identify the coercive tactics used over and over. A major tactic is the distribution of a chart comparing what it describes as the teachings of the local church, the denomination today and in the supposed past, and the Bible. We call it the Matrix.

We encounter it in almost every church where we partnered to quell disruptions and attacks or answered questions about positions taken by the wider church. As far back as fifteen years ago, the materials argued the denomination does not believe in the authority of scripture, the denomination

does not believe in the Lordship of Jesus, and the denomination does not believe in the sanctity of life.

The first time I saw these themes emerge in print was at a church in western Missouri that eventually voted to leave the denomination in the early 1990s. The pastor later asked us to let him remain as a pastor within the United Church of Christ. We had a 20-plus page document denouncing the denomination, complete with his signature, which he had sent to congregants during their debate about whether to remain as a UCC church. When I asked him why he would choose to remain a part of a denomination that did not believe in God, Jesus, the Bible, or the sanctity of life, he admitted to us that not he but someone high up in the Biblical Witness Fellowship (the UCC’s IRD-related renewal group) had written it.

Within months, we found ourselves encountering the same disruption at a church in eastern Missouri and similar documents. Over time, the screed changed its look but the content never changed as it passed through church after church. This document is “The Matrix.”

It is a multi-page document that has at least four columns, sometimes more. In the left-hand margin is a list of “issues” that often include the following: authority of scripture, sanctity of life, homosexuality, lordship of Jesus, belief in bodily resurrection, belief in the virgin birth, etc. Across the top of the page are various categories that include: The Bible, The Historic Church, the name of the church in which “The Matrix” is being circulated, and The United Church of Christ.

Down each column then is either a “yes” or a “no,” or sometimes a brief interpretation. If we read across the page, we would discover that column 1 tells us that the Bible itself upholds and believes in its own authority; in column 2 we would learn that the historic church does also; it would come as no surprise to us that column 3 indicates that the church in question believes in the authority of scripture; but column 4 is the shocker: it tells us the UCC does not believe in it. This goes on

The IRD has refined its tactics based on the governance structure of denominations. In the UCC, local churches enjoy a lot of autonomy, so insurgents tie up the body with a lot of resolutions and try to pry the church away from the wider denomination, gaining control of its property, endowments, memberships, and annual budgets.

In the more centralized Methodist and Episcopal churches, however, this is not possible. Instead, insurgents constantly bring charges against pastors and Bishops and initiate trials that can last months, if not years, about such topics as whether to continue the ministry of those who support, sanction, or perform gay marriages. In the Southern Baptist Convention, far and away to this point the most successfully sustained attack on a denomination, the power lay in the mission agencies and seminaries. For years, busloads of fundamentalist Baptists would swarm the General Baptist Convention to cast votes for key positions—eventually taking over the denomination and transforming it into something many older Baptists today cannot even recognize. With this influx of power, seminary presidents were replaced and professors were threatened with expulsion if they did not sign loyalty oaths to certain ideologies and theologies.



for row after row, issue after issue, sometimes for pages.

When we asked where these charts came from, the critics told us that someone in the church wrote it using information they downloaded from the Internet. The first time we heard this, we found it hard to believe. When church after church, in disparate parts of the state and even the country, were showing us roughly the same content in roughly the same format, it became obvious that someone, somewhere, was coaching these folks.

### Forcing Votes

In almost every church under attack we saw trained renewalists forcing votes upon congregations concerning “wedge issues.” They will not stop until a vote is taken, sides are chosen, and battles won. Regular disagreements expected within a congregation turn into church-destroying moments with a little IRD training.

The IRD trains people to conduct these votes as often as possible, and in as many venues as possible. Councils take votes to either support or denounce the actions of the wider church. Congregations take votes at annual meetings, or in more extreme cases in emergency meetings called to suggest that the matter at hand is so pressing it cannot wait. Congregations are forced to divide themselves and to debate issues that seem to emerge out of nowhere and which, to the surprise of many, now seem to be almost life and death matters.

We saw this most visibly after the UCC General Synod in Atlanta, Georgia voted in 2005 to support marriage equality for gays. Renewalists in churches across the denomination forced votes either to affirm or deny marriage equality.

This was directly out of the IRD’s playbook. The IRD states on its own website, in their mission statement, that they exist to “unite reform activists,” and admits that “the IRD trains activists, with topics ranging from issues (e.g., religious liberty abroad) to tactics (e.g., proper form for a motion). At national church meetings, IRD activists from outside the church assist delegates in drafting legislation and

framing arguments for debate. This work is done in cooperation with like-minded groups in seven major denominations (representing nearly 20 million Americans) through the Association for Church Renewal.”<sup>4</sup>

The IRD’s four-year plan mentions this tactic. The IRD wrote of training activists to author and pass resolutions that are never intended to pass, and even names specific issues upon which they will focus—like marriage equality, the very same issues

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**Tolerance and acceptance  
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that churches and denominations find themselves fighting on every front. Remember the memo read: “We have crafted resolutions for our supporters to submit... These resolutions are supporting the Christian Declaration on Marriage... The process of submitting and supporting resolutions is an excellent training device for conservative activists, even if the resolutions are not approved...”

That last point is a crucial one. The IRD exists for one reason only. It is not to steal churches out of our denomination, nor to defrock ministers, not to establish certain religious, theological, or biblical principles. The IRD only exists to tie up churches and judicatories in dissent. That is it. So, its staff really doesn’t care if the resolutions they are teaching their activists to present pass or not. They don’t care if the church supports gay marriage or not. They don’t care if the Bible is interpreted literally or not. They only care that activists keep pushing buttons, fomenting dissent, and tying up

congregational, judicatory, and denominational leaders in one argument, one battle, one fierce debate after another as a way to weaken churches interested in social justice.

Some votes, however, go right after church treasuries. One commonly presented resolution asks the church to amend its by-laws so that if the church sells, closes, or disaffiliates from the United Church of Christ, its property does not revert to the UCC Conference.

I want to be clear about one thing: the church has always fought over controversial matters. And those on all sides of issues have written polemical materials with less than an objective or unbiased point of view. Liberals and conservatives alike are guilty of that—if, indeed guilt need be attributed.

What makes this different is the goal is not debating church positions but allying with the IRD to dissolve the denomination and its power.

### “Calling” Pastors from Outside the Denomination

The UCC has its own seminaries, and pastors affiliate because they identify with its mission. Regional church bodies conduct background checks and also screen pastors to see if they are authorized to serve the denomination, creating lists from which churches regularly select candidates. The pastors are finally chosen by the local church board.

This has created an opening for another key disruptive tactic: circumventing our “Search and Call” process by choosing pastors whom the UCC regional officers have not screened, and indeed may not even know about, who come from outside the denomination, are untrained in the teachings of the wider church community, and indeed are hostile to it.

Here’s how it works. First, an activist campaigns for by-law changes to allow a church to call a minister from outside of the denomination. The IRD-linked Biblical Witness Fellowship then inundates church committees with candidates from the “Pastoral Referral Network”—a clan-

destine organization which has never disclosed the names of the ministers on its list. The Executive Director of the Biblical Witness Fellowship travels across the country recruiting students from what he calls “evangelical seminaries” for this network who are then coached on how to use “wedge” issues to generate discontent and disconnect the church from the wider UCC family.<sup>5</sup>

Close to 70 percent of our region’s churches searching for new ministers receive a packet of information from the Pastoral Referral Network asking them to consider calling one of their “Godly Pastors.” Still, in my four years leading the St. Louis region, only two rural churches called a pastor from the network. After the experience at Redeemer Evangelical (which predates my tenure), we’ve learned to coach search committees to identify applications coming out of the IRD-affiliated network, and we inform them of the risks – not just of debilitating schisms in their church but also of losing the liability portion of their property insurance because the candidate is not screened by the regional UCC body.

### Defending our Congregations

Here in the St. Louis area, we have found other ways to defend our congregations from IRD-influenced attack. With the pastor’s permission, I worked with a 200-member congregation whose rural church was perched on the top of a hill at the end of a long gravel road. An ally had the insight that these churches under attack are like households with batterers—the victims are bullied into silence. So if you name publicly what is going on, the bullies slink away. And that is just what happened. The key is that an outsider like me can’t do the naming; it has to be a lay leader.

We coached other congregants to speak openly and name the individuals who call secret meetings without the board or pastor’s knowledge or circulate unsigned materials to foment dissent. A young woman in her mid-20s became a leader in this effort, which shut down the bullies who then left the church.

Similarly, in a South St. Louis church,

we coached the pastor to simply say at his next council meeting that a council member was bullying him. Sure enough, after slamming his fist down on the table, the person resigned and left the congregation. Once secrecy ends, so often does the campaign.

But we also learned not to wait for an attack to be underway. You can be proactive and strengthen a church if the pastor and lay leaders simply find opportunities to say why they are part of the church and the denomination. So when the attack comes, the church has built up an internal pride that counters the poison its opponents want to spread. It is also important to model congregational dialogue and debate to show that we can have difficult conversations without being torn apart. Don’t wait for an IRD-allied congregant to spark the discussion on authentic controversies—do it yourself. Then if an activist introduces a controversial issue or resolution, we can say, “See, we’ve had these conversations before and know we can disagree.”

Tolerance and acceptance are virtues, to be sure. But they become destructive when activists charge that the church has abandoned its desire to be tolerant when other congregants call them out for their strident, bullying, and aggressive tactics. What church leaders must be clear about is that while divergent theologies can always be tolerated, actions that are destructive of the common good cannot be justified by any theology.

### Conclusion

I have traveled the country telling this story and connecting these dots. I am met with skepticism wherever I go—until active church leaders in every mainline denomination, and in every corridor of this country realize that what I am describing is precisely what their own personal experience affirms.

And almost every time I am scheduled to present this material, someone is there representing the IRD or one of their related renewal groups to record the event and to report on it to their constituents. They are taking this very seriously, and for the first

time in a very long time their methods are being challenged by many who are no longer going to sit idly by while their denomination disintegrates.

We who do this research have begun discovering one another, moving slowly out in wider circles as we open our eyes to the startling revelation that what we are all experiencing within our own households of faith is simultaneously going on everywhere. That was an important revelation. This is not a UCC thing. It is not a Methodist thing. It is not a Presbyterian, Lutheran, or Episcopal thing. It is an IRD thing. And antagonists from within our respective denominations are allied with each other in a vast network to undo our church, to occupy our time, to silence our prophetic witness. They advance the cause—even if unwittingly—of some very large, very powerful, very wealthy, very conservative political players. And while this is not what I imagined the body of Christ would ask of me when I took my ordination vows, I cannot see anything more noble in these times than the defense of that which I have grown to love for the way it has fed and nurtured me: this beloved church that is the body of Christ on earth. Shame, and worse, on those whose ministrations and machinations have united in grand conspiracy to undo her for political gain. ■

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jim Naughton, *Following the Money: A Special Report from the Washington Window, Part I*, <http://www.edow.org/follow/part1.html>, accessed on March 2, 2007, 2:37pm.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of this writing, no fewer than eight articles written about me appear on the front page of the scurrilous website [www.ucctruths.com](http://www.ucctruths.com). Twice now, I have been “visited” at one of my workshops by a staff member of the IRD, who within one week wrote a follow up article about me on the organization’s website.

<sup>3</sup> This statement signed in November 2000 by the president of the National Association of Evangelicals plus a high ranking Roman Catholic Bishop and Southern Baptist, urged churches to develop programs helping reduce divorce and promote marriage between men and women.

<sup>4</sup> IRD Mission Statement, <http://www.ird-renew.org>, accessed on March 5, 2007, 9:35am.

<sup>5</sup> Radio interview with David Runnion-Bareford, director, Biblical Witness Fellowship, on “Issues, Etc.,” KFUF St. Louis, June 21, 2004. [http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:wQtlo3z5Hqgl:www.kfuo.org/ie\\_archive\\_jun04.htm+Issues+Etc.+David+Runnion-Bareford&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us](http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:wQtlo3z5Hqgl:www.kfuo.org/ie_archive_jun04.htm+Issues+Etc.+David+Runnion-Bareford&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us)

GAY CONSERVATIVES *continued from page 1*

ership that had come to represent them.<sup>1</sup>

Membership, reflecting a strong libertarian bent, is now up to about 20,000 with 50 chapters nationwide.

### Who are gay conservatives?

Voters are ever more willing to represent themselves as gay to exit pollsters.<sup>2</sup> Gay voters, who number upwards of four million in the United States, hold a range of political views, and no one political organization can represent them.<sup>3</sup> The gay liberation movement of the 1950s and 1960s is almost gone, and in its place are social and political organizations and institutions representing a spectrum of political thought and activity. Much of this infrastructure represents the interests of libertarian gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people. This cohort already functions as a market niche to advertisers' eyes.

Gay conservatives are a curious element in the political landscape.

National prominence for the Log Cabin Republicans came only in 1995 when Tafel outed the Bob Dole presidential campaign for returning the \$1000 contribution it had itself solicited from the group. Local chapters grew, attracting gay conservatives who wanted a place at the table to put pressure on the Republican Party and its conflicted positions on homosexuality. As Republicans held on to power, LCR learned to show its loyalty through active participation in political campaigns, and it developed a Washington presence through lobbying, fundraising, and channeling political contributions to gay-supportive Republicans. Log Cabin has been able to attract prominent Republicans like Arnold Schwarzenegger and John Danforth to its meetings. In 2000, LCR was "delighted" that gay Congressman Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) spoke at the Republican National Con-

vention, the first out member of Congress to do so.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the political moment for gay conservatives had arrived.

But the pendulum swung again. By 2004, when George W. Bush ratcheted up the campaign to promote the anti-gay marriage Federal Marriage Amendment, the climate had turned nasty. In response to a Log Cabin television ad that attacked the Christian Right's homophobia in 2004, Robert Knight, director of the Culture and Family Institute at Concerned Women for America, advised, "It's time for the Republican Party to realize its mistake in giving Log Cabin any official recognition.... The Log Cabin just burned down."<sup>5</sup>

Patrick Guerriero, then president of Log Cabin Republicans, issued a state-

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### The Log Cabin Republicans was founded in 1977 to recruit gay Republicans to oppose an attempt to prohibit gays and lesbians from teaching in California schools.

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ment refusing to endorse Bush for President. He sounded less like a loyal Republican and more like a member of the Democratic gay group, the Stonewall Democrats.

The President's use of the bully pulpit, stump speeches and radio addresses to support a Constitutional amendment [banning gay marriage] has encouraged the passage of discriminatory laws and state constitutional amendments across America. Using gays and lesbians as wedge issues in an election year is unacceptable to Log Cabin.<sup>6</sup>

Despite Log Cabin Republican's attempts to dissuade gays from voting for the GOP, almost the same percentage of gay voters turned out for Bush in 2004 as in

2000, about 23%. Gay voters make up 5% of the total vote and have become as nationally significant a voting group as Latino (8%) and Jewish voters (3%). They are clearly not voting as a predictably liberal bloc.<sup>7</sup> Why is it that one quarter of gays and lesbians consistently vote for Republicans?

The stereotype of a gay conservative is a white man of means to whom economic and security concerns are at least, if not more, important than identity politics. Libertarians, those eager to keep government off people's backs and out of the bedroom, have traditionally filled the ranks of gay conservatives, and this continues to be the case. *Village Voice* editor Richard Goldstein has dubbed gay conservatives "homocons."<sup>8</sup> They sometimes refer to themselves as "classic liberals" in the libertarian sense of Friedrich Hayek's free market economics and as social conservatives similar to Gertrude Himmelfarb and her biting criticism of the 1960s cultural revolution. Embarrassed by a gay community that embraces the diversity of drag queens, transgender youth, and adherents of exotic sexual practices, these (mostly male) assimilationists express their sense of entitlement through outrage at being discriminated against for being gay. Sexual orientation is for

them the only thing that lies between them and the American dream, and they consider their own experiences to be representative of all gays and lesbians. All they want is *A Place at the Table*, as Bruce Bawer's book title about gay conservatism suggests. Such a vision ignores those LGBT people who do not fit their mold. Several of the books by gay conservatives, like Tafel's *Party Crasher* and Bawer's *A Place at the Table*, are heavily autobiographical, which encourages a kind of extrapolation from these white men's experiences to everyone gay.

Gay conservatives have had difficulty finding a home and a purpose. Many individuals hold a constellation of opinions that are variations on classic conservative values: limited government, lower taxes, personal responsibility, a strong defense, and

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free markets, and they presumably hope that the GOP would accept them and their homosexuality simultaneously. They are a new generation, coming of age when AIDS has become a manageable disease, at least for those with access to treatment. And they have emerged at a time when the Christian Right's headlock on the Republicans by using its own "traditional values," including a definition of marriage that excludes same-sex couples, maintains political purchase.

For some, it may be that their sexual orientation is not the deciding, or even the primary, factor influencing their politics. Given the estimated one million gay Bush voters, it's hard for groups like Log Cabin Republicans to find consensus among its thousands of members. Their organizing strategy has been to choose the lowest common denominator among their constituency, the single issue of gay rights. For the group, this has taken the form of campaigning to erase the legitimacy of sodomy laws and the "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military, strengthening support for anti-discrimination laws, and as a primary focus, promoting the legalization of same-sex marriage. Emphasizing "inclusion," this approach is designed to pressure Republicans to become more inclusive of gays and lesbians, arguing it would improve the party's image on the fairness scale, and recognize them as an electoral force.

Incongruously, both the ascension of the Right and the development of gay culture, especially gay media, have made a space for increased gay conservative visibility. The short-lived perception of conservative tolerance for gays and lesbians among many Republicans, peaking in the 2000 Bush election year with Kolbe's convention appearance, made it possible for gay conservatives to consider themselves welcome enough in the Republican Party to join Log Cabin. A collection of gay newspapers and magazines like the *Advocate* (national), the *Washington Blade* (D.C.), *Bay Area Reporter* (San Francisco), *Gay City News* (New York), and *Bay Windows* (Boston) offers a arena for political commentary,

including space for mainstream and conservative voices, and individuals characterizing themselves as spokespeople for their movement began to appear in print. Writers such as Jennifer Vanasco, John Corvino, and Paul Varnell appear in the pages of the gay press. The rise of conservative gay political pundits rode the wave of the gay liberation movement which created the media vehicles for most of their voices to be heard.

Progressive gay journalist Doug Ireland has observed, "Even though it's now dead, the gay liberation movement gave cultural space for people like [Andrew] Sullivan to

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### Masculinism is what holds the conservative movement together.

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thrive without having to hide their sexual orientation."

It is in the blogosphere, however, where political writers like Andrew Sullivan, Jonathan Rauch, and the Independent Gay Forum, an online collection of gay conservative writers, have found their home.

These days all the well-known names among gay conservatives are journalists, a phenomenon due to several factors. First, out gay or lesbian politicians are still rare, although the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, a PAC supporting the full range of gay candidates, documents 350 gay elected officials at all levels of government across the country. Most of these are at the local level. Household names like members of Congress Barney Frank (D-MA), and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) are those rare exceptions that uphold the rule. Former U.S Representative Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), the lone out Republican, left Congress in 2006.

Journalists, through their access to media, can make names for themselves by creating public personas, ranging from

intellectuals to radio celebrities. Conservative lesbian radio host Tammy Bruce hosts a daily syndicated show out of KABC in Los Angeles, but her books, *The Death of Right and Wrong* and *The New American Revolution* do not sell as well as those from gay conservative men, despite her self description as "a chick with a gun and a microphone." It takes the ability to self promote, to negotiate with media representatives, and above all, to connect with a mass crossover audience to gain a level of prominence in a field where being gay and conservative is still seen as something of a contradiction. Only a few have managed to achieve that level of success.

### Gay Pundits on the Right

Andrew Sullivan, 43, is by far the best known of the gay conservative writers, as much because of his appearance in mainstream media outlets such as the *New Republic*, the *New York Times*, *Time*, and the *Atlantic* as for his intellectual acumen. But Doug Ireland identifies the single most important source for Sullivan's celebrity status: "TV." Sullivan regularly appears on talk shows from the Sunday morning news reviews to shows like *Hardball* with Chris Matthews and *Real Time* with Bill Maher. Biographies of British-born Sullivan highlight his Oxford background, his Harvard Ph.D and his near-celebrity status. The knowledge that Sullivan's dissertation was on British philosopher Michael Oakeshott, a difficult, pessimistic, and ultimately conservative writer, has certainly influenced Sullivan as a thinker, as has his self-understanding as an intellectual. His media appearances and well-read blog, "the Daily Dish" now on the *Atlantic* website, boost his name recognition. Also notable is his reconciliation of his Roman Catholic faith and his sexual orientation. His brand of conservatism blends the classic theoretical conservatism à la Oakeshott or Edmund Burke, a heavy dose of Libertarianism with bits of neoconservatism thrown in.

The author of four books—*Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality* (1995), *Same-Sex Marriage, Pro and Con: A Reader* (1997), *Love Undetectable:*

*Notes on Friendship, Sex, and Survival* (1999), and *The Conservative Soul: How We Lost It and How to Get It Back* (2006)—Sullivan’s interests go beyond his earlier arguments on behalf of a conservative politics of homosexuality. Recent blog entries range from lightweight cultural commentary to an ongoing criticism of U.S. state-sanctioned torture and the failure of the war in Iraq. Ireland says of Sullivan’s TV advantage, “On the shows he is always introduced as a blogger, driving visits to his site.” Before the 2006 election, *The Daily Dish* reportedly received 100,000 hits a day.<sup>10</sup>

*The Conservative Soul*, his most recent book, addresses the future direction of conservative politics in general with little reference to gay issues. This book is a far-reaching, passionate attack on what to Sullivan’s mind has ruined conservatism—fundamentalist thinking, which he describes as a mindset of “certainty.” This he contrasts with the posture of doubt of classic conservatism, calling on Hobbes, Burke, Montaigne, and Oakeshott to support his arguments. Critics of the book observed the lack of attention to the complexity of fundamentalist thinking, as represented by otherwise sympathetic David Brooks from the *New York Times*:

Many people do believe that truth is revealed, and that one must work one’s way toward it. And yet to divide the world between fundamentalists and autonomous free thinkers is to create a dichotomy that distorts more than it reveals.<sup>11</sup>

Sullivan is an influential writer. His portrayal of fundamentalism as a scourge of conservatism has roots in the reality of the heavy influence of the Christian Right on the Republican Party, but the superficiality of his argument reinforces an acceptance of blanket stereotyping of Evan-

gelical Christians. He also continues to champion the appeal of religious faith as his recent “blogologue” with atheist Sam Harris attests.<sup>12</sup> But it is possible to suspect that Sullivan’s interest in driving a wedge between “good” and “bad” religion has more to do with his insistence on society’s tolerance of homosexuality than on the intellectual merits of conservative arguments. Here again could be an example of the dilemma of the gay conservative: how to carve out a place for gay people on the Right?

During his stint as editor at the *New Republic* from 1991-96, Sullivan published an essay that became the core of his first book.<sup>13</sup> He came out in the mid-1980s, and his later discovery of his HIV-positive status seemed to percolate his thinking.<sup>14</sup> “The Politics of Homosexuality” marked an important moment in the development of gay conservative thought. In it, Sullivan attempts to parse out the different political responses to being gay as he saw them in 1993. He categorizes the most punitive and judgmental as “the conser-

vative politics of sexuality,” later to be called the Prohibitionists in *Virtually Normal*. This position holds the attitude that homosexuality doesn’t, or shouldn’t, exist. “The politics that springs out of this view of homosexuality has two essential parts: with the depraved, it must punish; with the sick, it must cure.” He calls adherents to the other, non-Prohibitionist, politics “radicals” or liberationists. According to Sullivan, a radical or “queer” strategy has its limits as well, since its attempts at cultural subversion are as extreme and as uninfluential as the Prohibitionists.

Far more subversive than the media-grabbing demonstrations on the evening news has been the slow effect of individual, private Americans becoming more open about their sexuality. The emergence of role models, the development of professional organizations and students groups, the growing influence of openly gay people in the media, and the extraordinary impact of AIDS on families and friends have dwarfed



radicalism's impact on the national consciousness.

In painting the Left and the Right as extremist and less important than the centrist middle, he echoes 1950s intellectuals Daniel Bell, Richard Hofstadter, and Seymour Martin Lipset who decried attacks on the "rational middle" by irrational, moralistic "extremists" at either end of the political spectrum.

Sullivan's adherence to this line of reasoning reveals his theoretical affinity with the neoconservatives. At the beginning of the Iraq War, he agreed with the position that the United States had no choice except to enter into war to prevent further terrorism from extremists. After evidence of weapons of mass destruction evaporated, Sullivan did change his mind and has since been highly critical of prisoner torture and "endless war." His blog banner describes him as "of no party or clique."

On Sullivan's political map, moderates are a dying breed of both hetero- and homosexuals who are privately tolerant of gays but publicly disapproving, like the old closeted gay elite of J. Edgar Hoover and Roy Cohn. He dismisses them as being out of date, due to the force that made the closet irrelevant, AIDS. More "durable" is the liberal approach, which attempts to legislate change in homophobic behavior through "formulaic civil rights legislation." This portrays gay people as victims, which in Sullivan's eyes will never bring about the full equality of gays and lesbians because they are seen as weak, not as the capable, self-supporting individuals that gay people really are. Other gay conservative writers have picked up on Sullivan's disdain for "victimology."<sup>15</sup> But an alternative to all of these, the one that Sullivan suggests is the only path to success, is the "classic liberal" (or libertarian) position of ending all government-sponsored discrimination against homosexuality and maintaining government neutrality to any other preferences.

And that is all. No cures or re-educations; no wrenching civil litigation; no political imposition of tolerance; merely a political attempt to enshrine formal civil equality.

As far as Sullivan is concerned, besides erasing sodomy laws, the two most emblematic campaigns that embody this classic liberal approach are full equality for gays in the military and legalized same sex marriage. He has been quoted as saying,

Once we have won the right to marry, I think we should have a party and close down the gay movement for good.<sup>16</sup>

In 1993, none of these goals seemed realizable. Ten years later, sodomy laws are unconstitutional, and same sex marriage, although caught in the fray of debate by the Christian Right, is legal in Massachusetts.<sup>17</sup>

Sullivan's blog portrays him as a man interested in an agenda much broader than gay rights. His early 2007 posts spend considerable time on U.S. foreign policy. Like Bawer and Tafel, however, he appears uninterested in the politics of social issues like poverty and racism. That those interests do not include a multi-issue gay movement is probably lost on his mainstream audience, mostly urban male heterosexuals.<sup>18</sup>

Bruce Bawer, another early conservative spokesperson with a Ph.D. in English, wrote *A Place at The Table* (1993) and edited a collection of conservative gay political writing, *Beyond Queer: Challenging Gay Left Orthodoxy* in 1996. After laying out the conservative arguments for gay acceptance, focusing on a rejection of queer politics as too radical and unnecessary for the attainment of gay rights, he moved from gay themes on to poetry, cultural commentary, and political criticism. Another place Bawer moved was to Europe in 1998 and has been largely a virtual presence on the U.S. scene ever since. Like other gay conservatives, he is embarrassed by what he sees as the excesses of gay (male, that is,) culture embodied in Gay Pride.

It seemed as if people who wore suits and ties on the 364 other days of the year had, on this particular morning, ransacked their closets for their tackiest, skimpiest, most revealing items of clothing. There were hundreds of bare chests, bare bottoms, mesh

pants, nipple rings, leather shorts, and tight designer briefs without anything covering them.<sup>19</sup>

His latest book, *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* (2006), has placed him in the spotlight again. Bawer blames European liberalism for the unchecked growth of radical Muslim thought in the enclaves that ring European cities. He sees unchallenged Islamic practices as threatening to women, gay men, and Jews and to the basic democratic principles of European politics. The book received mixed reviews, easily sorted on ideological lines. It has been labeled "racism as criticism" and "hyper-ventilated rhetoric" by members of the National Book Critics Circle where it was ironically nominated for an award and where Bawer has himself been a member. On the other hand, the conservative journalist Mona Charen, who has been known to rant against gay marriage, says, "Bawer writes with intelligence and passion. A fascinating analysis of Europe's death spiral."<sup>20</sup>

The timing of the release of his latest book coincides with a growing anti-Muslim attitude among Americans reinforced by a popularized understanding of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" theory. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of World Order* (1996) suggested that future world conflicts would be along cultural, not ideological, difference. Despite criticism that the book perpetuated racist stereotypes, Huntington's thesis has helped propel writers like Bawer whose own political proclivities were toughened by his personal experiences living in a Muslim neighborhood in Amsterdam.

Jonathan Rauch is a journalist with a biweekly column "Social Studies," giving him a regular forum at the respected Beltway publication *National Journal* where he comments on issues from foreign policy to the environment. He also holds a position at the Brookings Institution, is a contributor to the libertarian magazine *Reason* and writes for the *Atlantic*. Rauch has been a journalist since he graduated from Yale, and his style is readable and intelligent, his



interests far-reaching. Rauch began as a political commentator on general conservative themes, including a conservative take on hate crimes legislation because of the danger of subjective definitions of prejudice. As he wrote in 1991:

Eliminating prejudice is exactly what “the country”—meaning its governmental authorities—must *not* resolve to do. Not only is wiping out bias and hate impossible in principle, in practice “eliminating prejudice” through force of law means eliminating all but one prejudice—that of whoever is most politically powerful.<sup>21</sup>

Rauch has lost faith in Bush’s war on terror, a position he shares with Sullivan and other anti-big government gays and lesbians. He has written, “Bush’s course is looking less like a long road than a dead end.”<sup>22</sup> It is possible to oppose Bush’s interventionist policies and still remain loyal to conservative principles of smaller government, lower taxes, and privatized, diminished social services.

Rauch’s *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America* (2003) presents an argument he shares with two other gay men, Michaelangelo Signorile and Gabriel Rotello, who while not identifying as political conservatives, exhibit a conservative attitude about gay sex. Surprising the liberal gay community at the time, both Rotello and Signorile condemned a gay sex culture that celebrates multiple sexual encounters.<sup>23</sup> In a *New York Times* editorial published in 2006, Rauch reiterates his position. AIDS had changed everything.

The master narrative for gay life was: come out, leave home, gorge at the banquet of sexual liberation.... Though few said so (no one wanted to be callous, not with people dying), many also knew that the culture of promiscuity and alienation was a culture of death. To me the idea of same-sex marriage sounded like the Coast Guard’s hail to a castaway. It promised a new narrative: of com-

mitment, of connectedness, of a community bound by stories of love, not death.<sup>24</sup>

Rauch is vice president of the Independent Gay Forum, an online community where he has attracted numerous conservative gay writers. But he is more widely known for a non-gay-related essay. His 2003 *Atlantic* article, “Caring for Your Introvert: the Habits and Needs of a Little-Understood Group,” resonated with many who found his lighthearted but dead-on plea for understanding accurate and helpful.<sup>25</sup>

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### Andrew Sullivan’s blog portrays him as a man interested in an agenda much broader than gay rights.

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#### “I’m All for the Cult of Masculinity”

The fact that all the writers represented here have been male is no coincidence. Few of the emerging lesbian political commentators are conservative. Of the 45 authors listed on the Independent Gay Forum website, five are women, and of these, only one, Jennifer Vanasco, is steadily writing about gay issues. Camille Paglia, certainly an intellectual iconoclast, has been dismissed as being too liberal. Tammy Bruce has bona fide conservative credentials, but she is seen as more of a shock jock than an intellectual force. Norah Vincent, a Sullivan protégé with an arsenal of anti-liberal themes (second-wave feminists are “those saber-rattlers of the ‘70s”), stepped away from her syndicated column to write a book about gender attribution, and the experience wounded her emotionally. *Self-Made Man* (2006), a memoir of living in drag as a man for 18 months, stranded Vin-

cent between a marketable concept and the guilt of betraying those she befriended as a man.

It could be that there is not much of an audience, or they may be invisible. “I’ve never met a lesbian conservative,” quips Jo Wyrick, executive director of the National Stonewall Democrats, an association of gay democratic clubs. The Independent Women’s Forum, a secular anti-feminist organization, has demonstrated, after all, that women can reject feminist principles. But rather than speculate on the ability of women to have conservative positions, perhaps this reveals a little-explored area of gay conservative influence. Such Left analysts of the gay right as Richard Goldstein and Stanford professor Paul Robinson have discussed what they call a “masculinist” tendency among gay conservatives. By this they mean the glorification of male experience. As Goldstein explains,

The gay right’s message, like that of the entire Right, is that the power vested in men is justly assigned.... Masculinism is what holds the conservative movement together.<sup>26</sup>

As Sullivan has said, “I’m all for the cult of masculinity.... Last time I checked, that was a major reason I thought of myself as a homosexual.”<sup>27</sup>

Enforced gender conformity is a vestige of the closet for LGBT people, and those who believe in assimilation as a path to status and acceptance will find only straight-appearing lesbians acceptable. There is no real room for women’s issues, unless they avoid a focus on the bad hand that women have been dealt, which requires ignoring the effects of sexism.

Because women and their problems [have been marginalized by gay conservatives], they find it easy to discard the notion that gays are victims of the same patriarchal values that keep women in their place.<sup>28</sup>

Some gay conservatives expose the tension between how many define them by sexual orientation and a frustration at being defined only in this way. A recent

Vincent quote:

We will have won the battle against Puritanism in America not when sexuality is run up the flagpole, but when it is irrelevant.<sup>29</sup>

This hope that sexuality will someday recede from public policy debates is reminiscent of the Right's attempts to appropriate language from civil rights leaders to justify a "colorblind" society.<sup>30</sup> Hoping that discrimination will disappear without undue governmental intervention, though, remains a dilemma.

Among the cadre of gay conservative writers, people of color are also conspicuously absent. This makes sense if we realize that issues like affirmative action, racism, and public education are mostly off the radar of gay right pundits. While gay conservative people of color certainly do exist, their relationship with the gay movement has been problematical, and no one has emerged to represent them nor has anyone been sustained by the usual media.

The power of gay conservative pundits has successfully focused LGBT issues on the narrow frame of gay marriage. This has effectively erased from their line of vision those LGBT people who do not stand to receive its benefits, those not in the solid middle class, poor single parents, and the uninsured.<sup>31</sup>

### Who's Got the Clout?

What can be said about the gay right's influence? At this political moment when many assume the gay vote to be consistently liberal, about 25% of gay voters identify as Republicans, and the percentage of gay voters who call themselves conservative is increasing.<sup>32</sup> Joined with an also-increasing group of independents, these voters certainly can carry a message on Election Day. Is the percentage of gay conservative writers representative of this group?

Goldstein argues that the mainstream media encourages gay conservative writers since they are more acceptable to centrist editors than radical ones. Because mainstream media publishes conservative gay writers, according to Goldstein, this skews mainstream readers' image of gay opinion to the right. It promotes the value of assimilating gays and lesbians with this readership by allowing the voices of assimilation, like Vincent, Bawer, Rauch and Sullivan, to dominate. The *New York Times* recently signed Norah Vincent on to review gay books such as John Cornwell's *Seminary Boy* and Jennifer Baumgardner's *Look Both Ways*. (Gay conservative bloggers, up to perhaps 40 in number but mostly consisting of unknowns, remain a distinct minority in the realm of the thousands of conservative political bloggers as a whole.)

Goldstein suggests that gay conservatives

assuage straight anxiety about homosexuality by presenting acceptable images of gays and lesbians. "This preserves the illusion that stigma can be overcome by good behavior."<sup>33</sup> Further, the celebritization of gay conservatives has strengthened the representation of gay people as individuals, not as a community or as a political movement. Singling out individuals gives the select few a higher status and helps to keep the rest of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer-identified population divided and invisible.

The gay right has influenced the broader gay movement, even without many noticing. Their goal, full equality for gay and lesbian people, is indeed the gay rights agenda. But that vision is narrower than that of the gay liberation, which sought sexual freedom in alliance with feminists and recognized common ground with other disenfranchised groups.<sup>34</sup> In September 2006 the Gill Foundation, a Colorado-based national LGBT funding and movement organization, initiated Gill Action, a 501(c)4 bipartisan organization prepared to get involved in electoral politics with Patrick Guerriero as its first Executive Director. Of the seven members of its new political team, three have associations with Log Cabin Republicans.

In 2007, the gay agenda that so worries the Christian Right as a radical remaking of society amounts to the single issue of gay rights, manifest in a primary demand of gay marriage and the remnants of interest in non-discrimination of gays in the military. While gay conservatives may not have consciously engineered this single issue focus, their increasing visibility in the cause during a period of conservative resurgence reinforces the narrow scope of contemporary gay politics.

Strikingly, these narrow goals can be seen as conservative, or non-radical demands—to be allowed to defend national security and to be recognized as identical to heterosexuals under the law. This toes the line of the gay conservative position as does the reality that the gay movement, despite its political diversity, has embraced same sex marriage as its central political

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#### TO THE EDITOR *continued from page 2*

us into, a settler version of U.S. history. What about the native peoples who were here already? These peoples are clearly not part of the worldview of Christian Nationalism — but shouldn't they be part of ours? And if we accept and bring into the story the reality of the Indian peoples and their struggles, doesn't that upset right from the start that fiction that "we" are a Christian nation.

The vision of a country we need to uphold, in my view, is one that finally comes to terms with this wretched past of genocide. It should give due place in the country's creation story to the native peoples — and to their continuing struggles for self-determination. Given the continuing

centrality of expansionism, or empire-building, in U.S. life today, getting things wrong back at the beginning can unwittingly lend support to the way the dominant forces picture the U.S. role today.

I realize that these points go deep into the self-image of many people in the United States, and do so in unsettling ways. They are not easily accepted, since people want to feel good about the country and its origins. It's good that there was the light of religious tolerance enshrined in the Constitution — and that's the main point of your article. But the real source of enlightenment is the history of all our people.

—Chip Smith, Fayetteville,  
North Carolina

demand. Whether done consciously or not, this choice allows some, including parts of the Right, to separate the LGBT community into “good gays,” those who just want to get married and settle down, and “bad gays,” those who flaunt their sexuality, demand radical change, or challenge gender-normative images. This, riding on the demise of a functioning radical gay left, represents the true influence of gay conservatism on the politics of homosexuality: the gay movement continues to be pulled to the right.

Meanwhile, Log Cabin Republicans continue on their resolute path towards the construction of a “big tent” Republican Party that will somehow acknowledge, if not embrace, the one million gay voters who went for Bush in 2004. The homophobia fueled by Focus on the Family’s James Dobson, by the Family Research Council’s Tony Perkins, by Traditional Values Coalition head Lou Sheldon, and by the American Family Association’s Donald Wildmon is a powerful obstacle to their plan, one that no amount of white-washed images of gays will overcome. A Republican Unity Coalition formed in 2001 to be “a sort of gay/straight alliance of politicians.” David Rockefeller, Alan Simpson and Mary Cheney all agreed to be

on the Republican Unity Coalition’s advisory board. But the use of anti-gay rhetoric as a pillar of Republican organizing placed the Coalition in an untenable position. Charles Francis, the founder of the organization, recently said, The Republican Unity Coalition “is now in a sort of frozen state, like Walt Disney’s body. It’ll come back someday. We’re waiting for a better time.”<sup>35</sup> ■

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Rich Tafel, *Party Crasher: A Gay Republican Challenges Politics as Usual* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1999) 17.
- <sup>2</sup> Political language is always in flux. This article uses the word gay when referring to groups or individuals who have used the term to describe themselves. We use LGBT as shorthand to refer to the broad collection of identities that includes bisexuals and transgendered people.
- <sup>3</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/US/P/00/epolls.0.html>.
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.logcabinwa.com/archive/200007241832.shtml>.
- <sup>5</sup> *WorldNet Daily*, September 4, 2004. [http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=40296](http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=40296).
- <sup>6</sup> Nonna Gorilovskaya, “Gay Republicans Come Out of the Cabin,” *Daily Mojo*, September 4, 2004, [http://www.motherjones.com/news/dailymojo/2004/09/09\\_505.html](http://www.motherjones.com/news/dailymojo/2004/09/09_505.html).
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/pages/results/states/US/H/00/epolls.0.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> Richard Goldstein, *Homocons: the Rise of the Gay Right* (New York: Verso, 2003).
- <sup>9</sup> Telephone conversation with Ireland, February 13, 2007.
- <sup>10</sup> The Daily Dish, Sitemeter, <http://www.sitemeter.com/?a=stats&cs=sm3DishStats&cr=1>.

meter.com/?a=stats&cs=sm3DishStats&cr=1.

- <sup>11</sup> Davis Brooks, “Where the Right Went Wrong,” *New York Times*, October 26, 2006, Section 7, 14.
- <sup>12</sup> “Is Religion Built Upon Lies?” [http://www.beliefnet.com/story/209/story\\_20904.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/209/story_20904.html).
- <sup>13</sup> Andrew Sullivan, “The Politics of Homosexuality,” *New Republic*, May 10, 1993, 208(19):24-37.
- <sup>14</sup> Jamie Glasov, “Frontpage Interview: Andrew Sullivan,” *Front Page Magazine*, January 20, 2004, <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=11761>.
- <sup>15</sup> Jonathan Rauch, “Beyond Oppression,” *New Republic*, May 10, 1993, 208(19):18-23; Tafel, op.cit.
- <sup>16</sup> Richard Goldstein, *Homocons: The Rise of the Gay Right*, 26.
- <sup>17</sup> *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003); *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* 440 Mass. 309.
- <sup>18</sup> “Reader Demographics,” <http://www.andrewsullivan.com/info.php?artnum=0000demo>.
- <sup>19</sup> Bruce Bawer, *A Place at the Table* (Crofton, Md.: Poseidon Press, 1993), 55.
- <sup>20</sup> Patricia Cohen, “In Books, a Clash of Europe and Islam,” *New York Times*, February 8, 2007. (E)1; Mona Charen, *While Europe Slept* dustjacket quote, available at <http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780385514729&view=quotes>.
- <sup>21</sup> Jonathan Rauch, “Beyond Oppression,” *New Republic*, May 10, 1993 (208, 19) 18-23.
- <sup>22</sup> Jonathan Rauch, “Unwinding Bush,” *The Atlantic*, October, 2006 (298,3) 27-8.
- <sup>23</sup> Gabriel Rotello, *Sexual Ecology: AIDS and the Destiny of Gay Men* (New York: Dutton, 1997); Michaelangelo Signorile, *Life Outside: the Signorile Report on Gay Men: Sex, Drugs, Muscles, and the Passage of Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).
- <sup>24</sup> Jonathan Rauch, “Families Forged by Illness,” *New York Times*, June 4, 2006, (4) 15.
- <sup>25</sup> Jonathan Rauch, “Caring for Your Introvert: the Habits and Needs of a Little-Understood Group,” *The Atlantic*, March 2003; (291, 2), 133.
- <sup>26</sup> Goldstein, 61, 75.
- <sup>27</sup> Quoted in Goldstein, 72.
- <sup>28</sup> Paul Robinson *Queer Wars: The New Gay Right and its Critics* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 2006) 3.
- <sup>29</sup> Norah Vincent, “Both Sides Now,” *New York Times*, Sec. 7, February 18, 2007, 19.
- <sup>30</sup> See Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have A Dream” speech.
- <sup>31</sup> For a description of these groups, see Kara S. Suffredini and Madeleine V. Findley, “Speak Now: Progressive Considerations on the Advent of Civil Marriage for Same-Sex Couples,” *Boston College Law Review*, 45 B.C.L. Rev. 595 (2003-2004).
- <sup>32</sup> Robert W. Bailey, *Out and Voting II: The Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Vote in Congressional Elections, 1990-1998*, (New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2000) 18-19.
- <sup>33</sup> Goldstein, 47.
- <sup>34</sup> Surina Khan, “Gay Conservatives: Pulling the Movement to the Right,” *The Public Eye* (10,1) Spring 1996, <http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v10n1/gaycons.html>.
- <sup>35</sup> Thomas Mallon, “They Were Always in My Attic,” *American Heritage Magazine*, March 2007, [http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/2007/1/2007\\_1\\_10.shtml](http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/2007/1/2007_1_10.shtml).

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# Book/Film Reviews

## BORDER WATCHERS: CATCHING ANTI-IMMIGRANT VIGILANTES ON FILM

### Walking the Line

Jeremy Levine & Landon Van Soest (57 minutes, 2005).  
English & Spanish with English subtitles. \$12 for individuals

### Crossing Arizona

Joseph Mathew & Dan DeVivo (95 minutes, 2006)  
English & Spanish with subtitles in both languages.  
\$25 for individuals; producers available for community screenings.

### Rights on the Line/Derechos Sobre la Línea

Ray Ybarra & Tamaryn Nelson (25 minutes, 2006).  
Subtitled or dubbed in Spanish. \$25 for 3-DVD kit.

Reviewed by Tarso Luis Ramos

These days it's not just *coyotes*, Homeland Security agents, and vigilantes surveilling the U.S. border with Mexico. Back before the Minutemen became darlings of CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, several documentary film teams headed to the border to explore the role of anti-immigrant militants in shaping the national debate on immigration and the fate of Latino migrants. The films considered here are among the best video resources on this topic available to educators, organizers, and the general public.

Made by a pair of Ithaca College students who in the fall of 2003 traveled to Cochise County, Arizona, **Walking the Line** is a polished product that captures many of Arizona's leading anti-immigrant players showing off their armaments and justifying why they organize undeputized posses to hunt migrants in the desert.

Most of these white men migrated to Arizona from other states specifically to confront border crossers. Chris Simcox, in his Tombstone Militia days (prior to the Minuteman Project), calls on U.S. armed forces to "eradicate these non-English-speaking thugs who rule entire neighborhoods in communities across this country" and constitute "sleeper cells, potential terrorists." Glenn Spencer of American Patrol—who the filmmakers neglect to mention was a major backer of California's landmark anti-immigrant ballot initiative 187—declares, "I became convinced this is part of what they call 'La Reconquista,' essentially reversing the result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo by migratory means and placing the Southwest under the jurisdiction of Mexico."

Throughout, the filmmakers give the vigilantes just enough rope to hang themselves. One episode involves an internal power struggle in which Casey Nethercott ejects Ranch Rescue founder Jack Foote, prompting Foote to label Nethercott "a sociopath" with "psychotic tendencies." As if determined to prove the charge correct, Nethercott runs a Border Patrol roadblock,

precipitating a confrontation with the FBI that results in his arrest and the shooting of his bodyguard. The following year, a federal judge awards the entire Ranch Rescue compound to a pair of undocumented migrants whom Nethercott was convicted of assaulting. In another case of apparent just desserts, retiree Richard Kozak, who tells harrowing tales of shootouts with Mexican drug smugglers seeking to cross his property, is later arrested following the discovery of 224 pounds of marijuana in his home.

If *Walking the Line's* main virtue is allowing anti-immigrant militants to speak for themselves, its treatment of the larger forces driving migration is less satisfying. Handled more deftly is the tragedy of desert migration across the Tohono O'odham Nation, the busiest point of entry for border crossers and also the deadliest—accounting for some 1500 crossings each day and 87 of 205 known migrant deaths in a single year. Addressing the strain on her impoverished community, Tribal Chairwoman Vivian-Juan Saunders soberly observes, "If this happened anywhere else in America this would be viewed as a crisis. But it's not here on Indian land."

In 1993, U.S. Border Patrol began pushing the migrant stream from cities and towns into Arizona's deadly Sonoran desert by militarizing urban crossing points, first in Texas, followed by California and Arizona. **Crossing Arizona** demonstrates how the current humanitarian crisis was shaped by a combination of this border militarization, anti-immigrant hysteria, and the decimation of Mexico's farm economy as U.S. exports flooded that country following implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994. The longest of the three documentaries, *Crossing Arizona* is also the most compelling and has won jury and audience awards at festivals from Munich to Austin. Its complexity and nuance make it a good option for audiences with diverse or undecided viewpoints. Indeed, its producers use screenings—facilitated by local pastors—to spark community debate over immigration policy.

*Crossing Arizona* opens in Altar, Mexico, a stopover on the migrant trail, where a *coyote* relates that the journey has gradually increased from two to forty



Photos courtesy of *Crossing Arizona*.

hours—three days of walking in temperatures that often exceed 100 degrees. A young man preparing himself for the crossing observes, “Some people leave and never return and their families are waiting, thinking that they’re working—but they never made it.”

Douglas, Arizona, Mayor Ray Borane, who once advocated border militarization, describes how it has forced migrants “further and further into the desert—and that’s when the dying started.” Rather than deterring migration, the strategy resulted in over 3,000 migrant deaths. “You can hold the American government specifically responsible for that,” he concludes.

Some of the same players float through all three documentaries, casting into relief how large social, political, and economic forces are playing out on the small stage of Arizona’s border communities. The film tracks Chris Simcox’s emergence as a national figure with the success of the Minuteman Project, a media-ready event that mobilized anti-immigrant activists along a stretch of Arizona border in April 2005. As the calls pour in from national news bureaus, he perceives the significance of the moment: “We’re going for the masses now.” Lou Dobbs of CNN is captured chumming it up with anti-immigrant activists in the desert and championing their cause on the airwaves.

Pursuing the anti-immigrant movement from bullet cartridges to the ballot box, *Crossing Arizona* documents Proposition 200, the ballot initiative in 2004 which required voters to provide proof of citizenship, barred undocumented immigrants from receiving many public services, and compelled state employees to turn undocumented clients over to immigration agents. At a pro-200 conference, anti-immigrant standard bearer, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-Col.), implores his audience to “battle with this philosophy of extreme multiculturalism that tries to tear Americans apart.” In a poignant moment, a Latino hotel employee cleaning up after the conventioners laments, “I heard really bad things about immigrant people... We come to do better this country, not to destroy this country.”

Produced by American Friends Service Committee and two other activist groups, **Rights on the Line: Vigilantes at the Border** is an excellent option for those seeking a concise and compelling summary of conflict at the border. Its examination of vigilantism, though brief, in some respects surpasses the other documentaries by exposing how the anti-immigrant backlash has reinvigorated white supremacist groups. At just 25 minutes (there’s also 12 minute version), the film makes an ideal opener for community group discussions and a companion organizing guide can be downloaded online.

The compelling storylines and astonishing footage of these films entreat audiences to take action, and demonstrate the impor-

ance of alternative media to human rights education and progressive movement building. Don’t expect to see these films at the local Cineplex. Seek them out.

*Tarso Luís Ramos is research director of Political Research Associates and on the editorial board of The Public Eye.*

### RACISM IN THE SERVICE OF SCIENCE

#### Medical Apartheid

*The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*

by Harriet A. Washington

Doubleday, 2006, 501 pages, \$27.95 hardcover.

Reviewed by Eleanor J. Bader

No matter how much you think you know about America’s racist underpinnings, medical ethicist Harriet A. Washington’s **Medical Apartheid** will make your head spin. This is the true stuff of shock and awe, an almost numbing account of three centuries of heinous experimentation on people of color.

Washington begins at the beginning, in the colonial United States. She tells us that in 1700, the country was home to approximately 20,000 Africans-turned-slaves; by 1776 their numbers had reached 550,000, comprising 20 percent of the total population. In her rendering, backbreaking labor, poor nutrition, and medical neglect collide with the pathogens of North America, Europe, and Africa. The result is a “bewildering array of unfamiliar infectious diseases, such as hookworm, types of malaria, and yellow fever” that inevitably disabled a large number of the enslaved. Of course, owners and overseers saw it differently and cast aspersions on the slaves, calling them indolent and inferior.

Some colonists compared slaves to beasts, others compared them to children, but the common denominator was their subordinate status. Since planters had the power to call—or not call—a physician to care for a sick worker, it was the planter, not the worker, who decided what, if any, treatment to allow. What’s more, Washington writes, slave-owning physicians profited from their slaves not only in the usual ways—from fieldwork, housework, and as breeders—but often used them “to conduct experiments too painful, too risky, or otherwise too objectionable to inflict on whites.”

Slaves were routinely subjected to hazardous chemicals with neither their consent nor their understanding. Not surprisingly, women were particularly vulnerable to medical research. In one of **Medical Apartheid**’s most stomach-churning sections, Washington describes the efforts of Dr. James Marion Sims to staunch tetany, a neuromuscular disease characterized by muscle spasms

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“Some people leave and never return and their families are waiting, thinking that they’re working—but they never made it.”

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and convulsions. Although the disorder was eventually linked to malnutrition, Sims believed it was caused by displacement of skull bones during childbirth and utilized cobbler's tools to surgically pry apart the heads of newborn babies. His ministrations invariably killed his patients. His response? He castigated "the sloth and ignorance of their mothers and the black midwives who attended them."

Sims was not deterred by his medical failures. In fact, his horrific track record encouraged him to devise new strategies not only for tetany but for a host of other ills. He also refused to use ether to anesthetize his patients and boasted that Black women did not feel the same pain as their more-sensitive white counterparts.

"Sims' surgical exploitation of enslaved blacks was consonant with the medical practice of his time," Washington writes. "For black women, forced experimentation was the standard of care."

Elders were also targets, and owners regularly sent aged slaves to hospitals as "clinical material." Slavemasters "were glad to rid themselves of old, sick and unproductive slaves," Washington continues. "It was a sage bargain on the slave owner's part because the hospital took over all or most of the cost of feeding, housing and treating the unproductive. If the slave died, his owner was spared the inconvenience and expense of burying him, because the hospital would retain the body for dissection or experiment. If the slave recovered, the master would once again profit from his or her labor and breeding."

The Civil War did little to free African Americans from being scientific objects. Rampant racism led White Americans to devise outrageous programs to scrutinize the Black body. In the early 1900s, for example, Benga, a pygmy from the Congo, was put in a cage at the Bronx Zoo alongside an orangutan and gorilla. Although New York's African American community expressed outrage, Whites interested in Darwin's increasingly popular theory of evolution flocked to the installation. P.T. Barnum and other hucksters also lured curious onlookers to sideshows showcasing Black anatomy.

Such lurid fascination carried into medicine, and African Americans remained fodder throughout much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. "Because of the widespread use of blacks as teaching material, new physicians left their medical school training with a deeply ingrained habit of looking upon blacks as demonstration material," Washington concludes.

Her catalog of horrors includes a nauseating array of examples:

- In 1932, a U.S. Public Health Service study of syphilis, aka the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, ostensibly offered free medical care to 600 impoverished Black sharecroppers from Macon County, Georgia. The 40-year investigation was meant to monitor the disease's progression. Participants believed they were being treated, but they were not. Instead, the study sought to eventually track the ravages of the disease in the men after their deaths through autopsies. The men were never

given the option of taking the life-saving treatment then in existence;

- During the early years of the 20th century, the eugenics movement worked to restrict procreation to the "mentally fit" and "well born." Highly educated women from the upper classes were considered eugenically superior; the uneducated, recent immigrants, the poor, and those labeled "feeble-minded" were deemed inferior. By 1941, Washington writes, between 70,000 and 100,000 women were subjected to forced sterilizations, usually without either their consent or knowledge. Although Nazi experimentation sullied the eugenics movement, as recently as the 1980s risky forms of birth control such as Norplant and Depo-Provera were tested on Black women;
- Prisoners, disproportionately Black, were burned by radiation and used to test hundreds of drugs between 1962 and 1966. Other inmates, she writes, took psychotropic drugs from the mid-1950s until the 1970s to see which might work as a "truth serum" during interrogations. Subsequently, several experienced "temporary paralysis or helplessness" while one man went into "a catatonic state from which he could neither communicate nor react to his surroundings." Others suffered from prolonged nausea or became uncharacteristically violent. Although today's inmates typically receive a small stipend for their participation in medical testing, Washington nonetheless questions the efficacy of using prisoners, especially if they are not told the nature of the experiments they're going to participate in.
- At least 126 boys were given fenfluramine between 1992 and 1997 by the New York Psychiatric Institute and a Columbia University research program. Parents/guardians were told they'd receive \$100 for allowing their children to receive a single dose of a "harmless" medication, slated as a mood regulator. Predictably, the boys were all from low-income African American or Latino households. In adults, Washington writes, fenfluramine is known to cause symptoms including anxiety, headaches, visual impairments, pulmonary hypertension and heart valve damage. It was taken off the market in 1997. And the boys? Complaints of severe headaches, panic attacks, hyperventilation, breathing problems and nightmares now fill their medical charts.

**Medical Apartheid** is a brilliant, enraging, grotesque, and tragic narrative that situates medical abuse within the pathology of racism. The legacy of race-based medical exploitation that Washington exposes will knot your stomach and drop your jaw, but it will also leave you aware of a shameful piece of American history.

*Eleanor J. Bader is a Brooklyn-based teacher, writer, and activist. She is the coauthor of Targets of Hatred: Anti-Abortion Terrorism (St. Martin's Press, 2001).*



# .....Reports in Review.....

## REPORT OF THE MONTH

### Dramatic Shift to the Democrats

#### Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2007

*Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Washington, D.C., March 22, 2007.*

<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=312>

If we can believe this survey, support for the Republican Party has dropped drastically since 2002, with only 35 percent oriented toward the GOP today compared with 43 percent five years ago. The Democrats, meanwhile, are much more popular, with support rising from 43 percent in 2002 to 50 percent today. More independents lean toward Democrats, but true party partisans are as divided as ever.

Some of the most dramatic shifts are visible when comparing the 1990s to today, especially in support for gay rights, government help for the needy, and religiosity. You see key socially conservative positions peaking in 1999, right before the election of George W. Bush, and a decline since then: for instance, 55 percent said prayer was a daily part of their lives in 1999, compared with 45 percent today. The

Gingrich revolution of 1994 seems to be another peak, this time for fiscal conservatives: only 57 percent of those surveyed thought “government should care for those who can’t care for themselves” in 1994, compared to 69 percent today – admittedly still a pretty dismal number. The shift is equally dramatic when it comes to support for the government giving the needy food and shelter: from 59 percent in 1994 to 69 percent today.

Support for unions has remained strong over the years, but there was a slight dip in support from 2002, with 68 percent showing support now versus 74 percent in 2003. A big surprise is the steady growth in support for affirmative action since the mid-90s, when only 58 percent thought women, blacks, and other minorities should get a boost in securing jobs. Today 70 percent do. And a whopping 19 percent of Generation Y—those born from 1977 on—say they are at least agnostic if not totally a-religious. Even the boomers aren’t so skeptical, with 11 percent at least agnostic. This report is full of such surprises and worth a browse.

– Abby Scher

### Other Reports in Review

#### Questioning the President's Power

##### Background on Executive Privilege

*Brennan Center for Justice, NYU School of Law, March 23, 2007.*

[http://www.brennancenter.org/stack\\_detail.asp?key=348&subkey=48270&proj\\_key=54](http://www.brennancenter.org/stack_detail.asp?key=348&subkey=48270&proj_key=54)

Condoleezza Rice says she will ignore Congress’s subpoena calling her to testify about the Bush Administration’s notorious claim that Saddam Hussein had secured uranium in Niger. And in their investigation of the firing of U.S. Attorneys last year, the Senate Judiciary Committee has subpoenaed Karl Rove’s emails to the Justice Department. But the Administration repeatedly claims executive privilege in refusing to cooperate.

If you want to sort out claims and counterclaims about the various forms of executive privilege, this short briefing paper will help you even though it does not examine any of the cases now in the news. While the Supreme Court recognized the constitutionally rooted Presidential privilege as a way to protect candor in decision-making in the White House

and “the supremacy of each branch in its own assigned area,” it still told the Nixon Administration it could only keep direct communication with the president secret. Congress’s power to investigate the executive branch and the pursuit of justice in the courts could also trump Presidential privilege, according to the Supreme Court. Later, a circuit court confirmed that it didn’t cover people in the Justice Department who were not communicating with the President, and that it was not an absolute privilege even in relation to the president.

The Bush Administration has also been pushing “deliberative process privilege” with roots in common law, not the Constitutional separation of powers of the three branches of government. This would cover staff’s policy-making debates that come before a decision, but, while recognized by the Supreme Court, it does not hold when there is the possibility of misconduct. So Congress often overrides it in its investigations.

When national security is involved, the courts give the executive branch more latitude to keep secrets, but Congress has aggressively

asserted the power of its intelligence committees to have access to the information. George Washington even ceded to Congress’s first request for information related to a military defeat in 1791. – Abby Scher

#### Labor Rights as Human Rights

##### Discounting Rights: Wal-Mart’s Violation of U.S. Workers’ Right to Freedom of Association

*Human Rights Watch, New York, May 2007.*  
<http://hrw.org/reports/2007/us0507/>

Wal-Mart is the world’s largest employer, and Human Rights Watch studied its egregious anti-union activities and illegal conduct as “a case study in what is wrong with U.S. labor laws.” But this 200-page report goes beyond corporate misconduct to evaluate the system of labor rights both domestically and internationally.

*Discounting Rights* argues that Wal-Mart (and other scofflaws) should be sanctioned not only because they violate U.S. labor law but also because they violate the right to freedom of association guaranteed by international

law. A worker's ability to organize is a basic human right that the United States should defend, Human Rights Watch argues, because it is party to international treaties like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As the premier non-governmental watchdog of international human rights violations, Human Rights Watch knows the territory.

Its analysis of U.S. labor law describes a system weakened by anti-labor interests and skewed in favor of employers. For example, while the National Labor Relations Board must ask for an injunction when evidence exists of serious union misconduct, it is not required to do so when the evidence focuses on management. The report illustrates how to construct an exposé of labor violations using a human rights frame.

—Pam Chamberlain

### Is a Liberal Arts Education Too Liberal?

#### The "Faculty Bias" Studies: Science or Propaganda?

By John Lee, JBL Associates, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland, November 2006.

[http://www.freeexchangeoncampus.org/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=22&Itemid=25](http://www.freeexchangeoncampus.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=22&Itemid=25)

On behalf of the coalition Free Exchange on Campus, JBL Associates looked into the recent claims that U.S. universities are left-leaning and thus not welcoming of conservative views, students, or faculty. These accusations stem from eight studies largely conducted by conservative groups such as the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

Their "scientific" ammo arms conservatives like David Horowitz to demand that state legislatures pass his so-called Academic Bill of Rights, which would essentially force U.S. universities to hire the professors whose politics he likes.

JBL Associates, a postsecondary education policy research and analysis firm, analyzed the research strategies used in the eight studies to see just how legitimate they are. The conclusion: "None of the eight reports meets all of the minimum research standards for a valid research study."

It seems that the bias in the equation is not located in the higher education community but in the authors of the studies themselves. Along with methodological flaws, the most common error was mistakenly assuming that a correlation indicated causation. In other words, an academic department with a majority of registered Democrats on its faculty does not necessarily lead to the systematic exclusion of conservative ideas or to preventing conservatives from getting promotions.

Unfortunately, this propaganda masked as research has been used as material in the editorials and commentary of conservative pundits, and it is thanks to the publication of these "scientific" studies that state legislatures invite groups such as the American Council of Trustees and Alumni to testify. Fortunately, JBL's study pulls the rug out from under proposals like the Academic Bill of Rights and exposes their authors for the ideologues they really are.

—Michelle Iorio and Nathan Stopper

### Abstinence Programs A Bust

#### Impacts of Four Title V, Section 510 Abstinence Education Programs

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., April 2007.

<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/impactabstinence.pdf>

#### Why the Left is Attacking Abstinence Programs

Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse, Beverly LaHaye Institute, May 2, 2007.

<http://www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=12888&department=BLI&categoryid=reports>

A recent government-sponsored study won the attention of Janice Shaw Crouse, policy director of Concerned Women for America's Beverly LaHaye Institute, since it decisively shows that abstinence-only education "had no overall impact on teen sexual activity."

Mathematica Policy Research evaluated four programs for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and found that regardless of the children's age and socioeconomic status, program intensity, and availability of other sex education services, the programs were a bust.

For the study, youth were randomly assigned either to the program group—their school's abstinence program—or to the control group, which did not participate in any abstinence program. Following up on both groups four to six years later, researchers found "no differences in rates of unprotected sex" between the groups, and striking similarities in the median age of first sexual intercourse, and number of sexual partners. They found the programs are effective in building awareness of sexually transmitted diseases, although 25% of adolescents have an STD.

Although authorized and funded by Congress, Crouse dismisses the study as "based on flawed methodology" and an example of the Left's effort to push their own "sex-is-no-big-deal" and "sex-without-consequences" agendas by undermining the programs. With a bit of "flawed methodology" of her own, Crouse overlooks the possibility of any "intervening variables" in arguing that the abstinence programs must work because teen sexual activity and teen birthrates have dropped since the programs won federal support ten years ago—now to the tune of \$87.5 million a year.

—Michelle Iorio

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# Eyes RIGHT

## SATANIC IMMIGRANTS

The “best of the best” of the Republican Party. That is how Lt. Governor Gary Hebert described the Utah County Republicans at their convention in April, but the honchos in GOP headquarters in Washington may not agree. First the local Republicans discussed internal corruption and the pesky protests of a local Dick Cheney appearance. Then they moved on to the grand finale: the Satanic nature of illegal immigration.

A party member introduced a resolution stating that, “Satan’s minions want to eliminate national borders and do away with sovereignty.” Legislator Don Larson brought himself to tears discussing the “illegal aliens” plot to “destroy Christian America.” Not everyone listening was on board, it seems, since some of them refused to give their name to the newspaper reporter covering the event.

Due to low attendance, no official action could be taken on the issue. However, one Senator fretted that “liberal media” would use the debate to “give negative attention to the Republican Party.” He may be right.

*Source: Caleb Warnock, “Convention Ends with Satan and Immigrants,” Daily Herald (Provo, Utah), April 29th, 2007.  
<http://www.heraldextra.com/content/view/220065/4>*

## SLAVES HAD IT GOOD

A New York psychotherapist with a penchant for revisionist history has created something of a controversy for NARTH, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, a notorious anti-gay group. The Southern Poverty Law Center’s (SPLC) Intelligence Project News reports that Gerald Schoenewolf peddled some hard-to-believe historical truths while ranting about political correctness on NARTH’s website in his “Gay Rights and Political Correctness: a

Brief History.” For example, did you know that, “At present, the Gay Rights Movement has taken over nearly all professional organizations not only in America but also in the United Nations and throughout the world”? Or, “The Civil Rights Movement...began in the 1850s and was one of the causes of the Civil War.”

But his most egregious statement was about Africa and slaves. “It could be pointed out...that Africa at the time of slavery was still primarily a jungle, as yet uncivilized or industrialized. Life there was savage, as savage as the jungle for most people.... Those brought to Europe, South America, America, and other countries were in many ways better off than they have been in Africa.” This attracted protests from the National Black Justice Coalition.

According to Brentin Mock at SPLC, these over-the-top comments were too much even for some NARTH supporters who resigned in protest. The Schoenewolf article has since been removed from NARTH’s website but is available on request from PRA.

*Source: Brentin Mock, “One More Enemy: Essay by Promoter of ‘Ex-gay’ Movement Sparks Racist Charges,” Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report, Winter 2007. <http://www.splcenter.org/intell/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=717>*

## TOM CLANCY AS AN EXPERT WITNESS

In February, the Montana Shooting Sports Association filed suit to gag the state’s Fish, Wildlife and Parks employees from testifying about policies in their bailiwick. Far

from being expert witnesses, the group says they are violators of the state’s ban on staff influence on political bodies. The novelist Tom Clancy, on the other hand, is the kind of expert witness that passes muster with Sports Association’s president Gary Marbut. He is quoted in a press release as saying:

We are angry that FWP employees continue breaking the law, employees who think they are above the law. FWP has been warned repeatedly that their personnel are in violation of the law. Tom Clancy says there is a name for people who break the law, including government employees—criminals. (Clear and Present Danger, page 432)

Thanks for that citation, Gary.

(And thanks to Montana Human Rights Network Policy Director Travis McAdam for this priceless tidbit.)

*Source: Montana Shooting Sports Association News Release, February 1, 2007.*

## YOU’RE A MONKEY TOO

In a recent subscriber pitch, the *National Review* could have used some of retired editor William F. Buckley’s famed wry humor and conservative insight. “The establishment media write about conservatives as if we were rare specimens under their microscope. We’ve turned the tables on them. We look at them as if looking at, well, monkeys in the zoo. It’s rather a lot of fun!”

*Source: May 2007 direct mail for National Review.*

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