

# The Public Eye

A PUBLICATION OF POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES FALL 2002 • Volume XVI, No. 3

## The Right Family Values

### The Christian Right's "Defense of Marriage:" Democratic Rhetoric, Antidemocratic Politics

By R. Claire Snyder

#### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The United States was founded as a "liberal democracy," in which a secular government acts to protect the civil rights and liberties of individuals rather than imposing a particular vision of the "good life" on its citizens. Equality before the law constitutes one of the most fundamental principles of liberal democracy, as does freedom from State-imposed religion. These principles, enshrined in our founding documents, have become an almost universally accepted norm in U.S. society today.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the Christian Right is currently mobilizing its supporters across the country to undermine these basic principles, appealing to popular prejudice against an unpopular minority, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in a change from their previously virulent homophobic language, right-wing forces are increasingly masking their antidemocratic and un-American agenda using democratic rhetoric. While populist appeals constitute a mainstay of the Right,<sup>4</sup> conservative thinkers have recently entered into ongoing conversations about "civil society"—the realm in which citizens act together to achieve common goals—generated by both "democratic theorists" within academia and ordinary citizens concerned about civic life, pushing that agenda far to the right. While the Christian Right claims to speak for the "moral majority" of U.S. citizens, they actually support policies that most Ameri-

cans oppose. While conservative Americans are free to practice their beliefs and live their personal lives however they choose, the government of the United States cannot legitimately let those beliefs violate the human rights of others in society. Similarly, it cannot generate public policy supporting a particular religious worldview or deny legal equality to certain groups of citizens.

#### Liberal Democracy or Christian Nation?

Liberal political theory constitutes the most important founding tradition of American democracy.<sup>5</sup> Both social welfare Democrats and neoliberal Republicans<sup>6</sup> (see sidebar page 4) endorse its basic principles—individual freedom, religious liberty, equal rights, constitutional government and impartial laws—although they interpret these concepts in different ways.<sup>7</sup> According to the liberal founding myth of "social contract," self-interested individuals left the state of nature in order to better secure their natural rights and liberties. Consequently, they established a constitutional government of impartial laws that would protect all citizens equally.<sup>8</sup> The Declaration of Independence states the basic values of liberal political theory—"all men are created equal and . . . are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"—while the U.S. Constitution created a secular government that would not discriminate against those who do not practice the dominant religion or who espouse

unpopular beliefs.

Despite the First Amendment's prohibition against the establishment of religion by government, Christian conservatives and their supporters often insist that America is really a "Christian nation." They argue that the American founders believed that democratic political institutions would only work if grounded in religious mores within civil society, emphasizing a comment made by John Adams: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."<sup>9</sup> William Bennett has contributed greatly to this right-wing project of revisionist historiography with the publication of *Our Sacred Honor: Words of Advice from the Founders*, a volume that catalogues stories, letters, poems, and speeches that emphasize the religious beliefs that animated many in the founding generation (among other things).<sup>10</sup> The Christian Right hopes that once the religious beliefs of the American Founders are established, a theory of constitutional interpretation that privileges "original intent" will authorize the imposition of Christian moral precepts on U.S. society at large.<sup>11</sup>

While the relationship between religion and democracy in the U.S. context is

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# Guest Commentary

By Sylvia Rhue, Ph.D.

In the United States, we have two parallel universes. One is the secular State established by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The other is religion, the Church, and the thrust to make the United States a Christian nation.

The Christian Right works on the front lines and behind the scenes to deny basic rights to women, LGBT people, and people of color. Their agenda is clear: to impose their particular religious worldview on every U.S. citizen and to have that worldview codified into the law.

In their never-ending crusade against women, LGBT people, and people of color, they are fundamentally and inextricably antidemocratic. They manipulate religious texts and distort secular texts to achieve their goals of patriarchal control of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness according to their terms, their definitions, their proscriptions and their limitations.

In his book, *Stealing Jesus*, author Bruce Bawer addresses the danger that the Christian Right poses to a democratic society: “In America right now, millions of children are taught by their legalistic Christian parents to revere a God of wrath and take a sanguine view of human suffering. They are taught to view their fellow Americans not as having been ‘created equal,’ as the Declaration of Independence would have it, but as being saved or unsaved, children of God or creatures of Satan; they are taught not to respect those most different from themselves, but to regard them as the enemy, to resist their influence, and to seek to restrict their rights. This is not only morally offensive, it’s socially dangerous—and it represents, for obvious reasons, a very real menace to democratic civil society.”

As progressive people of faith we actively oppose the manipulation of religion to promote exclusion and inequality. Equal Partners in Faith daily challenges the ‘very real menace’ to democracy and to our children posed by the Religious Right that R. Claire Snyder and Sean Cahill elaborate in this issue of *The Public Eye*.

*Sylvia Rhue is director of Equal Partners in Faith, a multiracial national network of religious leaders and people of faith committed to equality and diversity.*

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Hird Graphic Design

### Printing

Red Sun Press

### Mailing

Walnut Street Center



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Please make checks payable to Political Research Associates, 1310 Broadway, Suite 201, Somerville, Massachusetts 02144-1731. 617.666.5300 fax: 617.666.6622

PRA is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. © Political Research Associates, 2002.

Website: [www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org)

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a complicated one, the fact remains that the Founding generation *intentionally* took the radical and far-reaching step of constructing a secular government, constitutionally required to remain neutral toward religion. As Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore rightly stress, “God is nowhere to be found in the Constitution, which also has nothing to say about the social value of Christian belief or about the importance of religion for a moral public life.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed the fact that the U.S. constitution institutionalized a secular State was quite controversial at the same time as it was revolutionary. While conservatives are certainly correct in pointing out that the Bill of Rights protected states’ rights not individual rights, leaving the states free to establish religion, in fact only five states actually permitted the establishment of religion.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the conservative attempt to redefine America as a Christian nation completely ignores the fact that this country was remarkable precisely for its intentionally secular Constitution.

### Lesbian/Gay Civil Rights and the Logic of Liberalism

In principle, the Bill of Rights has protected individual rights from the tyranny of state governments and majoritarianism ever since ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment after the Civil War. This important amendment extended the liberal principle of legal equality by mandating “equal protection” of the laws for all U.S. citizens. While never fully actualized in practice, the principle of legal equality has been successfully used to justify progressive change. African Americans utilized this principle during the Civil Rights Movement in their struggle to end segregation. While the Right violently opposed legal equality at the time, contemporary conservatives have largely accepted the principle of colorblind law. However, colorblindness in law underscores the New Right’s “new racism,” wherein *de jure* legal equality is used to challenge affirmative action and other remedial measures that seek to address

institutional racism.<sup>14</sup>

The struggle for genderblind law has also been largely successful. Although feminists lost the battle for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) during the 1970s, since that time the principle of legal equality for women has been largely implemented through the Courts,<sup>15</sup> which are charged with following the logic of liberalism as they apply the principles of the Constitution to new areas. While historical custom and reactionary political agen-

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das have resulted in some unfortunate constitutional rulings, overall the level of legal equality within U.S. society has increased over time.

A consistent application of the philosophical principles of liberalism justifies same-sex marriage: A secular State committed to legal equality cannot legitimately deny *civil marriage* with all its benefits to particular citizens on the basis of gender or sexual orientation. To do so would be to violate the basic principles of the United States as a liberal democracy. While I would argue that the Christian Right is losing its battle to prevent the extension of civil rights to lesbians and gay men, there is no

guarantee that politically-appointed judges will rule in a principled way. Societal attitudes are changing. Fifty-eight percent of first year college students now “think gay and lesbian couples should have the right to ‘equal marital status,’ i.e., civil marriage”—including “half” who identify as “middle-of-the-road” or “conservative”<sup>16</sup>—and the Courts are slowly beginning to recognize the underlying logic of liberalism as well.<sup>17</sup>

### The Right-wing Attack on Liberal Democracy

Despite the compelling logic of philosophical liberalism, the U.S. Right has actively opposed the extension of legal equality in every instance. The Old Right was explicitly racist and violently fought to stop the extension of civil rights to African Americans. By 1965, however, Gallup polls “showed that 52 percent of Americans identified civil rights as the ‘most important problem’ confronting the nation, and an astonishing 75 percent of respondents favored federal voting rights legislation.”<sup>18</sup> With explicit racism on the decline, right-wing leaders began developing a more marketable message, “mainstreaming the ideological positions of the Old Right and developing winnable policies” that “highlighted a protest theme” against a wide range of cultural changes inaugurated by the new social movements of the 1960s.<sup>19</sup> This “New Right” successfully created a coalition between cultural conservatives, including Christian fundamentalists, and antigovernment, fiscal conservatives (*aka* neoliberals).

Opposition to women’s equality was one of the causes the New Right needed to consolidate its base. Anti-feminism “provided a link with fundamentalist churches,” focused “the reaction against the changes in child rearing, sexual behavior, divorce, and the use of drugs that had taken place in the 1960s and 1970s,” and “mobilized a group, traditional homemakers, that had lost status over the two previous decades and was feeling the psychological effects of

## Neoliberalism: Two Views.

“Neo-liberalism is a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last 25 years or so. Although the word is rarely heard in the United States, you can clearly see the effects of neo-liberalism here as the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer.

‘Liberalism’ can refer to political, economic, or even religious ideas. In the U.S. political liberalism has been a strategy to prevent social conflict. It is presented to poor and working people as progressive compared to conservative or Rightwing. Economic liberalism is different. Conservative politicians who say they hate ‘liberals’—meaning the political type—have no real problem with economic liberalism, including neo-liberalism.

‘Neo’ means we are talking about a new kind of liberalism. So what was the old kind? The liberal school of economics became famous in Europe when Adam Smith, an English economist, published a book in 1776 called *THE WEALTH OF NATIONS*. He and others advocated the abolition of government intervention in economic matters. No restrictions on manufacturing, no barriers to commerce, no tariffs, he said; free trade was the best way for a nation’s economy to develop. Such ideas were ‘liberal’ in the sense of no controls. This application of individualism encouraged ‘free’ enterprise, ‘free’ competition—which came to mean, free for the capitalists to make huge profits as they wished.

Economic liberalism prevailed in the United States through the 1800s and early 1900s. Then the Great Depression of the 1930s led an economist named John Maynard Keynes to a theory that challenged liberalism as the best policy for capitalists. He said, in essence, that full employment is necessary for capitalism to grow and it can be achieved only if governments and central banks intervene to increase employment. These ideas had much influence on President Roosevelt’s New Deal—which did improve life for many people. The belief that government should advance the common good became widely accepted.

But the capitalist crisis over the last 25 years, with its shrinking profit rates, inspired the corporate elite to revive economic liberalism. That’s what makes it ‘neo’ or new. Now, with the rapid globalization of the capitalist economy, we are seeing neo-liberalism on a global scale.

Around the world, neo-liberalism has been imposed by powerful financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. The first clear example of neo-liberalism at work came in Chile (with thanks to University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman), after the CIA-supported coup against the popularly elected Allende regime in 1973. Other countries followed, with some of the worst effects in Mexico where wages declined 40 to 50% in the first year of NAFTA while the cost of living rose by 80%. Over 20,000 small and medium businesses have failed and more than 1,000 state-owned enterprises have been privatized in Mexico. As one scholar said, ‘Neoliberalism means the neo-colonization of Latin America.’

In the United States neo-liberalism is destroying welfare programs; attacking the rights of labor (including all immigrant workers); and cutting social programs. The Republican ‘Contract’ on America is pure neo-liberalism. Its supporters are working hard to deny protection to children, youth, women, the planet itself—and trying to trick us into acceptance by saying this will ‘get government off my back.’ The beneficiaries of neo-liberalism are a minority of the world’s people. For the vast majority it brings even more suffering than before: suffering without the small, hard-won gains of the last 60 years, suffering without end.”

*Source: “What is Neoliberalism? A Brief Definition for Activists.” By Elizabeth Martinez and Arnoldo Garcia, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. See <http://www.corpwatch.org/issues/PID.jsp?articleid=376>*

“Neoliberalism is a philosophy in which the existence and operation of a market are valued in themselves, separately from any previous relationship with the production of goods and services, and without any attempt to justify them in terms of their effect on the production of goods and services; and where the operation of a market or market-like structure is seen as an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide for all human action, and substituting for all previously existing ethical beliefs.”

*Source: “Neoliberalism: what it’s not.” By Paul Treanor. See <http://web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/neoliberalism.html>*

the loss.”<sup>20</sup> The conservative mobilization against feminism helped solidify the New Right during the 1970s and played a “very important” role in its success, the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and the rightward shift in U.S. politics.<sup>21</sup>

Feminism and the lesbian/gay civil rights movement are linked theoretically through the political philosophy of liberalism and politically through common struggle. While unprincipled liberals sometimes try to deny this connection out of political expediency, the Right quickly recognized the logic of liberalism that provided the potential for unity between women and LGBT individuals, and used it to their advantage. For example, Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum argued, “militant homosexuals from all over America have made the ERA issue a hot priority. Why? To be able finally to get homosexual marriage licenses, to adopt children and raise them to emulate their homosexual ‘parents,’ and to obtain pension and medical benefits for odd-couple ‘spouses.’ . . . Vote *NO on 6!* The Pro-Gay E.R.A.”<sup>22</sup> In its rise to power, the New Right successfully manipulated homophobia to increase opposition to gender equality as well as explicitly condemning all attempts to accord lesbians and gay men the equal protection of the law.

## Religious Particularism and the Attack on the First Amendment

Christian Right organizations claim to be speaking for the American people when they oppose legal equality for lesbians and gay men, but they are actually trying to impose their own particular religious worldview on U.S. society in direct violation of the separation of Church and State. Despite their use of democratic rhetoric, the opposition of right-wing Christians to same-sex marriage is contingent upon their particular religious worldview, which defines marriage as a sacred religious institution and homosexuality as a sin. According to the Family Research Council (FRC) marriage is “the *work of heaven and every major religion* and culture throughout world history.”<sup>23</sup> Concerned Women for America

(CWA) proclaims marriage “*a covenant established by God* wherein one man and one woman, united for life, are licensed by the state for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family.”<sup>24</sup> For Focus on the Family (FOF), “marriage is a *sacred union, ordained by God* to be a life-long, sexually exclusive relationship between one man and one woman.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed because of this religious worldview, all three groups have made opposition to same-sex marriage a centerpiece of their political agenda.<sup>26</sup>

The Christian Right’s vision of heterosexual marriage directly relates to its understanding of gender difference, which it bases on its particular interpretation of the Bible. To justify male dominance, the Christian Right privileges the *second* version of the creation story in Genesis, in which God created Eve out of Adam’s rib to be his “helper” and declared that the man and his wife would become “one flesh” (Genesis 2: 18-24), rather than on the original story in which “God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; *male and female He created them*” (Genesis 1:26-27, emphasis added).<sup>27</sup> Additionally, instead of reading the original version as establishing gender equality at the source, the Christian Right interprets it to mean “God’s purpose for man was that there should be two sexes, male and female. Every person is either a ‘he’ or a ‘she.’ God did not divide mankind into three or four or five sexes.”<sup>28</sup> Right-wing Christians bolster their selective reading of the “Old Testament” with a smattering of “New Testament” verses, such as “man was not made from woman, but woman from man” (1 Cor. 11:8), woman is the “weaker vessel” (1 Peter 3:7), the “husband is the head of the wife” (1Cor. 11:4; Eph. 5:23), and man is “joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh” (Eph. 5:31-32).<sup>29</sup>

The Christian Right’s selectively literalist interpretation of the Bible not only emphasizes the subordination of women to men but also condemns homosexuality as a sin. They interpret God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16 – 19:29) as punishment for homosexuality. Other religious scholars argue

that the city was destroyed for the sin of inhospitality.<sup>30</sup> Right-wing Christians stress the sentences in Leviticus that proclaim “do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence” (Leviticus 18:22) and “if a man lies with a male as one

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lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death” (Leviticus 20:13), completely ignoring the fact that the Ten Commandments did not include a prohibition on homosexuality.

They also disregard the wide array of other practices prohibited in Leviticus,

such as eating pork, touching a football made of pigskin (Lev. 11:7-8), wearing cotton/poly blends (Lev. 19:19), and trimming the hair on the side of the face (Lev. 19:27).<sup>31</sup> For example, “exgay” Stephen Bennett stresses the use of the term “abomination” in Leviticus 18:22.<sup>32</sup> He asks:

What does God think about homosexuality? The verse says, “It is an abomination!” This means that it is detestable, loathsome, repulsive and heinous. It is one of the strongest words to describe God’s hatred of something. It is a stench in God’s nostrils like the smell of vomit! It is something that is disgusting, nauseating, revolting and sickening to God. The reason it is an abomination is that it is so contrary to what God has designed and established for the good of mankind.<sup>33</sup>

What Bennett fails to mention is that the Bible also refers to eating shellfish as an “abomination” (Lev. 11:10).<sup>34</sup>

Not all religious people share the Christian Right’s controversial interpretations of the above passages or its definition of marriage. For example, Reform Judaism not only supports civil marriage for gays and lesbians but also allows for religious unions.<sup>35</sup> For some Muslims and orthodox Mormons polygamy is within the norms of marriage. Even within Christianity, no consensus exists on the question of same-sex marriage. In fact, many denominations are currently divided. The Episcopal Church has recently addressed their own division by voting “to allow local churches to make their own determination about whether to offer services to sanctify gay and lesbian marriages, partnerships, or unions.”<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the diversity of beliefs within a religiously pluralistic society such as the United States, the Christian Right group Alliance for Marriage has introduced a Federal Marriage Amendment that declares, “Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman.”<sup>37</sup> Clearly this Amendment asks the federal government to establish *one particular religious defini-*

*tion of marriage* as the law of the land, thus violating the separation of Church and State.<sup>38</sup> In a liberal society, conservative Christian churches certainly have the religious liberty to define marriage for their parishioners in any way they see fit. However, when the Christian Right asks the U.S. government and the governments of the states to restrict the right to civil marriage because of their particular interpretation of revealed religion, they violate the separation of Church and State mandated by the First Amendment.

### Same-Sex Marriage: An Attack on Women?

The Christian Right seeks to re-consolidate male dominance and reestablish the patriarchal family as the dominant family form in the United States. When they make the obviously illogical claim that allowing lesbians and gays to marry would “undermine marriage” and destroy the family,<sup>39</sup> they really mean that same-sex marriage would undermine the *traditional patriarchal institution of marriage and family* that they want to impose on the American people. Because no evidence exists that same-sex couples are less functional than heterosexual ones, or that their children suffer any negative consequences, allowing same-sex couples to marry and have children would clearly undermine the myth that the patriarchal heterosexual family is the superior family form.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, Christian Right activists repeatedly assert that children need both a traditionally masculine father and a traditionally feminine mother in order to develop properly. As James Dobson puts it, “any uncertainty, any ambiguity in [sex-role] assignment must be seen as damaging not only to our sons and daughters but also to the long-term stability of society itself.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, conservatives must reject the “unisex” idea advocated by “the feminists and homosexual activists.”<sup>42</sup> In this perspective, the mother cannot adequately fulfill the role of the father (or vice versa), and so same-sex parenting cannot work successfully.

While Dobson and the burgeoning “fatherhood movement” stress the harm the feminist and the lesbian/gay movements have supposedly done to men and boys, the Right also insists that these movements for gender equality harm women as well.<sup>43</sup> CWA, which claims to be the largest women’s group in the country, blames feminism—in particular its support for legal equality, reproductive freedom, sexual liberation, and no-fault divorce—for

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Christian Right “movement propaganda often portrayed gay men, like feminists, as a wealthy, privileged elite misusing their power to impose their immoral agenda on society.” Even though “contrary to myth, gay men actually earned between 10 and 26 percent less income than did heterosexual men.”

And lesbians and other sexual minorities often earn far less as a group.

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eroding the “protections” supposedly provided women by traditional marriage and family law, making it easier for men to renounce their familial responsibilities, and causing the feminization of poverty. In their view the LGBT Movement continues these allegedly destructive trends by further undermining traditional gender roles, advocating diverse family forms, and reinforcing the disconnection between sexual pleasure and reproduction.

With the important role played by women in the traditional family already

undermined by feminism, the Right sees the specter of same-sex marriage as threatening to render women completely useless. According to Alliance for Marriage supporter William Mattox and his wife—who “sympathize with homosexuals” and “are not ‘gay-bashers’”—“in the same way that polygamy teaches that women are inferior to men, [male] ‘gay marriage’ implicitly teaches that women are superfluous to men, that women make no unique and irreplaceable contribution to family life. Indeed, [male] ‘gay marriage’ teaches that the most basic unit of human society—marriage—does not need a woman to be complete.”<sup>44</sup>

In fact, conservatives often seem to fear that if given the option, men might choose not to engage in heterosexuality at all. According to antigay activist Dr. Paul Cameron, “the evidence is that men do a better job on men, and women on women, if all you are looking for is orgasm.” If you want “the most satisfying orgasm you can get,” he tells people, “then homosexuality seems too powerful to resist. . . . It’s pure sexuality. It’s almost like pure heroin. It’s such a rush.” In opposition, “marital sex tends toward the boring” and generally “doesn’t deliver the kind of sheer sexual pleasure that homosexual sex does.”<sup>45</sup> Although the American Psychological Association expelled Cameron for ethics violations in 1983, he is still touted as an “expert” on homosexuality by the Right.<sup>46</sup> In light of comments such as Cameron’s, it would be understandable if right-wing women feel anxious about their position in this male-dominated society.

Nevertheless, despite rhetoric to the contrary, same-sex marriage does not undermine the position of women. In fact, according to records in Vermont, two-thirds of the applicants for civil unions were women.<sup>47</sup> Rather than undermining right-wing arguments, however, this empirical counter-evidence simply fuels hyperbolic claims that men are becoming irrelevant.<sup>48</sup>

### Right-wing Populism

Assuming a populist pose, the Christian Right claims to speak for the interests of ordinary people who are supposedly being attacked by an elite “homosexual lobby.” This rhetorical strategy worked well during the 1970s when opponents of the ERA portrayed feminism as advancing the interests of elite career women at the expense of housewives and working-class women.<sup>49</sup> That is to say, as opposed to feminist women who wanted the right to compete equally with men, many antifeminist women did not have the educational level or job skills that would allow them to pursue satisfying careers if forced to work outside the home.<sup>50</sup> Today, the Right attempts to condemn the LGBT Movement for civil rights as elitist. As Chip Berlet and Matthew Lyons have argued, Christian Right “movement propaganda often portrayed gay men, like feminists, as a wealthy, privileged elite misusing their power to impose their

immoral agenda on society.” Even though “contrary to myth, gay men actually earned between 10 and 26 percent less income than did heterosexual men.”<sup>51</sup> And lesbians and other sexual minorities often earn far less as a group.

Although advancing an extremist agenda not supported by the majority of the American people, the Christian Right frames its antidemocratic opposition to legal equality in populist terms.<sup>52</sup> For example, the Alliance for Marriage claims “the Federal Marriage Amendment is designed to *protect both marriage and democracy* in the United States by preserving the legal status of marriage *from court redefinition*. By *returning the debate over marriage to the American people*, the Federal Marriage Amendment will allow Americans to pass on to their children and grandchildren the legal road map for marriage and the family.”<sup>53</sup> Likewise, Robert Bork, a vocal advocate of states’ rights, sup-

ports the Amendment to protect the people from the “liberal activist courts [that] are the real problem.” While the Amendment ensures that “no legislature may confer the name of marriage on same-sex unions,” it leaves “the question of arrangements less than marriage... where it should be, *to the determination of the people through the democratic process*.”<sup>54</sup>

But while the Christian Right uses the rhetoric of “states’ rights” to justify their attack on the constitutional authority of the Courts, they stand opposed to federalism whenever it advances the “homosexual agenda.” For example, Dick Cheney has been lambasted for his consistent support for state sovereignty during the 2000 Vice Presidential debates. That is to say, when news correspondent Bernard Shaw asked him about same-sex marriage, Cheney responded as follows:

This is a tough one, Bernie. The fact of the matter is we live in a free



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society, and freedom means freedom for everybody. We don't get to choose, and shouldn't be able to choose and say, "You get to live free, but you don't." And I think that means that people should be free to enter into any kind of relationship they want to enter into. It's really no one else's business in terms of trying to regulate or prohibit behavior in that regard.

The next step, then, of course, is the question you ask of whether or not there ought to be some kind of official sanction, if you will, of the relationship, or if these relationships should be treated the same way a conventional marriage is. That's a tougher problem. That's not a slam-dunk. I think the fact of the matter, of course, is that matter is regulated by the states. I think different states are likely to come to different conclusions, and that's appropriate. I don't think there should necessarily be a federal policy in this area.

While Cheney clearly reasoned from the philosophical principles that underlie the neoliberal wing of the Republican Party, Christian Right extremists portray Cheney's response as unprincipled. For example, CWA spokesmen argue "Cheney's answer troubled family advocates, but drew little opposition from Republicans, who were desperate to end Democratic control of the White House and feared exposing Cheney's softness on the homosexual issue."<sup>55</sup> More ludicrously, they claim his answer reveals that the Bush Administration is really advancing a prohomosexual agenda!<sup>56</sup> When in fact, allowing the states to individually determine such laws, as Cheney suggests, is more likely to result in discrimination against LGBT people.

The Christian Right spokespeople emphasize the sovereignty of state legislatures only when it serves their interests. Otherwise they oppose the decisions of the people's elected representatives—often in the name of the people. For example, Dobson argues that:

*the California Legislature has been*

*captured, almost without opposition, by those who hold a gay and lesbian philosophy and by a governor—Gray Davis—who has signed into law a host of pro-homosexual bills revolutionizing that state . . . The result is a tsunami, a tidal wave, of anti-family and immoral legislation that is rapidly forcing the citizens of California to accept and live by an alien system of values that would never be approved if put to the voters."<sup>57</sup>*

Despite the pseudo-democratic rhetoric, the American people do not actually support the extremist antiliberal agenda of the Christian Right. In fact, a June 2002 national study showed that, "a clear majority of Americans surveyed . . . expressed support for basic partnership rights for same-sex couples, including joint property rights [60%], estate inheritance laws [59%], emergency health care authority [66%] and hospital visitation rights [71%]."<sup>58</sup> In addition, "a plurality of individuals surveyed (48%) also supports Social Security survivor benefits for same-sex couples, with 34% opposed and 18% undecided."<sup>59</sup>

### "Seedbeds of Virtue": The Role of the Family in Renewing America

Most insidiously of all, Christian Right sympathizers have recently joined the wide array of voices from across the political spectrum calling for *the renewal of American democracy*. Claiming to speak for ordinary people, Don Eberly, a founder of the National Fatherhood Initiative, insists that what U.S. citizens want differs markedly from what scholars in the civic renewal movement say they want. That is, while academics like Benjamin R. Barber advocate civic renewal, what ordinary people really want, according to Eberly, is *moral renewal*, as articulated by conservative politicians like William Bennett.<sup>60</sup> As Eberly argues,

Civil society intellectuals . . . frequently go overboard in attempting to narrow the boundaries of debate around civic issues. I recently shared a platform with Benjamin Barber, a

noted scholar from this camp, who stated emphatically, "What we don't need is moral character, but civic character. Our aim is democratic citizens; not the moral man." Barber added, "A society does not need moral truths; we need to live together."<sup>61</sup>

Notice that he sought to equate moral truths with an implied threat of intolerance or moral majoritarianism. Barber's remarks are something of a bellwether of the philosophical impoverishment that still guides this debate in many quarters. . . . What is sufficient for a democracy, they say, is civic character, or, in other words, a quickness to join. This is essentially civic secularism, and it largely misses the point.

According to Eberly, "if the public today has any preference for the basis of a reevaluation of American society, it points decidedly in the direction of moral values."<sup>62</sup>

To justify this claim, Eberly draws on a study by Daniel Yankelovich (a member of the conservative Council on Civil Society) that reports that 87% of the public believes that "something is fundamentally wrong with America's moral condition," 67% think that America is undergoing a long-term moral decline, and 59% (versus 27%) believe that "lack of morality" is a bigger problem than "lack of economic opportunity." Eberly adds that "at no point has a national poll identified deep public worries over a phenomenon one might term 'civic disengagement.'" Again sounding the populist note, he then tells an anecdote about "plain people" and "local folks" like him who would "hoot at the thought that we Americans lack civic commitment. What really leaves them speechless is the sense of powerlessness they feel as they watch the bottom fall out of our nation's moral life"—which Eberly repeatedly illustrates with references to "unmarried mothers" and "family collapse."<sup>63</sup>

If moral renewal is the problem, then religion is the solution. According to Eberly, religion needs to play a key role in civil



society as “both a legitimate wellspring of personal values and as perhaps the richest source of renewed social capital [social trust] in communities.”<sup>64</sup> While some like to blame “governmental malfeasance and feckless politicians” for the decline of social trust, Eberly believes that “a more likely source of our cynicism is the rupture of our primary relationships within the family, or our marriages, and our fellowship with our fathers.”<sup>65</sup> Appealing to the same narrow stereotypes about gender invoked by the Christian Right, Eberly claims that “it is fathers who cultivate a spirit of reasonableness and compromise, a capacity to trust and be trustworthy, a willingness to be helpful and empathetic, and a capacity to act with self-restraint and respect toward others.”<sup>66</sup> Mothers merely play a “biologically determined role.”<sup>67</sup> “Fathering, unlike mothering, . . . is heavily influenced by the wider culture.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, he concludes, “there can be no healthy democracy without dads.”<sup>69</sup> Here his argument for civil society dovetails with his advocacy of neopatriarchy within the fatherhood movement.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly supportive of the New Right coalition, Eberly links his version of civil society not only to male dominance, but also to the neoliberal opposition to government. That is, Eberly *sees moral renewal within civil society as a panacea that will eliminate the need for government*: “Most will rejoice to know that a vast majority of Americans now acknowledge that government, and especially the central government, may never again be embraced as the engine that drives American progress.”<sup>71</sup> While there may be a role for the State in the area of “crime and safety,” the government cannot do anything positive to “eliminate poverty, reduce unemployment, [or] achieve racial justice.”<sup>72</sup> Thus, unlike progressive advocates of civil society, Eberly hopes that “civic recovery” will not “temper the public’s recent repudiation of government activism by splicing in an emphasis on civic localism.”<sup>73</sup>

Eberly’s argument finds support in a growing groundswell of conservative scholarly voices emphasizing the importance of the family as a “seedbed of virtue” within

liberal democracy. In the introduction to *Seedbeds of Virtue: Sources of Competence, Character, and Citizenship in American Society*,<sup>74</sup> Harvard University law professor Mary Ann Glendon argues that U.S. democracy

requires (as the authors of *The Federalist Papers* put it) a higher degree of virtue in its citizens than any other form of government. . . . The American version of the democratic experiment leaves it primarily up to families, local governments, schools, religious and workplace associations, and a host of other voluntary groups

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The Christian Right  
spokespeople emphasize  
the sovereignty of state  
legislatures only when it  
serves their interests.  
Otherwise they oppose  
the decisions of the  
people’s elected representa-  
tives—often in the  
name of the people.

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to teach and transmit republican virtues and skills from one generation to the next.

Like others on the Christian Right, Glendon sees the family as the most important institution in society: “First and foremost among these ‘seedbeds of virtue’ is the family. Thus, impairment of the family’s capacity to develop in its members the qualities of self-restraint, respect for others, and sturdy independence of mind cannot help but impair the prospects for a regime of ordered liberty.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, democratic self-government depends upon a

stable family.

But if stable families play such an important role in democratic society, one has to wonder why Glendon and her collaborators vehemently oppose same-sex marriage, which some conservatives advocate precisely because it would act as a stabilizing influence on gay men.<sup>76</sup> While she does not mention the issue in *Seedbeds of Virtue*, the fact of the matter is that Glendon so strongly opposes same-sex unions that she worked with Robert Bork to draft the Federal Marriage Amendment, which would make it constitutional to violate the principle of legal equality and discriminate against an unpopular minority.<sup>77</sup> How can someone who invokes the importance of civic virtues, such as “deliberation, compromise, consensus-building, civility, reason-giving” and “tolerance” justify this?<sup>78</sup> Why does democracy require only heterosexual families?

Jean Bethke Elshtain, a well-known “democratic theorist” at the University of Chicago, concurs with Glendon’s political prescriptions. Elshtain pointedly embraces “a normative vision of the family—mothers, fathers, and children” and claims that this particular family form “is not only *not* at odds with democratic civil society but is in fact, now more than ever, a prerequisite for that society to function.”<sup>79</sup> Elshtain chaired the committee that published “A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths,” which says the number one priority for American democracy should be “to increase the likelihood that more children will grow up with their *two married parents*.”<sup>80</sup> And since she opposes same-sex marriage, this leaves no place for lesbians or gay men within democratic society.<sup>81</sup> Like Glendon and others, Elshtain never adequately explains why a fully functioning democracy requires heterosexual-only marriage. Indeed, these authors, like many others, *simply assert* the connection between traditional families and democratic self-government—and the causal relationship between “the breakdown of the family” and the decline of civil society<sup>82</sup>—*without actually arguing it*.<sup>83</sup>

What is it about the *traditional* family

that plays such an important role in socializing children? Is it the message of *conformity* communicated in a society that allows no diversity of family forms? Is it the lesson in female *subordination* taught by the wife's gracious submission to her husband's authority as the head of the household? Wade Horn, president of the National Fatherhood Initiative (and assistant secretary for family support in the Department of Health and Human Services in the George W. Bush Administration), emphasizes the importance of *obedience*, which, like conformity and subordination, is not usually considered a central virtue of the democratic citizen: "Well socialized children have learned to listen to and obey the directions of legitimate authority figures, such as parents and teachers; under-socialized children have not."<sup>84</sup>

James Dobson couldn't agree more. In *The New Dare To Discipline* he stresses that respect for authority must be instilled in young children in order to avoid teenage rebellion and ensure respect for traditional religious values. This message is best communicated, he believes, by spanking children with a switch or a paddle any time they show defiance or willfully disobey their parents. As he puts it, "a controlling but patient hand will eventually succeed in settling the little anarchist, but probably not until he is between three and four."<sup>85</sup> Dobson stresses that a spanking must be severe enough to make the child cry genuinely from pain rather than simply from anger or humiliation. While ostensibly condemning child abuse, Dobson praises the childrearing practices of his wife, who once "stung" their fifteen-month old daughter's "little legs" with a "switch" for disobeying an "order."<sup>86</sup> He also notes "there are those in the Western world who will not rest until the government interferes with parent-child relationships with all the force of law. It has already happened in Sweden."<sup>87</sup>

## Conclusion

In their fight against legal equality for lesbians and gay men, the Christian Right increasingly deploys democratic rhetoric to

mask its antidemocratic agenda. While right-wing Christians appeal to the religious assumptions, historical customs, social anxieties, and unexamined prejudices of many Americans, their overarching agenda actually undermines our democracy's most precious political principles, including the separation of Church and State, legal equality, and personal liberty. While liberal democracy has its limitations, its virtue is that it maximizes the freedom of all by allowing individuals to organize their personal lives as they see fit. While the government may respond to the will of its citizens by providing a default set of legal entanglements that make it easier for individuals to establish families (i.e., civil marriage), it may not legitimately deny equal protection of the laws to unpopular minorities or enshrine a particular religious definition of marriage as the law of the land. Consequently, the State should ensure equal access to civil marriage and leave religious marriage where it belongs—in the synagogues, churches, and mosques.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this article were adapted from R. Claire Snyder, "Neo-Patriarchy and the Anti-Homosexual Agenda," in Cynthia Burack and Jyl J. Josephson, eds., *Fundamental Differences: Feminists Talk Back to Social Conservatives* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> See Sean Cahill and Kenneth T. Jones, *Leaving Our Children Behind: Welfare Reform and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Community* (New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2001). See particularly sections on marriage, fatherhood, and abstinence initiatives.

<sup>4</sup> Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1955).

<sup>6</sup> Neoliberal refers to those who subscribe to the ideology of neoliberalism. See sidebar p.4.

<sup>7</sup> See Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, ed., C.B. MacPherson (Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1990).

<sup>9</sup> Cited in William Bennett, *Our Sacred Honor: Words of Advice from the Founders* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See for example Robert Bork, *The Tempting of America: The Political Seduction of the Law* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Isaac Kramnick & R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997), p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> See Amy Ansell, *New Right, New Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), and Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Jane Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986), p. 91.

<sup>16</sup> According to a recent survey of first-year college students by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), "a record high 58 percent 'think gay and lesbian couples should have the right to 'equal marital status,' i.e., civil marriage. . . . [S]ince only 30 percent of the students say they are either 'liberal' (27 percent) or 'far left' (3 percent), that means half of the support for gay civil marriage comes from students who say they are 'middle-of-the-road' or even 'conservative.' In other words, support for gay civil marriage is becoming the 'middle of the road' position, perhaps even picking up some small support among 'conservative' students who grasp the social benefits of stabilized relationships." Paul Varnell, "College Freshmen Support Gay Marriage," *Chicago Free Press*, January 30, 2002. <http://www.indegayforum.org/articles/varnell85.html> retrieved April 17, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> See *Baehr v. Lewin*, 852 P.2d 44 (Hawaii 1993) and *Stan Baker, et al. v. State of Vermont*, et al., 744 A.2d 864 (Vermont 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Maurice Isserman & Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 138.

<sup>19</sup> Jean V. Hardisty, *Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence From the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), p. 38.

<sup>20</sup> Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Hardisty, *Mobilizing Resentment*, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>23</sup> Fund-raising ad in favor of DOMA, paid for by the Family Research Council, included in FRC information packet, emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> Concerned Women for America, "Lawfully Wedded?" *Family Voice* (April 1996), emphasis added. [http://www.cwfa.org/library/family/1996-04\\_fv\\_marriage-gay.shtml](http://www.cwfa.org/library/family/1996-04_fv_marriage-gay.shtml) retrieved November 14, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> "Focus on the Family Position Statement on Same-Sex 'Marriage' and Civil Unions," *Citizen Link*, October 4, 2000, emphasis added. <http://www.family.org/cforum/research/papers/a0013151.html> retrieved July 22, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Hardisty, *Mobilizing Resentment*, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>27</sup> All "Old Testament" quotations are taken from *TANAKH: A New Translation of The Holy Scriptures*

According to the *Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985), currently considered the most accurate translation available. However, all quotations in this JPS translation are essentially the same as in the Revised Standard Version of the Christian Bible (unless otherwise noted).

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Bennett, "Homosexuality and the Bible: What Does God Say?" (Stephen Bennett Ministries, Huntington, CT, n.d.), p. 3. For an alternative view see Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all "New Testament" quotations are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Christian Bible.

<sup>30</sup> See John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (New York: Beacon Press, 1993), pp. 42-50.

<sup>31</sup> For a very funny letter that inspired this line of argument, see J. Kent Ashcraft, "an open letter to Dr. Laura," May 2000, originally posted on the Internet by anonymous. <http://www-users.cs.york.ac.uk/~susan/joke/laura.htm> retrieved July 22, 2002.

<sup>32</sup> While the RSV translation uses the term "abomination" in this passage, the JPS translation uses the term "abhorrence." While it is beyond my expertise at this time to determine whether "abhorrence" differs significantly from "abomination," it should be investigated.

<sup>33</sup> Bennett, "Homosexuality and the Bible," op. cit., pp. 14-15, emphasis in the original.

<sup>34</sup> Both the JPS and the RSV translations use the term "abomination" in reference to shellfish.

<sup>35</sup> Gustav Niebuhr, "Reform Rabbis Back Blessing Gay Unions," *New York Times*, March 30, 2000, p. 1A.

<sup>36</sup> Doug Ebeling, "Religions Mixed on GLBT Inclusion," Mountain Pride Media. [http://www.mountainpridemedia.org/sep2000/news07\\_religion.htm](http://www.mountainpridemedia.org/sep2000/news07_religion.htm) retrieved July 22, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> David Cray, "Coalition Wants Marriage Amendment," *Associated Press*, July 10, 2001. [marriage-owner@abacus.oxy.edu](mailto:marriage-owner@abacus.oxy.edu) retrieved July 7, 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Didi Herman argues that "anti-gay measures in the United States are, at their heart, orthodox Christian measures. Arguably, when they become legislation, the establishment clause is violated." Didi Herman, *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), p. 168.

<sup>39</sup> CWA, "History: 1978-2001." <http://cwfa.org/about/his> retrieved April 2, 2002.

<sup>40</sup> See Judith Stacey and Timothy J. Biblarz, "(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?" *American Sociological Review*, vol. 66, no. 2 (April 2001), pp. 159-183.

<sup>41</sup> James Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys: Practical Advice and Encouragement For Those Shaping the Next Generation of Men* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 16-17.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> For my views on the fatherhood movement, see Snyder, "Neo-Patriarchy and the Anti-Homosexual Agenda," op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> William Mattox Jr., "Gay Marriage Devalues Women," *USA Today*, August 21, 2001. <http://www.allianceformarriage.org/reports/fma/usatoday.htm> retrieved July 15, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Robert Dreyfuss, "The Holy War On Gays," *Rolling Stone*, March 18, 1999, p. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Hardisty, *Mobilizing Resentment*, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>47</sup> Associated Press, "Women In Vermont Form More Civil Unions," April 7, 2002. <http://www.telegram.com/news/inside/vtlesbians.html> retrieved April 7, 2002.

<sup>48</sup> See David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, *Power of the Positive Woman* (Berkeley Publishing Group, 1982).

<sup>50</sup> Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*, op. cit., pp. 105-107.

<sup>51</sup> Berlet and Lyons, *Right-wing Populism*, op. cit., pp. 236-237.

<sup>52</sup> Witeck-Combs Communications/Harris Interactive® study, available at [www.witeckcombs.com](http://www.witeckcombs.com)

<sup>53</sup> Press release by Alliance for Marriage, May 15, 2002, emphasis added. Likewise, they argue that, "The Federal Marriage Amendment is a reasonable response to the crisis for our democratic society created by those who would use the courts to overcome public opinion with respect to marriage. Gays and lesbians have a right to live as they choose. But they don't have a right to redefine marriage for our entire society." From Alliance for Marriage webpage, emphasis added. <http://www.allianceformarriage.org/reports/fma/fma.htm> retrieved July 16, 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Bork, "Stop Courts From Imposing Gay Marriage: Why we need a constitutional amendment," *Wall Street Journal*, August 7, 2001, emphasis added. <http://www.wsj.com> retrieved August 8, 2001.

<sup>55</sup> Quote from Robert Knight, Peter LaBarbera and Kenneth Ervin, II, "The Bush Administration's Republican Homosexual Agenda: The First 100 Days," May 31, 2001. <http://cultureandfamily.org/library/papers/22pb000.shtml> retrieved July 16, 2002. See also C&F Report Staff, "Ashcroft's Second in Command Speaks at Justice Dept. Gay Pride Celebration," *Culture & Family Report*, June 19, 2002. [http://cultureandfamily.org/report/2002-06-19/n\\_doj.shtml?print](http://cultureandfamily.org/report/2002-06-19/n_doj.shtml?print) retrieved July 18, 2002.

<sup>56</sup> Knight, et al., op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> "Dr. James C. Dobson Speaks Out Against Gay Marriage Bill," January 14, 2002. <http://www.family.org/welcome/press/a0019239.cfm> retrieved July 16, 2002.

<sup>58</sup> Witeck-Combs Communications/Harris Interactive® press release, "National Survey Shows Growing Support for Same Sex Partner Rights," July 11, 2002. Retrieved from [marriage@lists.qrd.org](mailto:marriage@lists.qrd.org) on July 12, 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Don Eberly, "Civic Renewal or Moral Renewal," *Policy Review* (September-October 1998), p. 5. <http://www.policyreview.com/sept98/renewal.html> retrieved May 15, 2001. All pages refer to online version. Eberly, served as deputy director for the Office of Public Liaison during the Reagan Administration, and more recently was named deputy director in George Bush's Office of Faith. He is a proponent of a form of "civil society," that reduces government by turning over the social safety net to faith-based organizations, corporate and community groups, and philanthropists. Eberly has written several books on the subject including, *America's Promise: Civil Society and the Renewal of American Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

<sup>61</sup> Here Barber refers to "A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths" (New York: Institute for American Values, 1998), a report of the Council on Civil Society, chaired by Jean Bethke Elshtain.

<sup>62</sup> Eberly, "Civic Renewal or Moral Renewal," op. cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Don Eberly, "Restoring Civil Society Through Fatherhood," in Don Eberly, ed., *The Faith Factor in Fatherhood* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999), pp. 251-263, 256.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 255, emphasis added. For a remarkably similar, explicitly Christian Right view of fatherhood, see Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys*, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Eberly, "Restoring Civil Society," op. cit., p. 260.

<sup>68</sup> Eberly, *America's Promise*, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>69</sup> Eberly, "Restoring Civil Society," op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>70</sup> I discuss this in "Neo-Patriarchy and the Anti-Homosexual Agenda," op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Eberly, "Civic Renewal or Moral Renewal," op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Eberly, *America's Promise*, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>73</sup> Eberly, "Civic Renewal or Moral Renewal," op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> Mary Ann Glendon and David Blankenhorn, eds., *Seedbeds of Virtue: Sources of Competence, Character, and Citizenship in American Society* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1995).

<sup>75</sup> Glendon, "Introduction," in *Seedbeds of Virtue*, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

<sup>76</sup> For examples, see Jonathan Rauch, "Leave Gay Marriage to the States," *Wall Street Journal*, July 27, 2001 and Andrew Sullivan, "Unveiled," *The New Republic*, August 13, 2001.

<sup>77</sup> The Glendon-Bork alliance is documented in a fundraising letter authored by Pete Knight in 2002.

<sup>78</sup> Glendon, "Introduction," op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, "The Family and Civic Life," in David Blankenhorn, Steven Bayme, and Jean Bethke Elshtain, eds., *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family* (Milwaukee, WI: Family Service America, 1990), p. 122. For an in-depth discussion of Elshtain's view on this topic, see Jill Locke, "Hiding for Whom? Obscurity, Dignity, and the Politics of Truth," *Theory & Event*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Fall 1999). See [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory\\_&\\_event/toc/archive.html#3.3](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_&_event/toc/archive.html#3.3)

<sup>80</sup> "A Call to Civil Society," op. cit., p. 18, emphasis added.

<sup>81</sup> Elshtain, "Against Gay Marriage - II: Accepting Limits," *Commonweal*, vol. CXVIII, no. 20, November 22, 1991, pp. 685-86.

<sup>82</sup> Glendon, "Introduction," op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, Elshtain, "Family and Civic Life," op. cit. For a critique of this line of argument, see my "Neo-Patriarchy and the Anti-Homosexual Agenda," op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> Cited in Eberly, *America's Promise*, op. cit., p. 54. Eberly praises Horn's recognition that "the differences between the parenting styles of fathers and mothers indicate that fathers are essential to developing impulse control in the young," p. 55.

<sup>85</sup> James Dobson, *The New Dare To Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992), p. 27.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36. Many studies have documented the detrimental impact of corporal punishment on children. See Phillip Greven, *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), and Murray Strauss with Denise A. Donnelly, *Beating the Devil Out of Them: Corporal Punishment in American Families* (New York: Lexington Books, 1994).

<sup>87</sup> Dobson, *New Dare To Discipline*, op. cit., p. 63.

## Scared Chaste, Scared Straight: Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education in U.S. Schools

By Sean Cahill

The welfare reform law of 1996, premised on the unproven claim that poor women's failure to marry is the cause of high rates of family poverty in the United States, promoted an abstinence-only-until-marriage policy that teaches that sex outside the context of marriage is intrinsically dangerous, both physically and psychologically.<sup>1</sup> Relying on scientifically inaccurate information and notions of shame, this policy poses a threat to all youth. But it poses a particular threat to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth, who are already subject to widespread harassment and violence in the nation's schools.

As of 1999 nearly one third of the nation's high schools were promoting abstinence only, while excluding information about contraception and safer sex education.<sup>2</sup> A study of 43 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia found that more than 10 percent of the abstinence-only funds had been granted to "faith-based entities" in 22 states.<sup>3</sup> A further 40 percent of the funds were spent through other private, but nonreligious, entities.<sup>4</sup> Twenty-eight of the 42 state and territorial jurisdictions sampled prohibited organizations providing abstinence-based education from providing information on contraception and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) if asked by a student or other client. A further five jurisdictions provided no guidance one-way or the other.<sup>5</sup>

Research has shown that sex education that promotes the delay of first intercourse but simultaneously teaches safer sex practices is more effective than abstinence-only education. A World Health Organization review of 35 sex education programs around the world documented the relative ineffectiveness of abstinence-only education in stemming the spread of STDs.<sup>6</sup> Youth in the United States have higher rates of unwanted pregnancy and STDs than their counterparts in Europe,

where comprehensive sex education is the norm.

A report released by U.S. Surgeon-General David Satcher in early 2001 also questioned the effectiveness of abstinence-only education. Satcher noted that there has been little research to demonstrate the effectiveness of this particular type of instruction. More comprehensive education programs that also provide information on condom use have proven effective in stemming disease transmission and

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pregnancy among already sexually active youth. Yet safer sex education has not been shown to increase or hasten sexual activity among youth. According to Satcher:

To date, there are only a few published evaluations of abstinence-only programs. Due to this limited number of studies it is too early to draw definite conclusions about this

approach. Similarly, the value of these programs for adolescents who have initiated sexual activity is not yet understood. More research is clearly needed.

Programs that typically emphasize abstinence, but also cover condoms and other methods of contraception, have a larger body of evaluation evidence that indicates either no effect on initiation of sexual activity or, in some cases, a delay in the initiation of sexual activity. This evidence gives strong support to the conclusion that providing information about contraception does not increase adolescent sexual activity, either by hastening the onset of sexual intercourse, increasing the frequency of sexual intercourse, or increasing the number of sexual partners. In addition, some of these evaluated programs increased condom use or contraceptive use more generally for adolescents who were sexually active.<sup>7</sup>

### Abstinence-Only and Prevention Efforts to Stop Sexual Diseases and Teen Pregnancy

Several states and municipalities have rejected or stopped applying for federal disease prevention funds out of a mistaken belief that accepting abstinence-only funds precludes them from accessing federal funds for sex education. Nebraska decided not to reapply for HIV prevention grants from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) because HIV prevention has traditionally combined abstinence promotion with safer sex education. Since 1997 Nebraska has limited all state-sponsored sex education to an abstinence-only-until-marriage message. Following lobbying from the National Abstinence Clearinghouse, Nebraska's Education Commissioner decided not to reapply for CDC funds.<sup>8</sup>

In 1998, Ohio state legislators passed a law preventing the state's Department of Education from spending CDC funds awarded to it until it agreed they would only be used to teach abstinence. More than two

years passed and an agreement between the department and the legislature was not worked out. Language that would have required programs to “emphasize” abstinence, but not limit their approach only to abstinence education, was rejected by hardliners. As a result, \$1 million was forfeited, although only 10 percent of those CDC funds were earmarked for HIV prevention; the rest were for other health initiatives, including tobacco use prevention, diabetes, and cancer prevention.<sup>9</sup>

The Northern Kentucky Independent District Health Department also voted in 2001 to limit sex education efforts paid for with state dollars to the abstinence-only-until-marriage approach.<sup>10</sup> The New Jersey and Maine legislatures considered bills, which would mandate abstinence-only education in those states’ public schools.<sup>11</sup> Florida Governor Jeb Bush announced in March 2001 that he wanted to take \$1 million in state funds for family planning

services at health clinics and redirect the funds into abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. Florida already has 35 abstinence-only education programs funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds and run by private organizations.<sup>12</sup> While Arkansas has long limited state-funded “sex education” to an abstinence-only-until-marriage approach, a bill that would further restrict sex education was introduced last year.<sup>13</sup>

### Scared Chaste: Abstinence-Only’s Reliance on Fear, Shame, and Misinformation

Abstinence-only-until-marriage approaches to sex education are counterproductive, dangerous, and even harmful to the youth who are subject to their messages. Premarital sex is presented as intrinsically harmful. Relying on shame and fear, abstinence-only spreads inaccurate information about STDs and contracep-

tives; presents rarely occurring, worst-case scenarios as routine and common; stigmatizes and evokes hostility toward people with AIDS; and largely ignores homosexuality except as a context for HIV transmission.<sup>14</sup> At least two curricula, however, are explicitly hostile toward lesbians and gay men.<sup>15</sup>

“[T]here is no such thing as ‘safe’ or ‘safer’ premarital sex,” warns *FACTS*, one such curriculum. “There are always risks associated with it, even dangerous, life-threatening ones.”<sup>16</sup> Echoing Pat Buchanan’s claim that AIDS is “nature’s retribution” on “the poor homosexuals” who “have declared war on nature,”<sup>17</sup> *Sex Respect*, another abstinence-only curriculum, teaches the following:

Is this [AIDS and other STDs] nature’s punishment for sex outside of marriage? No, not at all. These are natural consequences. For example, if you eat spoiled food, you will get sick. If you jump from a tall build-



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ing, you will be hurt or killed... If you have sex outside of marriage, there are consequences for you, your partner, and society.<sup>18</sup>

The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) documents numerous ways in which the incidence and effects of several STDs are misrepresented in abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula.<sup>19</sup> SIECUS warns that these scare tactics can discourage students from seeking treatment for STDs, such as chlamydia, which are easily curable if treated early on.<sup>20</sup>

Condoms are presented as a dangerous and ineffective form of birth control: "Relying on condoms is like playing Russian roulette," declares *Me, My World, My Future*.<sup>21</sup> Condom failure rates are overstated; and the failure of users to properly use condoms is inaccurately translated into an intrinsic defect in the product.<sup>22</sup> *FACTS* warns that even if condoms are properly used, they may still allow "the transmission of HIV/AIDS." This flies in the face of CDC and other scientific research, which finds condoms highly effective in stopping the spread of STDs when used properly.<sup>23</sup>

Skewed information about HIV/AIDS is common in abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula. *Sex Respect* devotes three paragraphs to the possibility of contracting HIV through "French kissing." This is based on a single case investigated by the CDC in 1987, which may have involved transmission due to bleeding, open-mouth sores. However, kissing is generally not a risk factor for HIV transmission. People with AIDS are also stigmatized as dangerous bearers of death. *Sex Respect* warns, "How can you tell if someone has AIDS? There is no way for you to predict. Anyone can be carrying your death warrant."<sup>24</sup>

### Scared Straight: Heterosexism, Sexism, and Antigay Bias in Abstinence-Only Curricula

Heterosexist gender stereotypes about boys and girls are widespread in abstinence-only curricula. Boys are presented as sex-crazed, and girls as less interested in sex than they are in finding love. Girls are warned about "the way you dress sending messages." *Sex Respect* warns, "Watch what you wear. If you don't aim to please, don't aim to tease." Feminism is blamed for promiscuity: "the liberation movement has produced some aggressive girls today, and

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In reaction to a growth in sex education and antihomophobia initiatives in the early 1990s, conservatives pushed "parents' rights" laws and parental notification laws in states across the United States, requiring teachers to provide advance written warning to parents prior to addressing issues of homosexuality in class.

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one of the tough challenges for guys who say no will be the questioning of their manliness."<sup>25</sup> Girls are portrayed as primarily responsible for rejecting the sexual advances of boys.<sup>26</sup>

Programs that focus on abstinence-only-until-marriage are detrimental to LGBT youth, those youth questioning their sexual orientation, the children of LGBT parents, and LGBT teachers and administrators in the nation's schools. Homosexuality is largely ignored except as a context for HIV transmission. But homosexuality is implicitly, and sometimes

explicitly, stigmatized. For example, *Sex Respect* teaches students that "[R]esearch and common sense tell us the best ways to avoid AIDS are: Remain a virgin until marriage... Avoid homosexual behavior."<sup>27</sup> When homosexual sexual practices are noted in this context, they are portrayed as "unnatural behavior."<sup>28</sup>

At least two abstinence-only curricula are overtly hostile toward lesbians and gay men. *Clue 2000* engages in the standard right-wing tactic of conflating homosexuality with pedophilia and incest when it notes that "[a]mong Kinsey's most outrageous and damaging claims are the beliefs that pedophilia, homosexuality, incest, and adult-child sex are normal."<sup>29</sup> *Facing Reality* assures teachers and parents that presenting homosexuality as intrinsically dangerous is actually in the best interests of students, and is not homophobic. It also repeats the outdated notion of AIDS as a gay disease:

Many homosexual activists are frustrated and desperate over their own situation and those of loved ones. Many are dying, in part, due to ignorance. Educators who struggle to overcome ignorance and instill self-mastery in their students will inevitably lead them to recognize that some people with AIDS are now suffering because of the choices they made... Teachers, in order to preserve an atmosphere of intellectual freedom, should feel confident that when examining health issues and moral implications of homosexual behaviors, they are not engaging in an assault on a particular person or group.<sup>30</sup>

The irony of that last sentence is particularly rich: Abstinence-only-until-marriage education is by definition a suppression of alternative points of view, and involves the supplanting of a method scientifically proven to be effective in decreasing the spread of STDs with another, unproven method. Yet this approach is constructed as "preserv[ing] an atmosphere of intellectual freedom."

Studies have shown that LGBT youth who receive gay-sensitive HIV instruction in school tend to engage in risky sexual behavior less frequently than similar youth that do not receive such instruction. In a random sample of high school students and HIV education instructors in Massachusetts, among sexually active heterosexual and homosexual youth, gay youth reported more sexual partners, more frequent use of substances before engaging in sex, and higher rates of pregnancy. However, those gay youth that received gay-sensitive HIV instruction reported fewer sexual partners and less frequent substance use before sex.<sup>31</sup>

### Impact of Abstinence-Only and "Parent's Rights Laws" on Safe Schools Initiatives

The often explicitly antigay and stigmatizing language of abstinence curricula can have a chilling effect on discussion of homosexuality in the schools, including attempts to deal with incidents of antigay harassment of LGBT students and the children of LGBT parents. In reaction to a growth in sex education and antihomophobia initiatives in the early 1990s, conservatives pushed "parents' rights" laws and parental notification laws in states across the United States, requiring teachers to provide advance written warning to parents prior to addressing issues of homosexuality in class. It also followed by a few years the "no promo homo" laws enacted by many states in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which restrict any neutral or positive mention of homosexuality.<sup>32</sup> When taken together, these policies create a context that may have a chilling effect on open conversations about issues facing LGBT students and the children of LGBT parents, including issues of verbal and physical harassment.

The link between sex education, abstinence promotion, and LGBT youth was vividly displayed in recent comments by Boston University president John Silber, who called for the disbanding of a gay-straight alliance at a university-run high school. Boston's gay newspaper *Bay Windows* reported September 12, 2002:

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People continue to get infected with HIV unnecessarily because some public health professionals and many elected officials have abdicated their responsibility to deal with HIV/AIDS as a public health issue. Instead, too many impose their narrow vision of morality on the rest of the population and promote policies which have failed to prevent the continued spread of this disease. Thus abstinence-only-until-marriage education may in fact contribute to the transmission of HIV and other STDs.

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Silber ordered academy headmaster James Tracy to disband the school's two-year old GSA last week, saying it didn't belong there because it encouraged teen sex. "We're not running a program in sex education," Silber told the Sept. 7 *Boston Globe*. "If they want that kind of program, they can go to Newton High School. They can go to public school and learn how to put a condom over a banana." According to a Sept. 6 *Globe* story, Silber threatened to cut funding to the school if the GSA wasn't shut down.

Efforts to silence and stigmatize homosexuality can have devastating effects on LGBT youth. A recent NIH-funded study of Latino gay and bisexual men found a correlation between experiences of homophobia and increased likelihood to engage in HIV risk behaviors. It also found that family acceptance and the presence of an openly gay role model while growing up correlated with lower incidence of HIV risk behaviors.<sup>33</sup> The promotion of homophobia and ignorance about AIDS and other STDs hurts all students, but especially

those who are gay or from gay families.

### The Connection with State "No Promo Homo" Laws

South Carolina bans discussion of "alternative sexual lifestyles from heterosexual relationships including, but not limited to, homosexual relationships except in the context of instruction concerning sexually transmitted disease."<sup>34</sup> Arizona law prohibits "instruction which: 1) Promotes a homosexual life-style. 2) Portrays homosexuality as a positive alternative life-style. 3) Suggests that some methods of sex are safe methods of homosexual sex."<sup>35</sup> Alabama requires that any mention of homosexuality stress "that homosexuality is not a lifestyle acceptable to the general public and that homosexual conduct is a criminal offense under the laws of the state."<sup>36</sup> And Texas law is almost identical to Alabama's statute.<sup>37</sup>

How do these restrictions play out? Kay Coburn, an administrator with the Temple, Texas Independent School District, told Human Rights Watch that there is "no discussion of homosexuality," nor "any message in the curriculum about how

homosexuals might protect themselves from HIV. Abstinence is the only message. The traditional family is where you have sex. The curriculum doesn't address sex outside this structure."<sup>38</sup>

Cheryl Cox, a health teacher and member of her Robinson (TX) High School health education advisory council, noted that coverage of homosexuality and other "lifestyle options" was "not needed or necessary... I can't see it ever being acceptable to discuss homosexuality, as it's a very conservative community. It's a topic that I'm not supposed to be talking about because of the standards set forth by the community and by the health advisory board."<sup>39</sup>

Terry Cruz, an abstinence educator in Laredo, TX, told Human Rights Watch that "probably the only time I touch on the subject [of homosexuality] is with HIV, referring to how HIV originally started."<sup>40</sup>

### Abstinence Efforts Likely to Dominate in Near Future

People continue to get infected with HIV unnecessarily because some public health professionals and many elected officials have abdicated their responsibility to deal with HIV/AIDS as a public health issue. Instead, too many impose their narrow vision of morality on the rest of the population and promote policies which have failed to prevent the continued spread of this disease. Thus abstinence-only-until-marriage education may in fact contribute to the transmission of HIV and other STDs.

Although HIV and AIDS has disproportionately affected gay and bisexual men, increasingly those living with HIV or AIDS are heterosexual, female, and African American and Latina/o women and children. Within the gay and bisexual male community, men of color, particularly younger men of color, are at greater risk for HIV/AIDS. For example, in New York City one recent study found that four percent of White homosexually active 15- to 22-year-old men are HIV-positive, while 10 percent of Latino men and 22 percent of African American men in this age bracket are HIV-positive.<sup>41</sup> From 1999 to 2000, 69 percent of new HIV infections were among

The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) announces the release of a new two-part report *Innovative Approaches to Increase Parent-Child Communication about Sexuality: Their Impact and Examples from the Field*.

According to SIECUS, "Many parents, caregivers, and young people want to talk with each other about sexuality-related issues. With this in mind, SIECUS decided to examine what the research said about the effectiveness of programs designed to increase communication about sexuality between parents and other primary caregivers and their children and to complement those findings with examples of innovative approaches to such communication.

Funded by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, SIECUS compiled this information into the publication. Intended to guide parents and caregivers, policymakers, public agencies, and educators in their quest for high-quality programs and information, the publication consists of two parts.

Part 1: *The Impact of Interventions Designed to Promote Parent-Child Communication about Sexuality* is written by Doug Kirby Ph.D., senior research scientist at ETR Associates, and provides scientific analysis of the available research on the effectiveness of programs designed to increase parent-child communication about sexuality.

Part 2: *Innovative Approaches that Encourage Parent-Child Communication about Sexuality*, compiled by SIECUS, includes ten innovative approaches and 45 examples from the field that have been used to increase parent-child communication about sexuality-related issues."

For more information check out [www.siecus.org](http://www.siecus.org) or email [siecus@siecus.org](mailto:siecus@siecus.org) or:

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Black and Latino individuals, most of them men who have sex with men.<sup>42</sup>

Federal incentives favoring abstinence-only education are likely to become more entrenched under President George W. Bush. As governor, Bush opposed sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. Bush told the *Washington Times* in July 1999 that he supports abstinence-only education, arguing that teaching safer sex and abstinence together "sends a contradictory message that tends to undermine the message of abstinence."<sup>43</sup> Bush told young people that they should avoid sex until they are in "a biblical marriage relationship."<sup>44</sup> Bush also supports educational grants for churches and faith-based groups to promote abstinence-until-marriage.<sup>45</sup>

Abstinence-only sex education, while strongly supported by President Bush and a conservative Congress, does not enjoy widespread support among the U.S. public. According to a national study conducted by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, there exists a strong disparity between what is actually taught in sex education programs and what parents actually

want.<sup>46</sup> One of the strongest disparities exists for homosexuality. Seventy-six percent of parents of 7-12<sup>th</sup> graders felt that sex education should cover homosexuality, while only 41 percent of students reported the topic was actually covered.

### Policy Recommendations

Age-appropriate, publicly funded sex education programs should be offered nation-wide which provide comprehensive, factual information about sexuality. These can promote abstinence but must also provide information on safer-sex techniques that significantly reduce the risk for transmission of STDs and pregnancy. They should avoid gender stereotypes and the stigmatization of homosexuality. They should not be allowed to contribute to the widespread harassment and violence against LGBT youth in the nation's schools.

*Sean Cahill is director of the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Each year since 1996, nearly \$100 million in government funds have been spent on abstinence-only-until-marriage education, ostensibly aimed at preventing teen preg-



nancy and out-of-wedlock births. The Bush Administration has sought a substantial increase in abstinence-only-until-marriage funds during the welfare reauthorization of 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon Lerner, "An Orgy of Abstinence: Federal Funding Pushes No-Sex Education Into the Mainstream," *Village Voice*, August 1-7, 2001. Available at <http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0131/lerner.php>. Abstinence activists are so extreme that they advocate against masturbation, a nearly universal human activity. The National Abstinence Clearinghouse's "Abstinence Survival Kit" warns that "sexual self-stimulation" may "eventually leave the person unable to respond sexually to a real person." "It's the first sign of sexual addiction," warns Leslee Unruh, the Clearinghouse's president.

<sup>3</sup> Adam Sonfield and Rachel B. Gold, "States' Implementation of the Section 510 Abstinence Education Program, FY 1999," *Family Planning Perspectives*, vol. 33, no. 4 (July/August 2001), pp. 166-172. Available at <http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/journals/3316601.html>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>6</sup> Mariella Baldo, et al., "Does Sex Education Lead to Earlier or Increased Sexual Activity in Youth?" Paper presented at the IXth Annual International Conference on AIDS Berlin, (Geneva: World Health Organization), June 6-10, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> David Satcher, *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Behavior* (Washington, DC: Office of the United States Surgeon General, 2001), p. 11. Available at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/sexualhealth/>

<sup>8</sup> Martha Kempner, "Controversy Over CDC's Research to Classroom Project," *SIECUS Report*, vol. 29, no. 6 (2001), pp. 4-5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Martha Kempner, "State-Level Debates Over Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage," *SIECUS Report*, vol. 29, no. 6 (2001), p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Kempner, "Controversy," p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, preface.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick Buchanan, Syndicated column, June 23, 1983, Cited in Sean Cahill and Erik Ludwig, *Courting the Vote: The 2000 Presidential Candidates' Positions on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues* (New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, 1999), p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Kempner, "State-level," p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-28.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> See *Questions and Answers on Condom Effectiveness*, CDC Update (Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control, 1997), and Philip Kestelman, and James Trussell, "Efficacy of the Simultaneous Use of Condoms and Spermicide," *Family Planning Perspectives* vol. 23, no. 5 (1991), p. 227, both cited in Kempner, "State-level," pp. 34-35.

<sup>24</sup> Kempner, "State-level," p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> *Sex Respect*, cited in Kempner, "State-level," p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> Kempner, "State-level," p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Sex Respect* describes anal intercourse as "unnatural behavior." Of course, anal intercourse is a behavior practiced by both heterosexuals and homosexuals. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Susan M. Blake, et al., "Preventing Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Adolescents: The Benefits of Gay-Sensitive HIV Instruction in Schools," *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 91, no. 6 (2001), pp. 940-946.

<sup>32</sup> As a result of such a law, teachers in Merrimack, NH, declined to teach Shakespeare's Twelfth Night because a female character disguises herself as a man, and declined to show a video about Walt Whitman that mentioned that he loved men. See Mary Bonauto, *Background Information on "No Promo Homo" Policies* (Washington, DC: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educators' Network, September 16, 2002). Available at <http://www.glsen.org/templates/resources/record.html?section=14&record=42>

<sup>33</sup> Rafael Diaz and George Ayala, *Social Discrimination and Health: The Case of Latino Gay Men and HIV Risk* (New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, 2001). Available at <http://www.nglft.org/library/index.cfm>

<sup>34</sup> See South Carolina Code Ann. 59-32-30(A)(5). Cited in Human Rights Watch, *Ignorance Only: HIV/AIDS, Human Rights and Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Programs in the United States; Texas: A Case Study*, vol. 14, no. 5 (September 2002), p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> See Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. 15-1716. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> See Ala. Code 16-40A-2. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> See Texas Health and Safety Code 163.002(8). Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> Interview cited in *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> Interview cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>40</sup> Interview cited in *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Elovich, "Beyond Condoms...How to Create a Gay Men's Culture of Sexual Health," *POZ* (June 1999).

<sup>42</sup> National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, "With CDC HIV Infection Rates on the Rise, New NGLTF Report Examines Direct Impact of Discrimination on Latino Gay Men," (Washington, DC: NGLTF, July 12, 2001). Available at <http://www.nglft.org/news/release.cfm?releaseID=404>

<sup>43</sup> AIDS Action Council, "Election 2000 Presidential Candidate Report," (August 1999). Available at <http://www.thebody.com/aac/candidates.html>; Cynthia Dailard, "Fueled by Campaign Promises, Drive Intensifies to Boost Abstinence-Only Education Funds," *The Guttmacher Report on Public Policy*, vol. 3, no. 2 (April 2000). Available at <http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/journals/gr030201.html>.

<sup>44</sup> David Broder, "Bush Defends Gun Record, Pushes Teen Abstinence," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1999, p. A4.

<sup>45</sup> "Bush Promotes Abstinence for Teenagers," *Associated Press*, June 22, 1999.

<sup>46</sup> Tina Hoff and Liberty Greene, *Sex Education in America: A Series of National Surveys of Students, Parents, Teachers, and Principals* (Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000). Available at <http://www.kff.org/content/2000/3048/SexED.pdf>.

## Packaging Xenophobia in Liberal Garb: Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman "Environmentalism"

By Mitra Rastegar

*Editorial Note: This article first appeared in Sojourner: The Women's Forum (Boston, April 2002), pp. 7, 16. Reprinted with the kind permission of the publisher.*

Are you worried about the destruction of parks and forests in this country? Do you fear rolling blackouts will become a norm in the future? Are you concerned about your child's overcrowded deteriorating school? Does the traffic congestion and sprawl drive you crazy? Well, a number of organizations say they have discovered the single most important step to countering these problems: restricting immigration.

These groups go by names like Population-Environment Balance, NumbersUSA, Negative Population Growth, Carrying Capacity Network,

and Federation for American Immigration Reform. They put out publications and sponsor television commercials, radio spots and billboard campaigns to warn of the supposed consequences of the immigration-induced "population explosion." They speak before Congress and attempt to affect the positions of mainstream environmental organizations.

Following a rich history of packaging xenophobia in liberal garb, these organizations seek to entice environmentalists and others to their anti-immigrant positions. A closer look at their analysis shows that they are more interested in opposing immigration than in protecting the environment. They consistently scapegoat immigrants for a whole range social, economic and environmental ills, often changing their focus

depending on what issue is in the forefront of debates. They also exploit the general public's racism and sexism by demonizing women of color and immigrant women in order to promote their cause of restricting immigration.

### The Population Control Framework

These organizations argue for restricting immigration based on the concept of "population stabilization." They say that most environmental and "quality of life" problems, such as water and power shortages, pollution, traffic, overcrowded schools and suburban sprawl, are a direct result of U.S. population "explosion." Through colorful poster graphs they illustrate that most post-1970 population growth in the United States is a result of immigrants and their offspring.

Why the seemingly arbitrary year of 1970? Around this time, White fertility rates came down to replacement levels of about 2 children per couple. Also, just five years earlier, Congress ended immigration quotas based on nationality, which opened the doors to many immigrants of color who had previously been barred entry. Today 85 percent of immigrants are people of color and by the year 2050 Whites are predicted to no longer be in the majority in this country. Population control groups claim to be only concerned with "the numbers," i.e. the size of the entire U.S. population. However their analysis consistently overlooks Whites' responsibility in environment degradation, while leading to policies that restrict the movement and reproductive rights of people of color.

The racism and sexism in this anti-immigrant "environmentalist" position comes through in their choice of focusing on U.S. population growth as the central cause of environmental degradation. They disregard much more significant factors such as corporate exploitation and destruction of natural resources, along with lawmakers' reluctance to adopt and enforce necessary environmental protections. Focusing only on decreasing "the numbers," they ignore whether environmental

resources are used to meet basic needs or to fuel a consumerist economy of luxury goods. In fact, the focus should not be only on how large the population is, but how that population uses and/or protects the resources of the earth.

These anti-immigrant groups also ignore that environmental degradation is a global issue affected by many factors other than mere population size. The United States, with about 5 percent of the world population consumes 30 percent of the world's resources. Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) responds to this fact by stating that it is more fair and effective to stop immigration thereby stabilizing U.S. consumption rates, than to tackle the problem of unbridled overconsumption in this country. In other words, the United States is justified in reaping the benefits of developing countries' resources, while inhabitants of those countries should be content with living in poverty and deprivation. A real environmentalist solution would seek to meet the needs of all people, rather than protect the extravagance and exploitative behaviors of wealthy nations and corporations.

### Woing Liberals

While conservatives often oppose immigration based on fears that

immigrants will dilute a perceived Western culture and values, this environmental argument is a tactic to win over politically moderate and liberal individuals and the largely White environmental movement. Liberals have historically expressed ambivalence on the issue of immigration, often opposing it on economic grounds and the need to "protect American jobs." In the 1990s, as the proportion of immigrant women increased, liberals joined conservatives in voicing concerns about immigrants coming to the United States to reap the rewards of "generous" public benefits.

In 1994, California's Proposition 187 played off these stereotypes and sought to deny benefits and social services to all undocumented immigrants. After a divisive campaign, a majority of voters passed the ballot initiative, but a court overruled most of its provisions. Nevertheless, the proposition paved the way for the three sweeping 1996 anti-immigrant laws, including the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, or "Welfare Reform." Almost half of the expected savings of Welfare Reform, or \$24 billion, came from cuts to immigrants' benefits.

Many liberals and, of course, the Clinton administration, enthusiastically supported Welfare Reform. They accepted the Right's myths about women of color

### Hope or Despair?

Our friends in DC, the Center for Community Change, recently sent us a copy of "False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Redevelopment Program, released in June 2002." The report was prepared by: the National Housing Law Project (<http://www.nhlp.org>), the Poverty & Race Research Action Council (<http://www.prrac.org>), Everywhere and Now Public Housing Residents Organizing Nationally Together (ENPHRONT), and Sherwood Research Associates. The report's publishers urge people concerned with public housing and social justice to use "False HOPE" to "influence the debate around the reauthorization of the HOPE VI program." According to the foreword, "False HOPE identifies—and to the extent possible, documents—serious shortcomings and inconsistencies in the HOPE VI public housing redevelopment program. It proposes specific reforms to address these problems. This report is intended to support and to complement similar proposals for HOPE VI reform previously produced by ENPHRONT and the National Low Income Housing Coalition."

For more details on how to obtain a copy of the report contact <http://www.communitychange.org>

and immigrant women being lazy, sinful, baby-producing machines that needed to be reined in. They also endorsed the new law on the supposed economic grounds of protecting taxpayers' money.

## Anti-immigrant, Antiwoman

The anti-immigrant movement has also sought to use the issue of the environment to foment liberal opposition to immigration, in effect driving a wedge between communities of color and Whites. It has promoted many of the same stereotypes used in favor of Welfare Reform in its analysis of environmental problems. Central to both these issues is the idea that women of color are reproducing undeserving populations that will exploit resources (whether economic or environmental) that rightly belong to U.S. citizens.

Although anti-immigrant groups rarely speak directly about women, their focus on population stabilization implicitly is about controlling the sexuality of immigrant women and women of color. When analyzing population growth, FAIR refers obliquely to "immigration's invisible multipliers." This term refers to the higher fertility rates of immigrant women and the fact that their children will also have children, leading to supposedly uncontrollable population growth. The implication is that immigrant women are sexually irresponsible, producing too many children, and that legal restrictions are necessary to control this hypersexuality. Similarly, the Right's image of pregnant undocumented women crossing the border in order to have U.S. citizen "anchor babies" was key to restricting immigrants' access to public benefits.

Whether veiled as a concern about the abuse of the economic safety net or about the supposed environmental consequences of overpopulation, the underlying message is the same: immigrant women are reproducing at an excessively high rate that is dangerous to this nation. While some anti-immigrant groups are careful not to raise the issue of demographics, concern about immigrant women's fertility rate is implic-

itly connected to what is a deeper concern for many within the anti-immigrant movement. That is the changing racial and ethnic demographics of the country and the fact that Whites are already a minority in California and in an increasing number of cities.

John Tanton, the founder and a current board member of FAIR, who over the years has held leadership positions within the Sierra Club, Planned Parenthood, Zero Population Growth and U.S. English, in 1986 authored a private study-group memo spelling out these fears:

Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile? . . . Can homo contraceptivus compete with homo progenitiva if borders aren't controlled? . . . As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion?

Though most spokespeople for immigration restriction are not so direct, they often do raise the specter of racial and ethnic conflict. Within the population growth framework, they argue that as natural resources are depleted, ethnic conflict over these resources will become inevitable.

## A selected bibliographic resource on White Privilege

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," Working Paper Series, No. 189, (Wellesley, MA: Center for Research on Women, 1988)

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Peace and Freedom*, July/August 1989.

Mab Segrest, *Memoirs of a Race Traitor* (Boston: South End Press, 1994)

Sharon Martinas, "Shinin' the Lite on White Privilege: Defining the Problem, Why Can't We Just Get It Together?" 1998. See <http://www.prisonactivist.org/cws/sharon.html>

Tim Wise, in Paula Rothenburg, ed., *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2001).

Becky Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life [White Antiracist Activism]* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<http://www.uwm.edu/~gjay/Whiteness/Whitenessbib.html>

Though often stated in race-neutral terms, it is clear how their primarily White followers will perceive this prospect: Whites will be in a battle with a growing population of color over what Whites perceive as rightly theirs.

## Since September 11, 2001

Since September 11, the anti-immigrant Right has shifted its focus to national security, arguing that if its proposals for restricting immigration had been in place, the attacks would have been avoided. Opportunistically, many of the regular players in the anti-immigrant Right (including FAIR, NumbersUSA, Negative Population Growth) have formed a new coalition organization, United to Secure America, which calls for increased border security measures and decreased legal immigration. However the population control framework has not been set aside completely.

Within weeks of the September 11 attacks, Project USA placed 40 posters on phone kiosks throughout Manhattan saying, "Immigration will double U.S. population in our lifetimes," and "U.S. population now growing at a faster rate than China's." Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS) ran TV commercials in October linking the September 11 attacks

Packaging Xenophobia continues on page 21

# Books Received

*Nancy Chang*

*Silencing Political Dissent: How Post-September 11 Anti-Terrorism Measures Threaten Our Civil Liberties*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), pb, 168 pp, with reference notes.

*Howard Zinn*

*Terrorism and War*

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), pb, 159 pp, with appendix, reference notes, suggested further reading, and index.

*Gore Vidal*

*Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: How We Got to Be So Hated*

(New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002), pb, 160 pp.

*James X. Dempsey and David Cole*

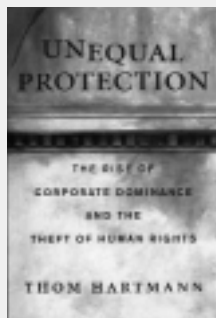
*Terrorism & the Constitution: Sacrificing Civil Liberties in the Name of National Security*

(Washington, DC: First Amendment Foundation, 2002 rev. ed.), pb, 231 pp, with appendix and reference notes.

*Thom Hartmann*

*Unequal Protection: The Rise of Corporate Dominance and the Theft of Human Rights*

(Emmaus, PA: Rodale Inc., 2002), hb, pp. 360 pp, with notes, resources, and index.



*Robert H. Wiebe,*

*Who We Are: A History of Popular Nationalism*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), hb, 282 pp, with bibliographical essay and index.

*David C. Leeger, et al.*

*The Politics of Cultural Differences: Social Change and Voter Mobilization Strategies in the Post-New Deal Period*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pb, 287 pp, with bibliography and index.

*R. Michael Alvarez and John Brehm*  
*Hard Choices, Easy Answers: Values, Information, and American Public Opinion*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pb, 247 pp, with bibliography and index.

*Ann Coulter*

*Slander: Liberal Lies about the American Right*

(New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), hb, 256pp, with index.



## Older Books Recently Acquired

*Noam Chomsky*

9-11

(New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001), pb, 125 pp, with appendix and suggested reading list.

*Paul Apostolidis*

*Stations of the Cross: Adorno and Christian Right Radio*

(Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

*Michael Tomasky*

*Left for Dead: The Life, Death, and Possible Resurrection of Progressive Politics in America*

(New York: Free Press, 1996).

*David I. Kertzer*

*The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*

(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

*Lewis C. Daly*

*A Moment to Decide: The Crisis in Mainstream Presbyterianism*

(New York: Institute for Democracy Studies, 2000).

*Alfie Kohn, ed.*

*Education, Inc.: Turning Learning into a Business*

(Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight, 1997).

*James Carroll*

*Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews, A History*

(Boston: Mariner/Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

*George M. Fredrickson*

*The Comparative Imagination: On the History of Racism, Nationalism, and Social Movements*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

*Robert L. Borosage and Roger Hickey, eds.*

*The Next Agenda: Blueprint for a New Progressive Movement*

(Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001).

*Ron Baiman, Heather Boushey, and Dawn Saunders, eds.*

*Political Economy and Contemporary Capitalism: Radical Perspectives on Economic Theory and Policy*

(Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000).

*Mary C. Brennan*

Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

*Robert McElvaine*

What's Left? A New Democratic Vision for America (Holbrook, MA: Adams Media, 1996).

*Nicholas Fraser*

The Voice of Modern Hatred: Tracing the Rise of Neo-Fascism in Europe (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000).

*Manfred B. Steger*

Gandhi's Dilemma: Nonviolent Principles and Nationalist Power (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

*Neil Baldwin*

Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

*James Arnt Aune*

Selling the Free Market: The Rise of Economic Correctness (New York: Guilford Press, 2001).

*Richard Abanes*

Harry Potter and the Bible: The Menace behind the Magick (Camp Hill, PA: Horizon Books/Christian Publications, 2001).

the Sierra Club's neutral position on immigration to one of immigration restriction.

## Conclusion

Whatever societal fear is making the headlines; the anti-immigrant movement has sought to promote its cause by creating a link between that issue and immigration. They have blamed immigrants for crime, loss of jobs, high taxes, feelings of cultural disconnect, spread of diseases, multilingualism, national insecurity, and of course, the deteriorating environment. While some of these myths are based on stereotypes about young, single men of color, as female immigration has increased so has the opportunity to demonize women of color based on their potential reproductive capabilities. We need to respond to these destructive images by presenting the real complexity of immigrant women's lives and telling their stories of struggle in the face of corporate globalization, an increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, and gender and racial oppression.

*Mitra Rastegar was formerly Researcher at Political Research Associates and coordinated PRA's Activist Resource Kit project.*

Packaging Xenophobia *continued on from page 19*

with immigration policy and calling on Congress to reduce immigration levels. More recently the Executive Director of CAPS, Ben Zuckerman, has announced that he is running for a position on the

Sierra Club Board of Directors in order to make population control a central focus of the organization. This will be the newest round in an almost decade-long campaign by the anti-immigrant movement to change

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# Eyes RIGHT

## “BLUE IN THE FACE FOR FAMILY VALUES: ‘CONGRESSMEN SHOW THEIR ‘TRUE’ COLORS’”

The Family Research Council had “a humbling and encouraging experience...as [it] honored 110 men and women from both houses of Congress who voted consistently with FRC’s position” on family values. This included “protecting the funding for the Boy Scouts of America” [safeguarding their constitutional right to discriminate against gays]; “promoting school choice,” [supporting the taxpayer funding of religious schools]; and “preventing abortions in military hospitals” [denying military women the right to control their own bodies]. According to FRC “These ‘True Blue’ members have stood on and for principle.” And the FRC celebrates the congress members’ joining it to “keep watch for families in the nation’s capital.” In turn Congressman Jim DeMint of South Carolina slapped FRC on the back, calling it “the conscience of Congress.”

Source: FRC email, 10/02/02.

## WHEN CONTROLLING THE WORLD JUST ISN’T ENOUGH

*National Review* author John Miller writes approvingly of Everett Dolman’s book *Astropolitik*, which proposes that the United States seize “hegemonic control” of space. Dolman suggests that once U.S. control is established, it can then impose “a police blockade of all current spaceports, monitoring and controlling all traffic both in and out.” According to Miller, “(t)he goal would be to make the heavens safe for capitalism and science while also protecting the national security of the United States...This may sound like 21st-century imperialism, which, in essence, it would be. But is that so bad? ...Seizing control of space would also would cost trillions,

but it would lead to a world made immeasurably safer for America and what it values.” And what exactly are those values, again?

Source: *National Review*, 7/15/02

## NUKE THE DEMS?

In an essay called “Why we hate them,” Ann Coulter serves up her usual dose of vitriol, this time reflecting on Al Gore’s recent comments about the direction of the president’s foreign policy. Describing Gore as laying out the Democrats’ “full traitorous case,” she comments that “Gore also complained that Bush has made the ‘rest of the world’ angry at us. Boo hoo hoo. He said foreigners are not worried about ‘what the terrorist networks are going to do, but about what we’re going to do’...Good. They should be worried. They hate us? We hate them. Americans don’t want to make Islamic fanatics love us. We want to make them die. There’s nothing like horrendous physical pain to quell angry fanatics. So sorry they’re angry—wait until they see American anger. Japanese kamikaze pilots hated us once too. A couple of well-aimed nuclear weapons, and now they are gentle little lambs. That got their attention.”

Coulter suggests that the Dems should stop “obsessing over why angry primitives hate Americans.” She stops short of advocating an attack on the wimpy and traitorous Democrats with a few of those well-aimed nuclear weapons, but you just know that’s probably what she’d really like to do.

Source: *TownHall.com*, 9/26/02

## GOD THE FATHER VS. MOTHER EARTH

*The New American*, published by American Opinion Publishing, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of The John Birch Society, has issued a warning to its readers: Beware of the U.N. Earth Charter.

Presented at the recent Earth Summit II

in Johannesburg, the Charter is a statement about the interconnectedness of all people, and a guide to working cooperatively toward a sustainable global society. At least that’s how the Charter’s authors see it. But according to William Jasper in an article entitled *The New World Religion*, the U.N. Earth Charter is “actually a diabolical blueprint for global government...it is also an outrageous



“I always see two Jewish communities in America: one of deep intellect and one of shallow, superficial intellect.”

—House Majority Leader Dick Armye (R-TX).

“I think Muhammad was a terrorist... [He] was a—a violent man, a man of war.”

—Rev. Jerry Falwell.

attempt to indoctrinate your children in the UN's New Age paganism." Jasper cautions concerned Christians that "(i)f the Earth Summiters have their way, Johnny and Suzie will not be able to pledge allegiance to 'one nation, under God,' but they will be able to pledge to 'One World, under Gaia'—that is, Mother Earth."

Source: *The New American*, 9/23/02

### "WE'RE VAGUE, ETHEREAL, IGNORANT, AND WE JUST DON'T CARE"

David Brooks, senior editor of the *Weekly Standard* and a regular guest on public television's "News Hour," has gone to the trouble of monitoring the "evasions, distractions and miasma of the anti-war left," or as he calls it, "The Fog of Peace." Characterizing a pro-peace full-page ad in the *New York Times* as a "picture perfect example of moral exhibitionism," Brooks quotes a few of the ad's "vague sentiments, ethereally removed from the tensions before us today..." Sentiments such as, "Nations have the right to determine their own destiny, free from military coercion by great powers..."

Brooks uses a favorite conservative ploy, defining the terms of the debate: either we attack Iraq or we do nothing. Since the anti-war Left opposes attacking Iraq, they must be for—doing nothing. This "logic" allows Brooks to describe such disparate thinkers as Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, Frances Fitzgerald, Barbara Ehrenreich, Susan Sontag, Tony Kushner, and even Tom Daschle as "playing culture war, and...disguising their eruptions as position-taking on Iraq, a country about which they haven't even taken the trouble to inform themselves...For most in the peace camp, there is only the fog. The debate is dominated by people who don't seem to know about Iraq and don't care. Their positions are not influenced by the facts of world affairs."

Source: *Weekly Standard*, 9/30/02

### "FREE SPEECH FOR CHURCHES?"

On October 2, 2002, the Houses of Worship Political Speech Protection Act (H.R. 2357) was defeated on the House floor by a vote of 178 to 239. The bill would have exempted

only churches and other houses of worship (not other 501(c)(3) organizations) from restrictions on endorsing political candidates and participating in election campaigns on a candidate's behalf. That pesky separation of Church and State clause keeps getting in the way, or was this an attempt at "Faith-based" electoral politics?

Source: *Concerned Women for America*, [http://www.cwfa.org/library/freedom/2002-10-03\\_jones-bill.shtml](http://www.cwfa.org/library/freedom/2002-10-03_jones-bill.shtml)

### "LESBIAN HEALTH & CITIZENS' WEALTH"

The Family Research Council is appreciative that the Bush administration is finally targeting LGBT communities for reduction and elimination of "so-called health care programs that squander taxpayer dollars and promote radical agendas." The immediate cause for celebration is the Department of Health and Human Services recent decision to withdraw support for a conference on lesbian health because it "...did not fit with Secretary Thompson's vision." FRC welcomes "...the administration's change of heart and applaud[s] the concern to protect citizens' hard-earned money from government waste."

Source: *Family Research Council daily email update*, 10/4/02.

### "MADE IN OUR MO[U]LD"

The Heritage Foundation has put together a new series of policy statements addressing what should be done with Iraq after ousting Saddam Hussein. In the section, "The Road to Economic Prosperity for a Post-Saddam Iraq" they boldly state, "The new post-Saddam federal government should develop a modern legal system that recognizes property rights and is conducive to privatization..." 'Nuff said.

Source: <http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/iraqroom.cfm>

### "PRO-FAMILY PORTRAIT"

The Family Research Council recently announced that it would release *The Family Portrait*, which is ostensibly a compilation of data, research, and public opinion on marriage and the family. FRC hopes that this book would be a "one-stop shop" of "both

the good and the bad news" on the family that policy makers, activists, and educators can use. As part of the launch, FRC will "unveil The Family Portrait" at the National Press Club in Washington DC, where a panel of experts will ascertain why sometimes "Americans' actions strongly conflict with their conservative views on marriage and family." Hmmm. Maybe because, increasingly, most Americans' views of what makes a family are not in sync with conservative values?

Source: *FRC email*, 09/12/02.

### "WHY IS THERE SUFFERING?"

Pat Robertson has probably been reading up on Buddhist philosophy, which is perhaps what led him to ask the deep question, "Why is there suffering?" Well, according to Pat, "To say there is suffering because there is crime, or because there are auto accidents, is not nearly enough. Our question goes far beneath the surface, where it hits at the very roots of human pain and anguish. There are many causes of suffering, and the list could go on for pages. But our question is not concerned with causes. We are looking for the reasons for suffering." Is there a difference?

Lest we worry too much and really begin to reflect on the reason for suffering, Pat provides us the answer that, "[a]ll suffering is temporary." It will end with the second coming of Christ. But that still leaves one to worry whether this is a pre-millennial or post-millennial perspective. Will we be troubled before being raptured or will we be raptured without being troubled?

Source: [http://www.cbn.com/spirituallife/biblestudyandtheology/Pat-Why\\_suffering.asp](http://www.cbn.com/spirituallife/biblestudyandtheology/Pat-Why_suffering.asp)

Compiled by *Nikhil Aziz, Kate Cloud, and Allen Jackson.*

## HAIKU

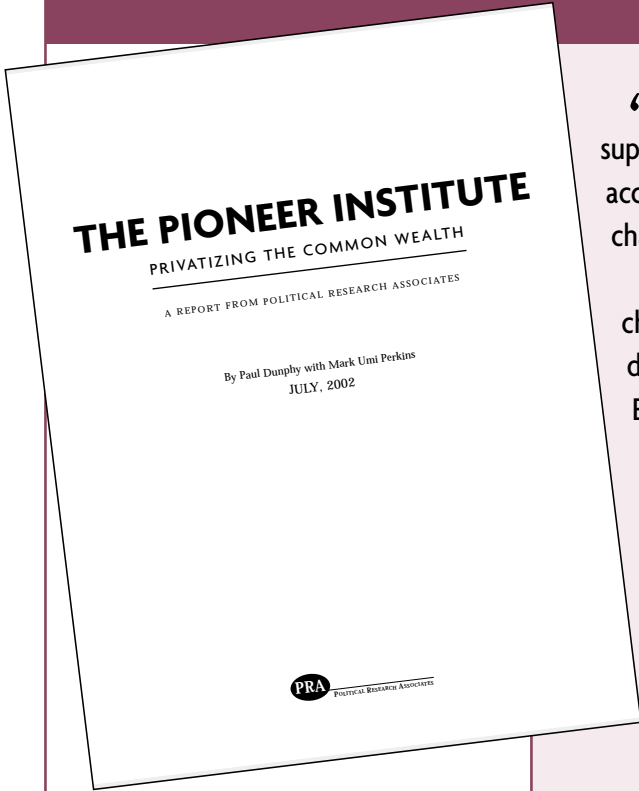
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*Chip Berlet*

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— Paul Dunphy, Co-author

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