

Opinion

by Shannon Gilreath

Right-wing gays and the dangerous appeal of Giuliani

Some gay people, for reasons inexplicable to me, vote Republican. This is so, notwithstanding the fact that, at least since 1996, the Republican platform has endorsed an anti-gay *Defense of Marriage Act* and has called efforts to include gays and lesbians in anti-discrimination laws a "distortion" of such laws.

Some of these gay voters are the true gay right-wing — gays and lesbians who vote Republican because they believe that stances on tax policy, for example, are more important than basic human dignity. They believe, I can only surmise, that the Republican commitment to rewarding the rich at the expense of the poor somehow benefits them. Or perhaps they are, deep down, self-haters.

Their self-loathing manifests itself in decision-making that is against their own meaningful inclusion in the political process and ultimately contrary to their own equality. They act on behalf of a hierarchy that openly despises and degrades them and that often claims religion as the transcendent authority for its abuses.

Other gay Republican voters seem less sinister to me. These voters have struck a spiritual compromise of sorts. They have in effect said: "We will continue to support you and your evil pronouncements in the hope that you will stick to your end of the bargain and leave us alone if we do not oppose you. We will stay in the closet, reject marriage rights and renounce our inherent equality if you will just stop your campaign to annihilate us!" It is a compromise that I can understand intellectually, even though I believe that it is ultimately misguided and dangerous.

The 2008 election promises a much more attractive danger for gays disposed to the right. Election 2008 offers the promise of Rudolph Giuliani. "Rudy," as most Americans know him, professes to believe in gay rights; after all, he was mayor of the gay Mecca — New York

City. Giuliani may be attractive to gay voters disposed to other Republican lies: the War on Terror, reducing the tax rate for the super-rich in order to benefit the economy or the lie that health insurance for low-income families is the first nudge in a slide toward Communism in the United

States. If you are gay and want to believe these things — for whatever reason — yet you have refrained from voting Republican because you somehow can't stomach voting for a party that believes you are subhuman, Giuliani may seem like a God-sent solution.

Don't bet on it. If you listen closely enough to Giuliani and you are familiar enough with the legal struggle for gay equality, you will understand that Giuliani is very dangerous indeed. Giuliani says he supports gay rights, but he also says that he will appoint justices in the model of Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas to the United States Supreme Court.

Justices Scalia and Thomas, both Republican appointees to the court, are among the staunchest opponents of gay equality. They dissented bitterly from the 2003 Supreme Court decision *Lawrence v. Texas*, which held that it is unconstitutional

for states to criminally punish gay adults who engage in consensual sex in private. Justice Scalia argued that, if the citizens of a state decide that gay sex is immoral and they want to imprison gay people for having sex in their own homes, no federal constitutional right exists to save gays from the gulag.

Incidentally, *Lawrence v. Texas* topped a recent survey of archconservative lawyers as the case they would most like to see overturned by the Supreme Court.

They may get their wish. Since *Lawrence* was decided in 2003, the make-up of the Supreme Court has shifted dramatically, placing the right of basic sexual autonomy for gay people in jeopardy. Justice Sandra O'Connor, who sided with the moderate majority in favor of gay rights, retired and was replaced by archconservative Samuel Alito. Justice John Paul Stevens, a dependable proponent of gay equality, is now over eighty years old and is expected to retire after the 2008 election. The Republicans on the court now need only one more vote to overturn the *Lawrence* decision. Giuliani has promised that he would give it to them.

There is a true yearning, I admit, to believe that the Republican establishment has finally wised up. There is real appeal in the idea that a viable candidate for the Republican nomination for president sees gays as something other than pond scum. But things are not always what they seem. Giuliani is not what he seems. He is not a savior for gays. Do not be fooled. ▽

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Giuliani was *TIME* magazine's 2001 person of the year.

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