

Foley's follies and the Republicans' quest for power

by Rev. Irene Monroe

The wedge issue that won the Republicans control of Congress back in the '90s will be the same issue that will bring them down this year — queer civil rights.

With the ball now in the GOP's court, thanks to Florida Republican Mark Foley's shenanigans with underage congressional pages as his hopeful boy toys, the house that homophobia built for the Republicans is now crumbling like a house of cards.

And with voter confidence in Republicans propitiously diving just weeks before the midterm elections and a media frenzy having fun with the story like children playing in autumn leaves, the Foley sex scandal is less about his behavior and more about the Republicans' lust for power.

In mounting a "family values" platform where no child is left behind, the Republicans were criminal in their knowing neglect of their pages.

And to equate the problem of Foley's predatory penchant for young boys to his sexual orientation ignores the overwhelming evidence that shows the preponderance of pedophiles are heterosexual.

But it also ignores the Republicans' egregious violation of queer civil rights as well as their hubris not to expect the issue they willfully trampled on to show up again in a way that would embarrass them and possibly lose them seats in the upcoming midterm election.

While I think it's God writing straight with crooked lines, Gerri Outlaw of Governors State University in Illinois said of the latest news, "I think it's funny that Republicans have a scandal of this nature and it won't go away."

Foley is certainly culpable for his actions and should be punished for it. But the real reason the sex scandal won't go away is because Foley is not the main issue here.

Instead, Foley is the prism through which we see a Republican political machine exploiting queers and children to maintain dominance by any means necessary.

When the question was posed to the Republican Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert of Illinois, about when he knew of Foley's behavior, the query suggests that others knew a right course of action could have been pursued. While it also suggests that only a few were privy to Foley's dark side, many knew at least three years ago. Jim Kolbe, Congress' only openly gay Republican member, reportedly knew six years ago.

So why did no one speak up?

"History suggests that once a political

party achieves sweeping power, it will only be a matter of time before the power becomes the entire point," editorialized *The Boston Globe* last week. "Policy, ideology, and ethics all gradually fall away, replaced by a political machine that exists to win elections and dispense the goodies that come as a result."

Foley also was the "right" queer puppet Republicans needed — politically closeted and ambitiously driven.

His 1996 vote supporting the anti-gay *Defense of Marriage Act* would lead you to think he was anti-queer. But Foley's congressional record suggests otherwise with his pro-queer position on AIDS funding, domestic partner benefits, his office being a queer-friendly safe zone, and a Human Rights Campaign voting score of 80-plus out of 100. And in his personal life, Foley was out.

But Foley was nonetheless a gatekeeper for the Republicans. His error is not that he is Republican. Foley's error is that he dissociated his queerness with his political ambition.

Politically closeted in order to maintain his voting constituency in a so-called red

state, Foley participated in the Republicans' homophobic drive for political dominance. And now Foley not only finds himself to be expendable to them, but he also finds himself to be their fall guy — as queers were designed to be in this present-day political administration.

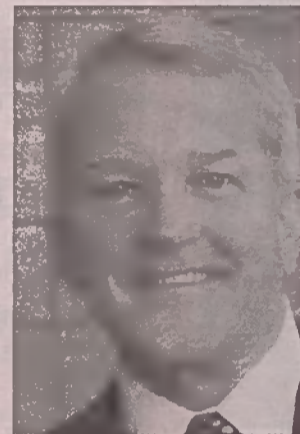
When President Bush did not win the popular vote in the 2000 election and it was discovered that at least three million conservative evangelicals stayed at home, Bush advisor Karl Rove decided "to expand the base of religious voters with a sharper, harder, more direct message to invigorate the faithful. Maybe throw a little sex and fear into the mixture. Bush needed to win re-election, and Karl Rove did not care who had to suffer on the road to victory. Victims were a part of the process. And homosexuals, he concluded, were the perfect enemy," James Moore and Wayne Slater wrote in this year's bestseller "The Architect: Karl Rove and the Master Plan for Absolute Power."

Many conservative evangelicals blame Foley for his personal immorality and the disgrace he has brought onto the Republican Party.

But the immorality and disgrace is how the Republican Party unabashedly will use children and queers to reach its political goal.

And the Republican Party's addiction to political dominance reminds me of Lord Acton's famous statement: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

The Republican Party lost its soul to gain the world. ▀



There's much more than just Mark Foley ailing the Republican Party.

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