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PERSPECTIVE

Anything But Straight

by Wayne Besen . Contributing Writer

Republicans Come To Jesus

In 1995, I arrived in Washington, D.C., as a fresh faced and doe-eyed 25-year-old. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do for a living, but I thought working on Capitol Hill might be interesting and the big buildings looked kind of cool. Although I had just served as a press secretary in a U.S. Senate primary, I wasn't a political junkie and all I really knew was that Democrats were the pro-gay "good guys" and Republicans were the anti-gay "bad guys."

For days, I scurried down the long corridors of the ornate and musty congressional offices to drop off resumes. While I was ultimately unsuccessful in attracting a job offer, I did manage to attract furtive glances from many staffers on The Hill — particularly well-scrubbed Republicans. If there were steam coming out of some of those Republican offices, I would have sworn I was in a bathhouse. Wasn't the GOP supposed to be the party that loathed homosexuals?

This bizarre dynamic was simply too mind-boggling for a political neophyte like myself to comprehend. I chalked it up to one of life's great unknowable mysteries, such as "Does God exist" or "why do straight women think Fabio is hot?"

Eleven years later, I must admit, I still don't get it. How can people go home with a same-sex partner at night and then show up at work the next morning to denounce homosexuals?

(I want to qualify this by stressing that many Republican office holders are pro-gay and there are many honorable Republican activists, such as former Log Cabin leader Patrick Guerriero.)

When I questioned gay Republicans, they would often scoff and say that the Republican Party is tolerant. As proof, they would point to the offices where they worked and proclaim that they were gay friendly environments. The Mark Foley scandal, as it turns out, proves that they weren't lying. The Republican elites in Washington love gay people, as long as they don't broadcast their sexual orientation.

Read: "Don't let the yahoos on the prairie know you are a fairy or they will stay home on Election Day and we won't get our tax cuts and promotions."

On a recent airing of the "Chris Matthews Show," commentator Tucker Carlson revealed that educated and wealthy Washington



Republicans can't stomach the religious fanatics. "The deep truth is that the elites in the Republican Party have pure contempt

for the evangelicals who put their party in power," admitted Carlson.

A combustible new book, "Tempting Faith: An Inside Story of Political Seduction," by former faith-based initiative honcho David Kuo, asserts that top GOP strategists privately called evangelical leaders "nuts" and "goofy."

It is easy to sympathize with evangelicals. For more than two decades, they had admirably outworked every other group in America to win offices from the presidency to lowly school boards — and still had time to send their kids to Jesus Camps.

In the process, the GOP became part of the conservative evangelical religion. The creepy worship of politicians, such as President Bush and Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS) seems, at times, to approach idolatry. This is why it must be incredibly painful to find that national party leaders are more likely to play show tunes than gospel hymns once safely ensconced in the Beltway. Indeed, gay activist Mike Rogers has outed so many hypocrites that it now seems more newsworthy if he reveals a Republican is actually heterosexual.

If you are having trouble understanding the betrayal felt by Christian conservatives, look at it from a different perspective. Imagine how you would feel if you came to find that Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) had offices filled with homophobic, apocalyptic Christians waiting for the End Times?

Incensed by the duplicity, the Traditional Values Coalition's Lou Sheldon has called for a "Come to Jesus meeting" between the GOP elite and their conservative base. It is clear that the Republican Party is in the midst of a major identity crises and there is no turning back. In the "come to Jesus meeting" Republicans will be forced to either abandon the goofy nutjobs or reluctantly agree to crucify gays.

Sorry if I don't shed a tear, but gay conservatives may be getting exactly what they deserve. They have helped elevate the very puritans that now may purge them. It was a good ride while it lasted, but the party is over. The only regret is that the halls of Congress won't be quite as much fun to cruise once they are gone. ▀

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