

## Time has come for re-defining modern marriage

Same sex marriage discussions can conjure up passionate disdain for the homosexual lifestyle. The Massachusetts and New Jersey Supreme Court rulings coupled with the acceptance of same-sex clergy in the Episcopal Church are forcing the plight of the same-sex couples to the front burner in the national debate on marriage. Some heterosexual people appear to have serious worry that the homosexual lifestyle is gaining mainstream legitimacy, so they want to squelch the idea before it gains a base.



SHERMAN MILLER

I chatted with some late fifty-and early sixty-something Christians to get their view on the symbolism of the New Jersey Supreme Court same sex ruling. One of these persons is known to take some liberal stances on issues. Yet they all displayed disdain towards the idea of having same-sex marriage legitimated. One chap argued that there are legal things that need to be resolved as inheritance rights, but he felt that same sex relationships should be called anything except marriage. Another chap argued that Europe and Japan are dying today because people stopped having children.

I asked the group if we are forcing our Judeo-Christian beliefs on people who may be atheists or agnostics who might accept same-sex relationships? They did not move from their conservative religious positions. It was clear that although we claim not to believe in a state religion America is really underpinned by Christian values.

In light of the New Jersey same sex ruling, Reverend Dr. Peter Bramble of New York, an Episcopal priest, was asked to share his feelings on the acceptance of same-sex clergy relationships in the American Episcopal Church. He declared, "The Episcopal Church is an agent of the devil!" He sees himself as an Orthodox Episcopalian who wants no part of same sex marriage in the clergy.

Reverend Bramble passionately argued that marriage is between a man and a woman and sex should produce a child. He saw same sex relationships as selfish because they offered gratification to the two people involved but they do not produce the next generation.

Reverend Bramble poured forth, "The sperm dies and no child comes from it! A man shouldn't sleep with another man. I just don't believe in it." Then he ardently worried aloud over the disappearance of the United States when same-sex partners started to die out leaving no children because he felt that people are unwilling to make the sacrifice to parent the next generation.

In pondering changes in the laws to allow same sex marriage, the obvious question becomes, "Should polygamy also be legitimated because de facto polygamy may already be today's underground marital paradigm in some sectors of the nation?" The U.S. Census Bureau reported on Percent of Households That are Married-Couple Families: 2005. We marveled at fewer than 50 percent (49.7 percent) of the households are married. However, what was not highlighted was that Washington, D.C. had only 21.8 percent of the household married.

Do we look at D.C. as a model of tomorrow's marital direction for U.S. households? If the D.C. marital direction is a prelude of tomorrow, then both issues of same sex marriage and de facto polygamy need to be included in the national debate of a redefinition of the modern marriage. On the other hand, the definition of marriage has stood the test of hundreds of years, so I am not personally convinced that there is sufficient need to redefine it now.

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## Is America ready to elect a president who isn't white?

There is no doubt that the 2006 midterm elections have set the stage for some historic developments for women and minorities in the political arena. The Democratic Party's success this past Election Day has paved the way for a number of firsts.

With the party's takeover of the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. Nancy Pelosi becomes the first female Speaker of the House, while Rep. Charles Rangel is poised to take over the helm of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee — the first African American to have the job. And in Massachusetts, Deval Patrick, chief of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division under President Clinton, won his bid to become the second elected African American governor in U.S. history after former Virginia Gov. Doug Wilder, who served in the 1990s.



MARC MORIAL

By the same token, Tennessee Rep. Harold Ford, who ran a remarkable campaign, lost in his bid to become the first African American senator from the South since Reconstruction. Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell, Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael Steele and former Pittsburgh Steeler Lynn Swan were all defeated in their respective races for governor. And in Michigan, voters gave affirmative action a victory by approving Proposal 2, which bars use of race- and gender-conscious remedies by state colleges and universities as well as governmental agencies.

But the recent electoral outcomes still beg the question — if the nation is willing to have an African-American lead one of Capitol Hill's most influential committees, a black female Secretary of State and a female speaker of the House, is it ready to elect a female and/or African-American to be president?

According to a recent Gallup Survey, the answer is a resounding yes: 58 percent said they believed the United States is ready to elect a black president and 61 percent — a female. But are voters ready to put their vote where their mouth is?

With more than 9,000 public officeholders nationwide, blacks have made major progress on the political front since the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In 1967, Edward Brooke of Massachusetts became the first popularly elected African-American to serve in the U.S. Senate. In 1969, the Congressional Black Caucus was formed with 13 members. In 1972, New York Rep. Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to the U.S. House, showed that a black woman could throw her hat into the presidential ring "in spite of hopeless odds" to demonstrate her "sheer will and refusal to accept the status quo."

By 1984, Reverend Jesse Jackson galvanized the black community and liberal democratic base in bringing his candidacy from the fringe to the mainstream within the Democratic Party.

"White folks were indignant that he was running," said Eric Easter, who worked on both of Jackson's campaigns, in a 2003 Village Voice story. "And then black folks got indignant that they were indignant..."

There was this very strong visceral reaction to his presence in the race, over whether this was the right time and right place for an African American to be, and that galvanized his base."

By 1988, he more than doubled his 1984 results, winning 11 primaries before losing to Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis. In 1996, Alan Keyes ran for the GOP but did better success in 2000, taking 14 percent of votes in the Iowa caucuses and 21 percent in the Utah primary. Some news organizations even declared him the winner of the presidential debates.

In 2004, Rev. Al Sharpton and former Sen. Carol Moseley Braun, the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Senate, vied for the Democratic nomination, collecting few delegates.

Not since 1988 has a minority candidate seen Jackson's success. Now, two decades later, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama may be just the candidate to make history. Largely unknown in 2004, Obama emerged from a very crowded field to win a U.S. Senate primary, paving the way for keynote speaking opportunity at his party's national convention. His performance caused the nation to take note, and his subsequent landslide over Keyes sealed the deal.

A December 2005 article in The New Republic argued that Obama would have his best chance of winning the White House in 2008, with no incumbent president or vice president in the race.

Time magazine recently put Obama on its cover with the headline — "Why Barack Obama Could Be The Next President." An editorial in the Chicago Tribune compared a possible Obama bid to President John F. Kennedy's successful run in 1960.

According to a recent CNN poll, the Illinois Democrat trailed only New York Sen. Hillary Clinton in a list of potential Democratic presidential contenders. Of registered Democrats, he drew support from 17 percent — compared to Clinton's 28 percent. He still outperformed former Vice President Al Gore (13 percent), 2006 Vice Presidential hopeful John Edwards (13 percent) and Sen. John Kerry (12 percent).

On the GOP side, neither Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice nor Keyes was even included as a possible presidential candidate. But does an African American like Obama or Keyes or even Rice have a realistic chance of taking the White House in 2008 or 2112 or even 2116? Or is the hype just fodder for pundits and journalists?

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## John Kerry told an unspoken truth about military

Ok, so now we have heard enough about Senator Kerry's attempt at being witty. As you remember, one week prior to the November 7th election, the Republican establishment went after Massachusetts Senator John Kerry. Kerry was quoted: "You know, education, if you make the most of it, you study hard, you do your homework and you make an effort to be smart, you can do well. If you don't, you get stuck in Iraq."

The Republicans seized on this remark in order to go after Kerry for allegedly "troop-bashing." Kerry fired back stating that he was tired of people (particularly Republicans) who never served in war attacking those who did. Bravo, Senator Kerry! In any case Senator Kerry apologized for his bungling an attempt at a joke. Nevertheless the Republicans were not interested in stopping their feeding frenzy.

Kerry's remarks may have, however, been a Freudian slip. In other words, while I believe that he intended to make a wisecrack criticizing President Bush, there may, at the same time, have been something else that he was thinking about, something that I think is quite important.

What Kerry's remarks actually point to is something that you and I both know to be true: although the military is called "voluntary," there is a draft. The draft is both an economic draft and a draft for those who are lost between the cracks of society. If one has few economic options; if one has not done well in school; if one is of color; if one is from an economically depressed region, the military can often look like not only the best option, but the only option.

This is not troop-bashing. It is a reality. To many of our youth, particularly prior to the invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq, looked at the military as a means to stabilize their lives and, perhaps, get some skills. For many urban youth, the military looked like an alternative to either gang life or life in some low wage industry. My high school-aged daughter has many friends that fit into one or another of these categories. I am thinking of one right now and I can hear in his voice the frustration of feeling that he has no alternative but to enter the military and possibly die in Afghanistan or Iraq.

So, where is the controversy? Instead of focusing on Kerry stumbling over his words, there should be a discussion about why there are few alternatives for our youth. In fact, we should use this incident to engage in a broader discussion that covers not only education but also the economy. I wish that Senator Kerry had used this moment to talk about what happens to youth who do not do well in school, or to discuss the fact that with the declining number of high wage jobs in manufacturing for semi-skilled workers, the chances for working class youth to succeed — be they white, black, brown, yellow, red — is in a continuous decline; actually a tail-spin.

It would be too much to expect that the Republicans would have such a serious discussion since they have been the foremost champions of the stomping on working people and the enhanced riches for the rich. But I keep coming back to my daughter's friend. I want to know why this young man — intelligent, well-spoken, completed high school — felt that his only real chance to get ahead was to put himself literally and figuratively in the bull's eye, in the middle of a war that he knows to be illegal and that he does not wish fight.

Why, Mr. Bush?

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## Three commandments for Democrat majority on Capitol Hill

By Rev. Barbara Reynolds

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

If the Democrats don't flub it, their winning majorities in both houses of Congress will result in one of the largest transferences of political power in recent history with the White House providing icing on the cake in 2008.

Or, it could become a short-lived blip and a return to stupidity as usual with the Republicans snatching the power levels back in the next presidential election.

While the Democrats will receive much advice on how to avoid mistakes on the big-ticket items, such as Iraq, Katrina, and health coverage,

here are a few principals they should add to their list, if they want to stay in office. Since the nation generally ignores the Ten Commandments, I suggest just three.

1 THOU MUST NOT DRAG SKUNKS INTO THE LIVING ROOM.

Once skunks are brought indoors they smell up the place and don't have the decency to leave.

In the 2004 election, the Republicans dragged same-sex marriages out of the closet into the living rooms of America as a political strategy to reach certain kinds of Christians.

Some misguided blacks, for example, lost their minds and

went running after same-sexers, who might represent less than a tenth of 1 percent of the nation's 300 million population and forgot about the Iraqi war deaths and the billions it drained from funding student tuition, health and housing.

This year, the Republicans didn't want to talk about gay things. They wanted skunk politics to go back into the closet. But they wouldn't. Out popped Republican Rep. Mark Foley, the ex-head of the House's exploited children's committee, who was sending nasty e-mails to male congressional pages.

2 THOU SHALL NOT SNATCH UP THE CARPET.

History provides many

example of how as soon as African-Americans work their way to the top the rules change.

There are high expectations that for the first time in history, so many black Democrats will chair powerful committees. John Conyers, Jr. will chair Judiciary, Bennie Thompson, Homeland Security, Alcie Hastings, Intelligence and Charles Rangel, the House Ways and Means.

Can't you imagine how certain folks in high places are shaking in their boots that these brave and honorable men, who have been faithful to the black and poor, will have their hands on committees with oversight on FBI

secrets, how resources are allocated to disaster areas, and what corporations have been stealing billions in no-bid contracts?

Nevertheless those posts are based on seniority and should be engraved in stone. Less certain is that of South Carolinian Rep. James Clyburn, the present Democratic Caucus chair, who is in line to be majority whip.

3 THOU SHALT NOT 'DIS' GOD

Until U.S. Sen. Barack Obama arrived on the scene and began talking about God, it seemed the high-ranking Democrats tried to confine God to the sidelines.

So often Christian

Democrats grieved over the sins of increasing poverty and the killing of innocent civilians by the thousands in Iraq.

Yet, few high-ranking Democrats voiced concerns that God could not be pleased with the current affairs of state and allowed the Republicans to pass themselves off as the moral voice of the universe. With the help of the media, the Republicans got away with defining Christianity as the province of white male evangelicals.

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