

Candace Gingrich

continued from page 3

creates the possibility for more truth around her." In that sense, I think coming out can be a way of becoming a role model and becoming an activist yourself. But I don't approve of outing.

Coming out is such a personal, strong step to take that I don't think it's fair for anyone to dictate when you should come out. Now, I have to admit, though, if I found out that, say, Jesse Helms was gay, or if I found out that somebody who was out there saying anti-gay things or working in opposition to all the things we've been working for, was gay, I might, maybe, condone outing them. But for the everyday average American person, I think outing would be wrong.

FP: What's it like from your perspective when your brother is nailed in the media? For example, right now, no one in America can escape the reality of the Oklahoma bombing. And several stories have questioned whether Newt Gingrich's rhetoric may have contributed to a climate of intolerance and hatred throughout this country. He's denied that fairly angrily. What is your reaction when you read or hear those kinds of stories?

CG: Well, I'm not placing blame. It's not like I believe there is an actual physical tie between conservative Republicans and these kinds of things that happen. But I also see what hatred does to a country and to people. For there to be this open climate and open opportunity for people to say whatever hate-filled thing they want to say, and have it be heard, can only result in negative things to our community because of the attacks they're making on us and in the country at large.

You know the saying we're all familiar with—

"Hate is not a family value." Well, it shouldn't be an American value either. So having those radical right voices talking all the time, whether it's in a political forum or whether it's in their religious forum, I don't think that it helps things.

FP: Recently President Clinton asked Americans to condemn hate speech, and called for an end to inflammatory political rhetoric. When Newt was asked if he thought Clinton was talking about him or his Republican supporters, he replied, "I'm sure he wasn't speaking about us. I don't think we should tolerate or in any way support people who advocate killing Americans." He didn't say anything about harassing or discriminating against gay men and lesbians, though.

Do you think that the Oklahoma bombing incident and the apparent motive of militant right-wing hatred is going to help Newt Gingrich or his political peers to better understand what it is you're talking about?

CG: That's a nice thought.

FP: That was diplomatic.

CG: Well, I don't think that they understand sometimes the scope and the extent of the effect their voices have, and certainly there are some voices in the House and Senate that use much more hate-filled rhetoric than others. If they could understand better, that would be really nice, because having those voices silenced can only be a good thing. Unfortunately, that's still not going to stop them from producing propaganda videos and things. And it's still not going to stop them from publishing their newsletters and doing the things that they do. But that's a nice thing to think about.

FP: Would you be willing to point these things

out to your brother in person?

CG: Yeah. Absolutely. He has to wake up and realize that whether it's direct or indirect, his opinions and his pseudo-tolerance and his disregard of us as American citizens can only perpetuate those thoughts, that hatred, that fear, of the gay and lesbian population. That's what lends to the violence that is enacted against us. And it's because of people that have no compassion, people that don't understand, people that are motivated by hatred and fear.

You know, it's like the argument about television. Did the program cause the kid to set the fire? Who knows, but it certainly doesn't help.

FP: The day after the photo op where Newt stood with his arm around you and said, "She's my sister and I love her," he said he doesn't support protection for lesbians and gays against job discrimination. What do you think his or your family's reaction would be if you were gay-bashed or if you were fired solely because you're a lesbian?

CG: That's a really good question. Since I haven't gotten a chance to sit down and talk with him about this stuff, I don't know what his response would be. But I know that my family would be appalled at what had happened to me and I'm sure that his stance would be one of compassion and concern, too.

Unfortunately, I think Newt has some very loud voices that have been whispering in his ears about these issues, and so far, he's been listening to those voices. I think the incident you just described—the photo op and then his saying those things about job protection the next day—is a direct result of somebody calling him up that evening and saying, "Hey, quit saying that your

sister's lesbianism is OK." I don't think some people liked him talking about ours just being an American family in all of its complexity. Somebody probably called him up that evening and said, "Look, these aren't the kinds of things that you should be saying. Please get back to your original position."

Of course, I don't know these things for fact, but some of the things he says are almost verbatim things that have come out of Lou Sheldon's mouth or things that have come out of Ralph Reed's mouth. You can't help but notice there might be a connection.

FP: So how do you define family values?

CG: Well, when I think of family values, I think of some of the things I learned growing up that I perceived to be important to me as a member of a family and an American citizen. That's making sure your family has security, making sure there's support and love in that family. It's honesty, integrity. It's the values of, "Look, we're a family, and regardless of the makeup, we consider ourselves to be a family and to be important, too."

FP: Some political observers have theorized that now that the first 100 days of the 104th Congress are over and the Contract With America has been completed, Congress has got an awful lot of time to focus on social issues, and things like AIDS funding and gay rights protections could come under fire. What do you think?

CG: Well, one of the things that I was told, and I'm sure it's probably true, is that in its first draft, when Newt and his people were coming up with what items to put in the contract, they made sure that all of the items had at least a 60 percent

continued page 11

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