

# Bad Boys, Nasty Boys: Out of the GOP's Closet

Michael Parenti | Feb 06, 2008Common Dreams

Republican party politicos espouse an unflagging devotion to old-fashioned morality and family values, inveighing heavily against gay marriage, abortion, homosexuality, adultery, feminism, crime, stem-cell research, secularism, and liberalism—all of which they tend to lump together as different facets of the same evil decadence.

GOP leaders dilate on the need to “put God back into public life.” Many of them even claim to be directly guided by their deity’s mandate when legislating and governing. Their private deeds, however, frequently betray their words. Consider this incomplete sampling of politically prominent “social conservatives” who preach the conventional virtues to their constituents while practicing something else in their off-hours.

Recently-deceased Representative Henry Hyde, Illinois Republican, played a key role in the impeachment campaign waged against the adulterous president Bill Clinton. The several obituaries I read about Hyde failed to mention that he had a six-year liaison with a young married mother of three children. The woman’s former husband blamed Hyde for the divorce that followed from the affair, and for the emotional damage inflicted on his children. Hyde dismissed the affair as “a youthful indiscretion”—it having ended when he was just a callow youngster of 43 or so. In 1992, Hyde divorced his wife of 45 years. Soon after that she died and he quickly remarried.

Representative Bob Livingston, Louisiana Republican, married with four children, resigned as House speaker-elect after his marital infidelities made the headlines in 1998.

Speaker of the House, Republican Newt Gingrich, led the charge against the philandering Clinton while himself carrying on an affair with a congressional aide. Gingrich hastened a divorce action against his (second) wife while she was hospitalized with cancer in order that he might marry the aide. At one point Gingrich’s ailing ex-wife and children had to get material assistance from their local church, having received insufficient sums from Gingrich himself. In 2007, he claimed to have come to grips with his “personal failures,” having sought God’s forgiveness.

Republican Baptist minister Bill Randall, who had been aggressively touted by the Republican party as a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in Florida, admitted that he had

fathered an illegitimate child in the 1980s. After confirming the child's existence, he changed his story the next day during a press interview, suddenly insisting that his teenage son was the father. Sensing that no one would swallow that story, Randall again reversed course and admitted to paternity. He did everybody a favor by dropping out of the 1998 congressional race.

Bob Barr was a Georgia GOP congressman until 2003, after which he became a conservative activist. While still married to his first wife, he was romancing the woman who would become his second wife. Barr was on record as a staunch right-to-lifer, but this did not prevent him from driving wife #2 to a clinic and paying the costs for her abortion. He soon took on a new mistress who became wife #3 shortly after he dumped #2. While in Congress, Barr authored the "Defense of Marriage Act," probably with good reason.

Three leading candidates for the Republican 2008 presidential nomination, Rudolph Giuliani, John McCain, and Newt Gingrich, had five divorces between them, all involving adultery. On the Democratic side, the three front runners, John Edwards, Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama, had neither divorces nor infidelities. Yet it was the Republicans who laid claim to being keepers of traditional family values, while damning the liberals for their amorality and profligacy.

In 2007, Senator David Vitter, a Louisiana Republican and family-values man, made the news for having patronized a prostitution ring in Washington, D.C. for several years, and earlier having used the services of a New Orleans brothel over a five-month period. Vitter refused to resign, assuring everyone that "I asked for and received forgiveness from God and my wife."

Along with the hypocritical philanderers, there are the subterranean gay blades. In 2007, Bob Allen, Florida Republican state legislator, married with one child, was arrested in a public restroom after offering to perform oral sex on an undercover officer for \$20.

Another restroom adventurer was Senator Larry Craig, Republican of Idaho, an outspoken opponent of gays in the military and gay marriage. Craig was famously arrested for directing sexual advances toward an undercover police officer in a men's toilet at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The police had been monitoring the restroom because of complaints about sexual activities there. Craig pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct. A number of other men, including one from Craig's college days, identified the senator as having engaged in sexual activity with them or having made overtures with that intent, including an encounter in the restrooms at Union Station in Washington, D.C.

A few weeks later another GOP politico who consistently voted against gay rights, Washington State representative Richard Curtis, was caught with his panties down. Dressed in women's lingerie he met a man in a local erotic video store, and went with him to a downtown hotel for a night of oral and anal copulation. Once the story broke, Curtis resigned from office. By now, word

on the Internet was that GOP stood for “Gay Old Party” or “Greedy Old Perverts,” and that Richard Curtis had left public life “so he could spend more time masturbating with his family.”

There are the three classic cases of ultraconservative anti-gay gays who go back half a century: FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, McCarthyite investigator and Washington lobbyist Roy Cohn, and Cardinal Francis Spellman of the New York Roman Catholic archdiocese. All three of these prominent right-wingers and keepers of American homophobic vigilance were themselves secretly full-blown homosexuals who sometimes partied together in the company of choice male escorts---back in the days when the press dared not touch such stories.

In the above cases, what is deplorable is not only the obviously hypocritical inconsistency between professed beliefs and private behavior, but the professed beliefs themselves; beliefs that advocate discrimination against gays, brand prostitutes as criminals, equate abortion with murder, denounce divorce as a mortal threat to family and nation, and treat sex between unmarried consenting adults (even of the heterosexual variety) as sinful fornication.

Consequently, a noticeable number of conservative politicos face the daunting task of trying to submerge their lascivious desires in order to live up to their puritanical mouthings, trapped as they are in an unyielding cycle of surreptitious sin and furious public denunciations of those same sins.

In recent years, Republican ranks appeared to be riddled not only with sexual hypocrites but, far worse, sexual predators. There was the former Republican mayor of Waterbury, Connecticut, Philip Giordano who is now serving a 37-year sentence for sexual abuse in 2001 of two girls, ages 8 and 10.

Jim West, conservative Republican mayor of Spokane, Washington, backed a measure to prohibit gays and lesbians from teaching in public schools on the presumption that they might get too close to their pupils. Meanwhile he was using his city hall computer to troll for sex with high school boys. Two men accused West of molesting them when they were Boy Scouts and he was a troop leader. He was ousted in a recall election in 2005.

A GOP congressman from Florida, Mark Foley, was caught sending sexually explicit emails to teenaged boys who had served as congressional pages. He reportedly invited one page to engage in oral sex with him, an offer the boy refused. Foley chaired the House Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children, which introduced stricter legislation for tracking sexual predators. Republican congressional leaders had received complaints about him from congressional pages---which they repeatedly failed to act upon. Foley resigned from Congress in 2006.

At that time, allegations of improper interactions with congressional pages were leveled at another Republican Congressman, Jim Kolbe of Arizona, who decided not to run for reelection.

In 2007, a Florida federal prosecutor working for the Bush administration, operating in “one of the most conservative United States attorney’s offices in the country,” dedicated to a hardline law-and-order approach, was charged with traveling across state lines to have sex with a five-year-old girl. J. D. Roy Atchison, had been chatting online with an undercover officer who posed as a mother offering to let men have sex with her young daughter. When arrested en route to his would-be rendezvous with a five-year-old, Atchison was carrying a doll and petroleum jelly. While detained in a federal prison in Michigan, he committed suicide.

In such instances, the most reprehensible thing is neither the hypocrisy nor the professed beliefs, but the behavior itself, involving the molestation and sexual assault of children and unwilling adolescents. The perpetrators are not merely hypocrites, they are criminals. In these cases, they really are sinners.

So the holy hypocrites-philanderers, homophobic gays, and pedophiles---crow their devotion to traditional morality while pursuing material and emotional plunder more rapaciously than any of us ordinary infidels and libertines. Looking at the above cases, and the many others that one could add if space and patience allowed, we can conclude that professions of religiosity are no guarantee of moral behavior. If anything, the hypocrites use religion as a bludgeon to be brandished against liberal opponents in order that they themselves might better pursue their aggrandizing goals and desires---no matter how selfish and destructive these may be. If this be morality, who needs degeneracy?