

Theocracy Alert

A woman of integrity and Louis Sheldon's color-coding (for the camps)

By Mel Seesholtz, Ph.D.

Online Journal Contributing Writer

June 21, 2005—Luoluo Hong was the Dean of Students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She's leaving the university because, contrary to previous policies and recommendations, the state of Wisconsin has decided to refuse to provide benefits to domestic partners.

The decision came despite Dean Hong and other university officials documenting that providing such benefits is crucial to attracting and retaining top faculty and staff, a truth already recognized by most [Fortune 500 companies](#).

"When I came here three years ago, Wisconsin was on the cutting edge of civil rights for lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders," said Dean Hong. "That legacy has not been my experience. . . . I've had job candidates interested in domestic partner benefits, but when they find out they're not available they say no," Hong told the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). "I have colleagues who have started looking for new jobs. It's very demoralizing for them."

And before anyone suspects self-interest, Dean Hong is a married heterosexual who does not need domestic partner benefits.

Since recruiting and retaining top faculty and staff are clearly in the students' and the university's best interests, why were the benefits denied? The "official" reason was the cost, but the further one looks into the matter, the more clearly familiar forces become visible.

The nonpartisan Legislature Fiscal Bureau estimated the university plan could cost up to \$2.2 million, depending on how many system employees signed up. Acknowledging that, Gov. Jim Doyle offered a stopgap plan giving the UW system \$1 million over the next two years to provide the benefits to same-sex and opposite-sex couples. It was rejected by the Joint Finance Committee by a vote of 13–3. One Democrat joined the Republican majority.

Rep. Mark Pocan offered another option that would not have cost the state anything, but would leave the university system free to find ways to fund the benefits. He also reads a letter from a UW-M researcher who had brought \$2.5 million into the university from external grants, but who was now considering leaving UW-M because it refused to recognize his eight-year domestic partnership. Mr. Pocan's proposal was also rejected.

Then came the real bottom line: "Pocan noted Republican legislative leaders voted last week to hire a conservative Christian firm to represent lawmakers in the suit" that led to these decisions.

Dean Hong is truly a woman of character and integrity, and Rep. Pocan was absolutely right when he accused Republicans of playing to the Christian Right. That's the "pro-family" Christian Right as they so often refer to themselves. How can they be "pro-family" when they fight against families and their well being?

They can't be, and they are not. Stripped of their holier-than-thou self portraits, they're dangerous borderline sociopaths using the religious-political dogma they've cobbled together to propagate intolerance of gay people, their families and anyone else they object to, as they advance what can legitimately be called a "theofascist agenda."

The Christian Right has become an [anti-gay industry](#) intent on destroying *any* program that provides legal, social or economic recognition to gay Americans and their families. Leading the charge [against families and equality](#) and into theofascism are the rabidly homophobic Rev. Louis P. Sheldon and his Traditional Values Coalition (TVC).

Obsessed with homosexuals since 1972, Sheldon is exploiting new ways to spread his anti-gay, anti-family messages. A recent [article](#) by University of Massachusetts sociologist Dr. Janice M. Irvine, entitled "Anti-Gay Politics Online: A Study of Sexuality and Stigma on National Websites" in the academic journal [Sexuality Research and Social Policy](#), documented TVC's increasing use of the Internet to spread its propaganda. But TVC is not alone in exploiting new ways to spread intolerance, fear and hate. A June 17 [story](#) in Focus on the Family's CitizenLink newsletter boasted that similar messages by James Dobson are now being "podcast."

Meanwhile, Sheldon is also pursuing a more traditional means of disseminating his homophobia, which, of course, is advertised on the TVC web site. Like Dobson, he's written a [book](#), the color-coded cover of which echoes a history the reverend would like to repeat, but most civilized people would like to avoid.

Notice the [color scheme](#) on the cover of Sheldon's book. Against a sinister black background the word "agenda" appears in pink and the words "the homosexual plan to change America" are highlighted in a yellow banner. How appropriate. The Nazis made homosexuals wear pink triangles and Jews wear yellow stars.

The color-coding exposes a deeper, more insidious connection. One of Sheldon's favorite myths is that gays are inveterate child molesters. But as University of Chicago historian George Chauncey pointed out in *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate Over Gay Equality*, the stereotype of gays as child molesters grew out of the anxious years following the Second World War, when communists, criminal syndicates, and other half-invisible specters seemed to threaten the nation and when demonic new stereotypes of homosexuals were created and backed by government sanctions. . . . The old tropes of anti-Semitic rhetoric . . . were especially influential in shaping depictions of homosexuals. . . . And like Jews, they were depicted as a threat to children. In the most dangerous element of this new image, the escalation of antigay policing was accompanied, inspired, and justified by press and police campaigns that fomented stereotypes of homosexuals as child molesters.

Sheldon and the TVC love using stereotypes and myths; they're the basis of their theofascist campaign against gay Americans (see "America's New McCarthyism: Homosexual Stereotypes, Myths, and the Politics of Fear" in the August 2005 issue of *Popular Culture Review*). But the color scheme for Sheldon's book does match the "thoughts" of Bill Banuchi, executive director of the New York Christian Coalition. Rev. Banuchi believes gay people should be required to wear "warning labels." From his June 12, 2005 [press release](#):

We put warning labels on cigarette packs because we know that smoking takes 1 to 2 years off the average life span, yet we "celebrate" a lifestyle [a Gay Pride event] that we know spreads every kind of sexually transmitted disease and takes at least 20 years off the average lifespan according to the 2005 issue of the refereed scientific journal *Psychological Reports*.

As a 365Gay.com [article](#) noted, *Psychological Reports* "regularly publishes articles described by many mainstream psychologists as misleading and faulty. The homosexuality morbidity study was conducted by the conservative anti-gay Family Research Institute."

Psychological Reports' own [web site](#) identifies the "refereed" journal's agenda: "experimental, theoretical, and speculative articles in the field of general psychology; comments; special reviews. Controversial material . . . is welcomed . . ."

Even a cursory visit to Family Research Institute's [website](#) confirms they are almost as obsessively homophobic as the Traditional Values Coalition and its chairman, who has suggested rounding up all HIV+ people (and gays, of course) and putting them in concentration camps. Banuchi's "warning labels" are a natural corollary. As 365Gay.com noted, "It is not the first time gays have been told they should wear labels. In Nazi Germany gays were forced to wear the pink triangle to differentiate them from other internees at concentration camps."

How coincidental that TVC began promoting Sheldon's book just days after Vienna announced a memorial to honor gay victims of the Nazis.

In announcing [plans](#) for the memorial, Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, said that like other groups who were targeted, this group of victims should be remembered in a year marking the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe.

"It is critical in this . . . year to remember this group of victims, who were not only forgotten . . . but even prosecuted," Mailath-Pokorny said, referring to laws in postwar Austria that forbade homosexual behavior. Such laws made it even more difficult for gays to stand up and make others take notice of what occurred to them during the war.

Having taken a cue from the Nazis, the Christian Right is also taking a cue from al-Qaeda and organizing "cell groups" to infiltrate communities and spread the word of faith-based political bigotry. As the Christian news service AgapePress [reported](#), "the cell-group movement [is] a trend that is growing in popularity daily."

The [2008 elections](#) are coming, and the leaders of the theofascist American Taliban are getting ready . . .