

Theocracy Alert

Following the money trail: The profitable business of discrimination and hate

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"Their tone [against homosexuality] has become quite amazing after the Lawrence decision. What was really striking was while the Klan and neo-Nazis spoke out against the Lawrence decision, the really vicious statements came from well-known leaders of the Christian Right."—Mark Potok, Southern Poverty Law Center and editor of Intelligence Report

"Homosexuals are the true inventors of Nazism and the guiding force behind many Nazi atrocities."—Scott Lively, co-author of *The Pink Swastika*

"They [leaders of the Christian Right] profit from homophobia. They are using anti-gay rhetoric to line their own pockets."—Jason Cianciotto, research director for the Policy Institute, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

June 11, 2005—In her June 3, 2005 [article](#) "Efforts of 'anti-gay industry' chronicled in new report: Civil rights group targets religious conservatives," Dyana Bagby summarized the Intelligence Report's 23-page [exposé](#) that documented how the holier-than-thou leaders of the Christian Right are using homophobia not only to enhance their own political power through bigotry and hate, but also to fill their organizations' coffers and line their own already deep pockets.

Further documentation of that claim came in a recent Denver Post [article](#) by Eric Gorski entitled "Focus is on politics of nonprofits: The fundraising success of a new James Dobson group spurs debate on the rules." An Associated Press [story](#) also reported on the profitability of Focus on the Family's Focus Action.

What's Focus Action? Here's Dr. Dobson [explanation](#).

Note the conspicuous promo for his hysterically anti-gay book *Marriage Under Fire*, in which Dobson argued legalizing same-sex marriages would not only destroy society and civilization, but would bring about the end of the world: "The culture war will be over, and the world may soon become 'as it was in the days of Noah' (Matthew 24:37)." According to their federal tax forms, the second largest expenditure in Focus Action's first six months of existence was \$1.17 million for the distribution of *Marriage Under Fire* and its companion films, video and audio products.

Contributing to a non-profit ministry that genuinely seeks to help people is one thing. Contributing to a "ministry's" political arm that's dedicated to hurting and demeaning people as deeply and extensively as possible is quite another matter. In the case of Focus Action, the vast majority of their funds go to help prevent gays and lesbians—2 percent of the population—from gaining civil equality in their personal and [professional](#) lives. And how much money are we talking about?

In the first six months of its existence (April through September 2004), James Dobson's Focus Action took in \$8.8 million, all from "individuals" whose identity is protected, so there's no way to know if these "individuals" actually represent political and religious organizations and/or corporations. Shouldn't there

be a public record of who's contributing large sums of money to help influence government and public policy?

One 152 donors contributed \$5,000 or more. The largest contribution was \$150,000. Five donors contributed \$100,000 each. "That is quite a lot of money," noted Frances Hill, tax program director at the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center. "But with Focus on the Family, it is not so surprising. They have an enormous money engine."

And on what does Focus Action plan to spend its money in the months to come? According to Tom Minnery, vice president of public policy for Focus Action, the first order of business is to revive and pass the proposed Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. That's money spent to turn the Constitution into a document that proscribes rights rather than guarantees them.

Complementing that campaign is the distinctly un-Christian permission Mark Potok noted in the Intelligence Report exposé: "These [Christian] leaders are acting in a sense as permission-givers for violence." They are aided in their call to hate and violence by others who believe as they do: politicians such as that paragon of ethics [Tom DeLay](#), "[Justice Sunday](#)" performer Bill Frist, and "the uniter" who divided the American people as never before, George W. Bush.

Professor of health sciences and psychology John D. Moore made the same point in his article "The president's assault on gay youth" that appeared on Advocate.com, March 8, 2004:

When President George W. Bush decided to publicly embrace a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, cloaking his remarks in the guise of religion, he psychologically violated millions upon millions of gay and lesbian youth around the nation as well as the many millions more who are their parents and relatives. In short, Mr. Bush has made it fashionable to declare "open season" on a segment of our society. . . .

Consider what one 20-year-old student wrote in an essay about this topic in a class I instruct on gender psychology: "I have beaten up faggots before, and I used to feel guilty—not anymore! Bush says fags don't count, so I guess it's cool to do it."

Dr. Moore's article is no longer available at Advocate.com, but a meaningful [letter](#) about it is.

Bush and his messianic Republican cohorts are gung-ho about using violence to bring freedom and equal civil rights to all the citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan. At home, they're just as gung-ho about "violently" restricting freedoms, denying equal civil rights to some Americans, and changing the country's bedrock document to ensure those same Americans remain second-class citizens.

The leaders of the evangelical Christian Right—specifically, James Dobson, Louis Sheldon (Traditional Values Coalition), Don Wildmon (American Family Association), Gary Bauer (Campaign for Working Families), Tony Perkins (Family Research Council), and the two patriarchs of evangelical hate, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell—are gung-ho about protecting the civil rights and religious freedom of Christians abroad. At home, they're just as gung-ho about using their religious freedom to deny civil rights to certain Americans and encourage hatred of them and anyone who subscribes to [a religion other than Christianity](#), but only *their* perverted form of "Christianity." As Pat Robertson definitively stated: "You say you're supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists and this, that, and the other thing. Nonsense. I don't have to be nice to the spirit of the Antichrist."

The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this [the attacks of 9/11] because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say: you helped this happen. —Jerry Falwell, on Pat Robertson's 700 Club broadcast, September 13, 2001.

Beyond the money meant to support discrimination against some Americans and the rhetoric that incites violence against those same Americans, perhaps Matt Miller asked the fundamental question in his June 4, New York Times [OpEd](#), *Is Persuasion Dead?*

Is it possible in America today to convince anyone of anything he doesn't already believe? . . . The signs are not good. Ninety percent of political conversation amounts to dueling "talking points." . . . Let's face it: the purpose of most political speech is not to persuade but to win, be it power, ratings, celebrity or even cash.

Miller made another astute observation: "governing successfully requires influencing how people actually think. Yet when the habits of persuasion have been buried, the possibilities of leadership are interred as well."

Rational "persuasion" and ethical political "leadership" do indeed go hand-in-hand. But they require "leaders" to listen to those with different opinions, consider their arguments and, if necessary, change their minds and positions. Changing one's mind is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of strength. It's called "learning."

Has Tom DeLay or Bill Frist or George W. had face-to-face meetings with and listened to the arguments of groups representing gay and lesbian Americans and their families? No, they have not. Financial and political supporters Dobson, Sheldon, Wildmon, Bauer, Perkins, Robertson and Falwell would all have a hissy fit if they did.

The so-called "leaders" of the Christian Right believe they alone know what's right for everyone and how everyone should be and live. No exceptions and no discussions. Today's faith-based political "leaders" also believe they alone know what's right for everyone. Put those two together and "leadership" becomes the Vietnam Mentality: we know what we're doing is [immoral](#), but we're going to "stay the course" even if it leads straight into a brick wall, or through that [wall](#) into a theocracy. As Dyana Bagby noted, that is the expressed goal of one group within the evangelical Christian Right:

American Vision

Atlanta

www.americanvision.org

Founded in 1978 by Gary DeMar, American Vision is a prominent proponent of Christian Reconstructionism. DeMar contends that the U.S. was founded as a "Christian nation" and that its democracy should be replaced by a theocratic government run by Christians who will strictly impose certain Old Testament prohibitions, including passages they interpret as opposing homosexuality and abortion.

James Dobson, Louis Sheldon, Don Wildmon, Tony Perkins, Jerry Falwell, as well as 1988 presidential candidate [Pat Robertson](#) and 2000 presidential candidate [Gary Bauer](#) may be slightly less direct in their rhetoric, but their collective money trails pave the way to the same theocratic goal.