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Theocracy Alert

Malignant hate hiding behind religion

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August 31, 2005—With every passing day, the leaders of the Christian Right become more unhinged and increasingly violent in their rhetoric. Pat Robertson's call to assassinate—and yes, Pat, even the Christian press [confirms](#) you did use the word “assassinate”—Venezuela's president was big news, except in the Bush administration where it was largely ignored [and/or](#) excused. But even Robertson has to strive to match the pure hate the Rev. Lou Sheldon vomits forth daily.

When the California Supreme Court [ruled](#) that domestic partners and their [children](#) must have equal protection and status under the law, Sheldon and his cronies went into hyper-hate mode. That was documented in an August 25 Traditional Values Coalition (TVC) [article](#), “California Supreme Court Redefines The Traditional Family.”

The piece began, “The California Supreme Court, in an act of judicial tyranny, has just issued an edict that redefines the traditional family in California law.” The “judicial tyranny” charge was, of course, expected. Any court decision Sheldon and his cronies disagree with is immediately labeled “judicial tyranny.” How ironic Sheldon didn't find Robertson's call-to-murder an example of “Christian tyranny.” In fact, Sheldon had nothing at all to say about Robertson's remarks. One can only assume, therefore, that he agreed with Pat's message and modus operandi.

But the TVC article's sinister absurdity began with “redefines the traditional family.” The so-called “traditional family” has not in any way, shape or form been “redefined” or even affected. It still exists *exactly* as it did before. Sheldon likes to exaggerate, and doom and gloom are his forte.

Speaking of exaggerated doom and gloom, Stephen Crampton, chief counsel with the American Family Association, was quoted as saying, “the California Supreme Court is determined not to be outdone in the aggressive fashioning of new social policy under the guise of deciding legal cases.”

Crampton and Sheldon must have the same apocalyptic hate-speech coach. After the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that “equality” means “equality,” Crampton issued this statement: “Unless the people of the State of Massachusetts rise up with one voice in opposition to this lawless and socially destructive behavior [same-sex marriage], it will destroy society as we know it.” Sorry, Stephen, Massachusetts society hasn't been destroyed nor has the sky fallen. Rather, as [Evan Wolfson](#) noted, “this is exactly what the right wing [was] afraid of. People have had a year of legal marriage in Massachusetts to see how ending marriage discrimination helps gay and lesbian families and hurts no one.”

Mat Staver of Liberty Counsel, which has one of its divisions headquartered on the campus of Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, also chimed in: “[this] ruling defies logic and common sense. By saying that children can have two moms, the court has undermined the family. . . .”

No, Mr. Staver, efforts by people like Crampton and you defy logic and common sense, promote hatred and discrimination, and are about as proactively anti-family as “legal” actions can be. Same-sex couples exist. They have always existed, and they will always exist. They are currently rearing 8 to 10 million children. Don't these people and families count? What you, Crampton and other “Christian” lawyers are

trying to do to same-sex couples and their families is what Robertson said should be done to Hugo Chavez. The Christian Right's legal efforts are little more than attempts to "take them out" of the social, legal, cultural, and economic pictures. That won't happen and, as you know, "civil equality" always eventually wins the day. But the Christian Right's antigay rhetoric and legal actions do correlate with a marked [increase](#) in gay-bashing and hate crimes against gay men and women and students in public schools. Are you proud of that?

Malignant hate hiding behind religion is personified by and crystallized in the words of the Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, founder and chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition. Being so filled with hate himself, that's all Sheldon can see. His "traditional values" are usually expressed in terms synonymous with the ultimate manifestation of hate, [war](#). The quoted excerpt from Sheldon's book used in the TVC article began with Lou's dark, militaristic vision: "Make no mistake; the homosexual agenda is a strategic plan for war. It is not a public policy briefing or a marketing plan: the agenda that has been disseminated by the homosexual lobby is a military strategy, a campaign map for a war to the death, waged by cunning men upon a supine and self-indulgent nation."

Sheldon likes to use the phrase "homosexual agenda" that the Christian Right concocted to sound as sinister as possible. Rep. Barney Frank [addressed](#) the matter at the 2004 Democratic National Convention:

I want to apologize to the various self-proclaimed divine messengers who appear deeply troubled by a dark plot they label the "gay agenda."

Troubled as I am by the prospect of these pious men denied a good night's sleep by their need to be eternally vigilant against us, I have decided to break the silence, decode the cryptogram, unravel the mystery and tip our hand. . . .

Specifically, we want all people in the United States to enjoy the same legal rights as everyone else, unless they have forfeited them by violating the rights of others. We believe this should include some things that are, apparently, very controversial.

They include the right to serve, fight, and even die on behalf of our country in the military; the right to earn a living by working hard and being judged wholly on the quality of our work; the right for teenagers to attend high school without being shoved, punched, or otherwise attacked; and, yes, the right to express not only love for another person but a willingness to be legally as well as morally responsible for his or her well-being.

Does this "agenda" sound sinister to you?

There's something else odd about the vast majority of Sheldon's homophobic rantings. They are almost always directed at gay men, as they were in this case: "waged by cunning men." Since Lou is so concerned with "protecting marriage" and the "traditional family," this gender bias seems most peculiar, especially in light of the statistics that resulted from the initiation of marriage equality in Massachusetts.

Two-thirds of the same-sex couples who applied for marriage licenses in Massachusetts on May 17, 2004—the first day gay and lesbian couples could legally marry—were women. This was not surprising since 43 percent of lesbians are "coupled" at any one time. Other pertinent demographics from May 17 in Massachusetts included: 50 percent of the same-sex couples who applied for marriage licenses had been together for at least a decade; the most predominant age group was 40 to 49 years-old (the median age was 43); 40 percent of those female couples said they had children in their households.

Every time I read Sheldon's diatribes against gay men, I hear a gender-adjusted line from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "The [man] doth protest too much, methinks" (III, 2). But Lou did catch his Freudian slip in the subsequent apocalyptic rant: "I do not exaggerate when I say that this trial by fire will determine the very survival of our culture and the fate of civilization as we know it. This is not a battle against foreign

enemies or third world extremists, but an even greater foe: the forces of darkness and legions of angry homosexuals and lesbians determined to abolish Christian virtue and moral judgment in any form.”

Yes you do exaggerate, Rev. Sheldon, grotesquely and intentionally for the sole purpose of inspiring more fear and deeper hatred.

“Survival of our culture and the fate of civilization . . .” Not only does Sheldon echo Crampton’s apocalyptic bravado, but with the same feigned godlike “knowledge” he matches the blustering of another homophobe, SpongeBob critic James Dobson who, in his 2004 book *Marriage Under Fire*, claimed that same-sex marriage 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.’”

The last line of the gospel according to Lou is particularly noteworthy: “the forces of darkness and legions of angry homosexuals and lesbians determined to abolish Christian virtue and moral judgment in any form.”

“Equality” for all Americans and their families is one of the “forces of darkness?” Only if you’re Lou Sheldon and use [American Newspeak](#) to advocate “the light” of discrimination and hate.

“Legions?” The *entire* homosexual population of the United States is estimated at between two and four percent. Sorry, Lou, that doesn’t qualify as “legions,” but it is typical of your fear-mongering exaggerations expressing and encouraging hate.

And as for “Christian virtue and moral judgment,” neither [you](#), Rev. Sheldon, nor televangelist Pat Robertson are qualified to pronounce on either.