

Reality Check: Sodom Postpartum - Watch Your Ass!

By Mike Fitzpatrick
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It's been nearly a week since the historic Lawrence ruling at the Supreme Court swept criminality from the lives of every collective queer in America, and - by proxy - anyone of any sexual stripe who practices anything other than the missionary position with their favorite consenting adult in the privacy of their boudoir. Whee! Yes, even that's permitted now. Without a doubt, the sodomy ruling will be a far greater assault on the Martha Stewart Everyday linen line than those pesky insider trading charges.

Pundits and politicians across the extremes have had a field day. More on that in a bit. When editor Bill told me of all the sodomy stories scheduled to appear in this issue I almost switched the topic of this piece to the search for the perfect blueberry muffin.

However, having already invested so much research into the aftermath and its implications for the LGBT community I felt it important to continue. Though I may be pilloried for looking through the glass darkly, history suggests that the court ruling signals the party is over and its going to be one hell of a hangover. How ironic that the immediate impact of the sodomy ruling will mean that very queer in the country will have to watch his or her ass. I suspect the backlash may be that strong.

Many of us took particular pleasure in watching the religious and political right wax apoplectic immediately following the sodomy ruling, the second of a one-two punch for equal rights struck by the court following its affirmative action decision the previous Monday. Nothing like a little adverse news to reveal the black reactionary roots at the scalps of those perfectly coifed "social conservative" blonde rhetorical 'dos. (For the record, "social conservative" is, at once, the best spin-doctoring of "bigot" ever wordsmithed by the gang at the Heritage Foundation and the greatest oxymoron since "military intelligence" and "jumbo shrimp".)

I listened last Thursday to about a half-hour of Limbaugh going ballistic about "six people overruling the will of the nation". Rushbo claimed the Court is partisan. If that were true, sweet Rushie, you'd be ripping President Gore a new one daily, rather than slobbering all over George W's.

Other conservative pundits railed at the court's supposedly liberal bias. They chose to ignore AP reporter Ann Gearan's "big picture" piece on the court's last season documenting that 73% of all the rulings toed the conservative line. More disturbing was Antonin Scalia's live reading of his 21-page dissent, again revealing his sharp legal mind overwhelmed by rock-ribbed religious orthodoxy.

The Religious Right's reaction was apocalyptically absurd as expected, yet bland by comparison. Pat Robertson's "going down the moral sewer" comments merely rehashed similar right-wing statements following the Supreme Court's 1954 anti-segregation and 1970 anti-miscegenation rulings. For a preacher old enough to have hand-painted the "Segregation is God's Law" placards held by little old lady evangelists outside Little Rock schools in 1958, you'd think he'd be able to come up something as sassy as the "mongrelization of the human race" rhetoric quipped by segregationists back then.

Over the weekend gay conservative spokesmodel Andrew Sullivan penned a perceptive piece about how the sodomy ruling banished forever the medieval “every sperm is sacred” mentality that has informed so much of the last 800 years of sexual law. However, being the good, dysfunctional Catholic he is, Sullivan couldn’t bring himself to step back an extra millenium or so to examine the wellspring of that medieval mentality: the Bible writers’ scientifically-naive mindset that perceived earth as the center of the universe and man as its ultimate product, equated the process making babies with planting crops, and solved everything then unknowable by blaming it on an all-powerful Supreme Being. Nor could Sullivan move forward to the tail end of the last century to point out the fundamentalist “Bible as literal truth” precept that informs the Religious Right’s modern evangelism was a desperate reaction to the ongoing scientific deconstruction of that Biblical world view which had begun with Copernicus and had most recently added Darwin.

Sullivan’s preoccupation with the medieval missed a shot at a more modern monument to religious hypocrisy whose recent anti-gay pronouncements got lost in the hubbub over the sodomy ruling: the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). He could have pointed out that ever since its foundation by slave holders opposed to the mainstream Baptist abolitionist activism, the SBC has come down against every major movement for equality in the last 150 years: slavery, women’s suffrage, women’s marital property rights, racial integration and intermarriage and LGBT civil rights. The SBC’s only political “win” only lasted 14 years: prohibition.

Sullivan also couldn’t bear to bring up the fact that ever since Constantine’s fourth century official embrace, Christianity has morphed from a spiritual ethic into an imperial force that has wreaked havoc on the politics and culture of Western civilization as it has simultaneously stymied the search for genuine truth. I won’t go into the Church’s selection of “approved books” of the Bible (thwarted by the discovery of the Qumran scrolls in 1948) or the systematic destruction of ancient secular texts that contradicted the official Christian mindset (such as the burning of nearly all of the works of Greek lesbian poet Sappho) by medieval monks. That’s old hat.

Need some contemporary examples? George W’s post 9-11 anti-terrorist “crusade” rhetoric is but a recent slip of the Christian-dominated sociopolitical tongue. His abstinence-only HIV education initiatives are but the latest manifestation of the historic Christian “keep ‘em stupid and submissive” modus operendi.

Now that they’ve had a few days to organize the troops and generate the talking points, the right-wing has lobbed its first volleys across the LGBT community’s bow. GOP Senate Majority Bill Frist told us last Sunday that he wants to take his physician’s scalpel to doctor the Constitution with a Marriage Amendment implant. Though the White House the next day signaled that the already-extant Defense of Marriage law was sufficient (continuing the President’s personal “don’t ask, don’t tell” position on gay issues), what had been dismissed as yet another far-right quixotic venture has begun to gain gravitas. Twenty-five legislators now have signed on and, as I polished this piece, Colorado’s freshman GOP Rep. Marilyn Musgrave declared the federal Marriage Amendment to be her top priority, apparently abandoning her previous work on education, small business and agriculture.

Make no mistake, the political backlash has begun. If history repeats, as it most likely will, the violent version is next. Abolition brought the murderous midnight rides of the Ku Klux Klan. Desegregation brought a decade of increased lynchings, church bombings murders and beatings. Children and civil rights workers died by the dozens. The Supreme Court’s 1970 anti-miscegenation ruling resulted in interracial couples being burned out of their homes.

However, unlike the abolition and racial equality movements. The LGBT community currently has no galvanizing political figure like a Lincoln or a Luther King. History also suggests such a figure likely will emerge, but in the interim, the well-entrenched Religious Right will be shape the rhetorical agenda during the postpartum period following the birth of the pro-gay sodomy ruling. To rework the line uttered by Bette Davis' hard-boiled Margo Channing in all-time gay fave flick "All About Eve," hang onto your sodomite heines, honeys, its going to be a bumpy ride!