

# Pushed to the **Altar**

The Right Wing  
Roots of Marriage  
Promotion



Jean Hardisty

**Marriage Promotion Series, Part I**

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# Preface

Unfortunately, neither PRA nor the Women of Color Resource Center is likely to be out of work any time soon. “Exposing movements, institutions, and ideologies that undermine human rights” and “promoting the political, economic, social, and cultural well-being of women and girls of color in the United States” show no signs of becoming superfluous.

A case in point — *Pushed to the Altar: The Right Wing Roots of Marriage Promotion*, a report jointly sponsored by Political Research Associates and the Women of Color Resource Center, documents one more assault on human rights and dignity: government programs designed to pressure women into marriage as the purported solution to myriad social ills.

The good news is that, in the struggle, we find ourselves in such extraordinary company. PRA is very fortunate still to have access to the fine work of our “retired” founding director, Jean Hardisty. We’re also delighted to work with such accomplished colleagues as Linda Burnham, Executive Director, and all the staff of the WCRC.

In *Pushed to the Altar* and its companion piece, *Marriage as a Cure for Poverty? Social Science Through a “Family Values” Lens*, Jean has produced an invaluable pair of reports. Linda’s introduction cuts to the heart of the matter and needs no supplementation. All that’s left is to acknowledge PRA’s good fortune in making this journey with such fine companions and to thank the Ford Foundation, and especially Barbara Klugman, for the funding that made this fine piece of work possible.

The Rev. Katherine Hancock Ragsdale  
Executive Director  
Political Research Associates  
Somerville, MA



# Foreword

The failed policies of the George W. Bush Administration have been so numerous and so varied that, perhaps inevitably, policies of great consequence slip right out of public consciousness. When is the last time you read a front-page story or heard a news bulletin about marriage promotion? With alarming news streaming in from both Iraq and Wall Street, whole realms of public policy simply churn along, without debate or scrutiny.

Marriage promotion policies, the subject of some controversy in the early days of the Administration, are now being implemented, day in and day out, in the basements of churches and community centers, on high school campuses and army bases, in towns and cities across the country.

It is our good fortune that someone has been paying attention. In *Pushed to the Altar: The Right Wing Roots of Marriage Promotion*, Jean Hardisty applies her formidable skills as a researcher and political analyst to exploring: the ideological and historical roots of marriage promotion; the intersecting agendas of its most avid advocates; and the crucial journey from ideology through activism to implementation.

In a nutshell, marriage promotion programs use government funds to advocate, educate, advertise, and celebrate the benefits of heterosexual marriage and the father-led nuclear family. Marriage promotion policies are meant to reinforce heterosexual marriage as the socially sanctioned norm and the cure for all manner of social problems, including, notably, poverty. Based on the presumption that marriage between men and women is an unambiguous social good, marriage promotion programs counsel, mentor, advise, and cajole people to wed and remain wedded.

Hardisty's deep immersion in the intellectual and organizational thickets of the conservative movement makes her the perfect guide to the saga of how the Right managed to lodge marriage promotion policies within the federal bureaucracy and why that achievement was a "win" on so many different fronts.

First, these policies provide a governmental seal of approval to the notion that heterosexual marriage

and male-led family formation ought to be the goals of every right-thinking citizen. Second, they provide a governmental seal of disapproval to female autonomy, diversity of gender identity and expression, gay marriage, and diversity of family forms, thereby striking an ideological blow to perspectives promoted by the feminist and LGBT movements. Third, they fortify the view that individual life choices—like the decision whether to marry—determine one's economic circumstances, while undermining the view that broader social, cultural, and economic trends and policies might have a determinative impact on both decision-making about marriage and economic status. Fourth, they reinforce an individualist, bootstrap approach to addressing racialized economic disparities, while submerging structural, institutional and policy-based explanations for racialized poverty. Fifth, they funnel government resources to conservative Christian individuals and organizations, bolstering the infrastructure of the Administration's core constituency. Sixth, they shift limited resources out of a reviled government program—welfare—and into the favored projects of key right wing ideologues.

Hardisty ably leads us through all this and more. "Pushed to the Altar" is particularly instructive as to how self-described "small-government" conservative activists came to tap into federal and state coffers to enact social experiments on poor women, and how race continues to motivate and infuse public policy in a period when direct discussion about racism is off the table.

The right-wing revolution has left us with decades of undoing to be done. Amidst the hubbub of presidential campaigning and the onrush of bad news, this timely report is a reminder of, as well as a road map to, an area of policy that, though little remarked upon, affects the lives of millions of women and men.

Linda Burnham  
Executive Director  
Women of Color Resource Center  
Oakland, California

## Acknowledgements

I owe thanks to many people who participated in the research and analysis that informs this report. The title itself is borrowed from Kimberly Alvarenga of the Women of Color Resource Center (WCRC). Linda Burnham, Executive Director of WCRC, provided inspiration for the report by the example of her own work and was a stalwart supporter of it throughout the writing process. Kaaryn Gustafson, formerly of WCRC and now at the University of Connecticut Law School, was an early and very helpful participant.

At Political Research Associates, I had help from nearly the entire staff. Katherine Ragsdale, Tarso Luís Ramos, Chip Berlet, Pam Chamberlain, Abby Scher, Cindy King, and interns Anna Mester and Jessica Hitch were especially helpful in reading drafts and chasing down sources. At the Ford Foundation, Barbara Klugman, Dorinda Welle, and Loren Harris gave crucial feedback, and Barbara Klugman, in particular, was endlessly patient and supportive of the research.

As is so often the case, Elly Bulkin edited my writing, not simply patrolling my tendency to use the passive voice, but bringing her own helpful insights to early drafts.

Kate Kahan, Erika Kates, and Irene Weiser gave me crucial feedback based on their own work with low-income women and their research on the programs meant to address poverty.

I was fortunate throughout this process to be a Senior Scholar at the Wellesley Centers for Women, where I received moral support and advice from many of my colleagues and the consistent encouragement of the Centers' Director, Susan Bailey.

And finally, I would like to thank the dedicated scholars and advocates who have worked for many years on the issues of poverty and welfare. Some I know, such as Lisa Jacobs at Legal Momentum; Suzanne Pharr, independent activist and scholar; Diane Dujon and Ann Withorn, leaders in the Boston area; Lucy A. Williams at the Northeastern School of Law; and Jill Quadagno at Florida State University. Some I have never met, but nevertheless owe a debt of gratitude, such as Kathryn Edin, University of Pennsylvania; Gwendolyn Mink, Smith College; Dorothy Roberts, Northwestern School of Law; Michael B. Katz, University of Pennsylvania; and Tim Casey at Legal Momentum.

I have spent my working life studying the political Right, hoping to inform activists and the general public of the wrong-headedness of its ideology and programs. This is not a luxury enjoyed by women who live in poverty. They must endure and resist the programs foisted on them by a punitive welfare system that stereotypes and demonizes them. They are the heroes of this story.

–Jean Hardisty

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## Executive Summary

This report is the result of a two-year investigation by political scientist Jean Hardisty into the George W. Bush Administration's marriage promotion and fatherhood initiatives. Dr. Hardisty locates these initiatives within the context of the Right's family values ideology and investigates their scope, scale, intellectual and operational origins, merits, and outcomes. *Pushed to the Altar: The Right Wing Roots of Marriage Promotion* is the most comprehensive examination to date of the ideological roots of these programs.\*

In 2001 the newly installed Administration of George W. Bush appointed Wade Horn as Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The appointment presaged a substantial shift in federal social welfare policy. Horn had served as the titular head of the rightist fatherhood movement during the 1990s. At HHS, he was to use the Administration's redefined and expanded faith-based initiatives (among other means) to support organizations that encourage women—especially welfare recipients—to marry their way out of poverty.

The Administration's success in promoting this agenda can be seen in Congress' allocation of \$100 million annually for marriage promotion programs over fiscal years 2006–2010 (a total of \$500 million) as part of welfare reauthorization in the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act. Such Congressional funding for marriage promotion was preceded, and continues to be supplemented, by a variety of Executive Branch and state government grant programs.

Wade Horn's appointment to HHS illustrates the close ties between the Bush Administration and various right-wing opinion makers, intellectuals, advocacy groups, and mass-based organizations. Since 2001, Horn and The Heritage Foundation have been leading strategists of the Right's agenda for "welfare reform." For the fatherhood movement, conservative opponents of liberal antipoverty programs, and the

Christian Right, the Bush Administration has provided a golden opportunity to promote marriage as a cure for poverty, and "responsible fatherhood" as a means to restore community health as they envision it.

What follows is a summary of the findings in *Pushed to the Altar: The Right Wing Roots of Marriage Promotion*.

***The arguments in favor of marriage and fatherhood promotion as a cure for poverty are ultimately ideological in nature. There is no solid evidence from the social sciences that marriage results in a higher income for poor women.***

The George W. Bush Administration's ideology, policies, and programs on marriage and fatherhood show how thoroughly politicized U.S. welfare policy has become. Conservatives who maintain that marriage and fatherhood will cure poverty are relying on two major sources: the analysis of sociologist George Gilder—specifically Gilder's assertion that marriage and fatherhood channel men's aggression and lack of work ethic toward work and maintaining the family; and the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 government report, in which he concluded that female-headed households were dysfunctional and that the African-American community was plagued by "fatherlessness," resulting in a culture of pathology. These are examples of bad science: reducing the explanation for phenomena as complex as family formation and poverty alleviation to one single causal factor—heterosexual marriage.

The assertion that marriage will cure poverty and end fatherlessness is simply unproven. The Administration's agenda is to replace "liberal" programs that are known to raise people out of poverty with programs that advance conservatives' social and economic goals but have no record of reducing poverty.

\* The second half of this Marriage Promotion Report Series is: *Marriage as a Cure for Poverty? Social Science Through a "Family Values" Lens* (Somerville, MA and Oakland, CA: Political Research Associates and Women of Color Resource Center: 2008). It examines conservative marriage promoters' questionable attempts to find support for their policy recommendations in social science literature.

### ***Government marriage promotion experiments are funded at the expense of proven poverty relief programs.***

As federal and state allocations for marriage promotion and fatherhood programs have dramatically increased, welfare benefits themselves have steadily fallen. While reducing welfare benefits, implementing “disincentives” for welfare recipients to have children (such as the “child exclusion” provision), and implementing a five-year lifetime cutoff for welfare recipients, the Bush Administration, Congress, and some states now lavish money on untested and unproven fatherhood and marriage promotion experiments. This redirection of benefits intended for low-income families and those unable to meet their own needs is the equivalent of taking food from the table of the hungry. Policies known to alleviate poverty—subsidized housing, health care, child care, and the provision of meaningful educational and job training opportunities—are not being vigorously promoted under the present Administration.

### ***Government funding for marriage promotion projects exceeds \$100 million annually.***

Executive Branch departments, including HHS and the Justice Department, make marriage promotion grants. State governments also fund a number of marriage promotion programs—some paid for with federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) block grants and some funded by the states themselves. Finally, Congress has allocated substantial resources for marriage promotion programs. The multiplicity of funding sources and the commingling of federal faith-based and marriage promotion initiatives makes it difficult to establish exactly how much state and federal money goes to support marriage promotion programs. We do know the following:

- ◆ The 2005 Deficit Reduction Act allocated \$100 million annually for marriage promotion programs and \$50 million for fatherhood programs for fiscal years 2006–2010, or a total of \$750 million;
- ◆ The Administration’s Charitable Choice Fund, which in 2004 had a budget of \$2 billion, has made grants in furtherance of marriage promotion;
- ◆ Some of the \$30 million, HHS-administered Compassion Capital Fund underwrites marriage promotion projects;

- ◆ HHS’ Healthy Marriage Initiative has made grants both before and since passage of the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act; and
- ◆ State funds, as well as federal TANF funds, are directed to state marriage programs.

### ***Government-funded marriage promotion and fatherhood programs are varied and numerous.***

Marriage promotion programs developed by the Bush Administration, with the assistance of The Heritage Foundation and other rightist think tanks, are now being implemented across the country, including:

- ◆ Public advertising campaigns and high school programs on the value of marriage;
- ◆ Marriage education for nonmarried pregnant women and nonmarried expectant fathers;
- ◆ Premarital education and marriage skills training for engaged couples and for couples or individuals interested in marriage;
- ◆ Marriage enhancement and marriage skills training programs for married couples;
- ◆ Divorce reduction programs that teach relationship skills;
- ◆ Marriage mentoring programs which use married couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities; and
- ◆ Programs to reduce the disincentives to marriage in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any activity described above.

### ***Government marriage promotion initiatives are intertwined with the dramatic erosion of Church/State separation under the Bush Administration’s faith-based initiatives.***

An increase in federal funding for marriage promotion has corresponded with the Bush Administration’s funding for faith-based initiatives. A line item in the 2002 federal budget created the HHS-administered \$30 million “Compassion Capital Fund” to channel federal money to faith-based groups at the local level. By 2006, the Administration was disbursing \$2.1 billion to various faith-based organizations and programs.

Although the federal government has long funded religious charities, it previously stipulated that they receive the money through a secular arm and adhere to strict rules for separation of church and state, including bans on religiously-based discrimi-

nation in hiring and worship in programs funded. The Bush Administration has resisted these restrictions and, failing to win Congressional approval, implemented its “Charitable Choice” initiative by administrative fiat. The Administration is currently facing lawsuits, which charge that some faith-based organizations supported by this Fund are illegally introducing the Bible into government-funded programs.

***The arguments for government marriage promotion programs often reflect racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes, and the programs themselves disproportionately target communities of color—especially African Americans.***

The Right has been able to mobilize the racial resentment of large numbers of White voters by stereotyping welfare recipients as African-American and demonizing them as women of loose sexual morals who are prone to defraud government agencies. Avoiding explicit statements about the inferiority of people of color, the Right instead developed an analysis of virtue and achievement as “colorblind”—adhering to individuals regardless of race. The Right refuses to acknowledge systemic racism and gender discrimination and characterizes poverty or exclusion as the fault of the individual.

Because many families in low-income communities of color do not conform to the model heterosexual, nuclear family configuration, conservative marriage and fatherhood promoters view such communities as their most challenging project. HHS’ Healthy Families Initiative administers special initiatives for African-American, Hispanic, and Native American communities that promote the nuclear family model and emphasize the father as the principal determinant of the success of both children and the family. Thus, the State is constructing marriage as the only acceptable means of family formation.

***Government marriage promotion efforts emerged from and reinforce the work of rightist fatherhood groups and Christian Right organizations.***

Central to the Right’s identity is its crusade to restore the heterosexual nuclear family as the only approved social unit worthy of the name “family.” By 2000 and the arrival of the George W. Bush Administration, the Right was able to mount strong campaigns, carried out by the movement’s infrastructure, to bring that ideological commitment to

bear on public policy. Key examples of such campaigns include:

- ◆ The Southern Baptist Convention’s Resolution on Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry;
- ◆ The Promise Keepers movement, with its massive revival rallies emphasizing the importance of men assuming leadership within their marriages and families;
- ◆ The Christian Coalition’s Contract with the American Family, which anticipated the Bush Administration’s Charitable Choice initiative;
- ◆ Covenant marriage, a voluntary option that makes divorce nearly impossible; and
- ◆ Opposition to same-sex marriage, as with passage of the federal Defense of Marriage Act (1996). As of 2006, 40 states had enacted laws denying recognition of same-sex marriage.

***While the momentum for conservative marriage promotion has come from the Right, liberals and centrists have not vigorously opposed it and sometimes have supported it.***

An overlooked element of the punitive 1996 welfare reform legislation signed by President Bill Clinton was its emphasis on marriage as a means to lift recipients out of poverty. The bill opened the door to the use of TANF money to promote “healthy marriage.”

As liberals and centrists became a minority voice in 2000, and their support for existing welfare programs weakened, the public increasingly supported a stereotype of welfare recipients as people undeserving of help and incapable of benefiting from it. A strong antipoverty Democratic platform and a well-funded and highly active welfare rights movement will be required to reverse the damage done by “welfare reform.”

***Marriage and fatherhood promotion also have liberal, and even progressive, variants and proponents.***

Progressive fatherhood and marriage organizations of color are less attached to the traditional nuclear family model than are conservative fatherhood organizations. Such organizations encourage fathers, whether married or not, to become more involved in their children’s lives, both emotionally and financially, and to develop a better relationship with a child’s mother.

A small movement of profeminist fatherhood organizations works on issues such as: the problems that male supremacy causes within the family; how the politics of masculinity often appears to condone violence in U.S. culture; and their own privilege as men.

### **Conclusions**

The measure of a social movement's lasting success is the extent to which its ideology and policy proposals become dominant in the country, and eventually become law. When George W. Bush assumed the Presidency in 2000, the contemporary Political Right for the first time had control of both the Executive Branch and Congress, creating an opportunity for it, as a movement, to reap the full benefits of success and power. Primary among these benefits has been implementation of the programs and policies that reflect the movement's ideology.

Marriage is a boon to some people and a nightmare for others. Rather than acknowledging the complexity of ever-accelerating modernity and the changes for better and worse that it brings, the Right would have government revive television's "Ozzie and Harriet" version of the 1950s heterosexual nuclear family. Although government could play a constructive role in providing support services for low-income women and men, it will not do so if the programs are driven by hidden ideological and/or religious agendas rather than a commitment to safety, self-empowerment, and financial security.

It is up to the public and policy makers to take a stand against ideologically-driven programs and to demand implementation of proven methods of addressing poverty, remembering that the social and economic harm of the Right's programs are visited on the most vulnerable women and their families.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

1. A return to policies known to alleviate poverty — subsidized housing, health care, child care, and the provision of educational and job training opportunities, provided without resentment, in a supportive environment, and with federal money;
2. Federal support for: groups fighting poverty; groups advocating for the rights of welfare recipients; and groups providing services to low-income people without racial, religious, sexual preference, or gender discrimination;
3. Protecting women from violence (now acknowledged in current marriage promotion policies) should be at the center of all government and private antipoverty programs;
4. The elimination of the five-years-in-a-lifetime limit on welfare benefits;
5. The elimination of the "child exclusion provision" or "family cap," and the "illegitimacy bonus," changes that would defend the right of low-income women to bear and raise children;
6. Comprehensive federally-funded jobs, housing, and health care programs that address the needs of those low-income families that fall "between the cracks" of the current, punitive Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) guidelines;
7. The reversal of exclusionary provisions that deny social services to documented and undocumented immigrants;
8. Objective social science research to examine the social and economic consequences of the expenditure of federal money to promote marriage among low-income women and men; and
9. A federally-funded public education effort to counteract the last twenty-five years of ideologically driven demonization of low-income people, especially welfare recipients, with special emphasis on institutional and systemic causes of poverty.

# Introduction

As a researcher who has studied the U.S. political Right Wing for many years, I am particularly interested in how it has operated as a coherent social movement that is made up of many networked and disciplined submovements focusing on specific issue areas. This interest, combined with my long-standing commitment to women, led me to study the question of how the Right has promoted both marriage as a solution to poverty and the idea of fathers as the creators of a family. The roots of both campaigns lie in the Right's view that the heterosexual, nuclear, patriarchal family, the church, and a strong military state are the foundations of a good society.

In the 1990s I followed the emergence of the rightist "fatherhood movement" and its titular head, Wade Horn. After the 2000 presidential campaign, when I read that the George W. Bush Administration planned to use its "faith-based funding" to support organizations to encourage women, especially welfare recipients, to marry in order to overcome their poverty, I felt a shock of recognition. Wade Horn, who was appointed by George W. Bush to be in charge of welfare programs at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), had morphed his fatherhood campaign into a government program to promote marriage and fatherhood among the growing number of U.S. women and men living in poverty.

The Right's ideological focus on family, the free market, and minimal government touched a chord in the U.S. public that was, and often still is, in a mood of reaction against the 1960s and liberalism. But there was more to the Right's success than its timely and resonant message. Its success has also rested on a keen understanding of itself as a movement and of the importance of nurturing movement infrastructure and promoting movement leaders. I believe it is this disciplined movement-building that has advanced the Right's overall agenda. Marriage promotion and fatherhood initiatives are just two examples of how the Right has moved—sometimes using

unethical and/or illegal tactics—from ideas to messaging to capturing political power, on to developing programs, and finally to policy implementation.

I am often asked about successful right-wing programs, "How did they get away with that?" The answer is complex but understandable, as this study will demonstrate. The Right's movement is well-oiled and high-performing, and the opposing progressive movement has very often been weak, underfunded, and outmaneuvered.

The Bush Administration, especially during the six years that it worked with a Congress dominated by the Republican Party, has allowed the contemporary Right to reach its greatest power and achievement. In addition to the presidency, the Right captured the entire Executive Branch, and thus the U.S. government bureaucracy. HHS is the locus of the country's welfare program. Under George W. Bush, it began to fund marriage promotion and fatherhood programs, while other Executive Branch funding sources also supported these programs. In this case, the goal of the Right's agenda is to replace "liberal" programs that are known to raise people out of poverty—such as education, jobs that pay a living wage, health care, child care, and low-income public housing. In 2005, Congress legitimized these programs by funding marriage promotion and fatherhood programs at the level of \$150 million annually for five years.

In this study, I explore the intellectual roots of marriage and fatherhood programs promoted by the Bush Administration, review the activism that the Right has mounted to promote its ideas, then assess the resulting policies that the Bush Administration and its base have advanced. In doing so, I expose one small piece of the Right's agenda, especially how it was developed, sold, and implemented by the movement.

I draw on the work of a great many dedicated scholars, activists, and advocates who have opposed the narrow ideology and harmful policies supported by the federal government's marriage and fatherhood

initiative. Their work doesn't get the media attention it deserves because mainstream journalists and politicians often consider it to be too liberal, or left, or feminist, or secular. Some of these journalists and politicians see themselves as liberals; some would even call themselves progressives. They fall under the spell of a simple formula for curing poverty with marriage and fatherhood, in part because they lack a feminist analysis. A journalist, researcher, activist, or interested member of the public who brings a feminist perspective to issues of poverty is very reluctant to blame women for their poverty and demonize them for having children. Rather, a feminist lens encourages a systemic analysis that explores the roots of poverty and advocates for the rights of all women, including (and especially) welfare recipients.

Attempts to raise low-income women out of poverty with marriage and fatherhood programs are not benign. They elevate a patriarchal version of family structure, denigrate the role and abilities of single mothers, promote marriage only for certain people

(excluding same-sex couples), and further the stereotype of female welfare recipients and their children as socially and economically handicapped without the presence of a male provider. Further, they demonstrate how the public has been encouraged by the Right to feel free to invade the privacy of low-income women and manipulate them by threatening their subsistence income.

Marriage is a boon to some people and a nightmare for others. Rather than acknowledging the complexity of ever-accelerating modernity and the changes for better and worse that it brings, the Right would have government revive television's "Ozzie and Harriet" version of the 1950s White heterosexual nuclear family. Although government could play a constructive role in providing support services for low-income women and men, it will not do so if the programs are driven by hidden ideological and/or religious agendas rather than a commitment to safety, self-empowerment, and financial security.

## Pushed to the Altar

### MARRIAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF WELFARE REFORM

By definition, conservatives seek to conserve the *status quo*—present conditions. They see what progressives call “social change” as dangerous and destabilizing for society. But the contemporary U.S. Right is determined to return to the *status quo ante*—that is, a period *before* the present time. As a result, it is what is known in political analysis as “reactionary.”

The reactionary forces within the Republican Party gained control of the Party as a whole with the election of Ronald Reagan as President in 1980. At this historical moment, the Right—now calling itself the “New Right” to distance itself from the discredited Old Right of Senator Barry Goldwater, the John Birch Society, and the Ku Klux Klan—attained the ability to legitimize its ideology and implement some of the policies that flow from that ideology. A test of its strength as a movement would be how well it had developed its ideological principles, how strongly it had developed a “base” of organizations and individuals committed to its ideology, and how skillfully it could work to implement rightist policies by pressuring a Congress that was still in the hands of Democrats.

“Welfare” benefits have always been strongly symbolic within the larger agenda of the contemporary Right. To its leaders and followers, welfare recipients lack ambition and accomplishment, and welfare programs represent the evil of liberalism’s “softness.” The Right mocks what they call liberalism’s habit of “coddling” the poor and claims that this “coddling” weakens the poor by providing the necessities of food and shelter, without which they would be harder workers. It is no surprise that “welfare reform” became an early commitment of the New Right in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The Reagan Administration did what it could to stereotype and demonize welfare recipients as “lazy,”

“sexually loose,” and “personally irresponsible,” in keeping with the Right’s antiwelfare agenda.<sup>1</sup> Reagan himself repeatedly told a story of Linda Taylor, a welfare recipient in Chicago, who allegedly had defrauded the Illinois Department of Welfare of \$8,000. With each telling the amount increased, until Reagan was reporting that she had defrauded the Welfare Department of \$150,000.<sup>2</sup>

With the election of President Bill Clinton in 1990, Democrats controlled both the Executive Branch and Congress. But Clinton ran for office with the vow that he would “end welfare as we know it.” In the 1990s, most public discussion of welfare reform turned on the need for welfare recipients to become productive citizens by holding jobs. In January 1995, Republicans gained control of the House of Representatives under the leadership of Congressman Newt Gingrich (R-GA). In 1996, Clinton signed the 1996 “Welfare Reform” Act, officially known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which created Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) to replace Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). As its name implies, TANF is a welfare program that ends the federal government’s commitment to an indefinite safety net for poor women and their children.

PRWORA contains stunning victories for the Right’s agenda, including: 1) a “family cap” or “child exclusion” provision that denies any increase in benefits to a mother who becomes pregnant and gives birth while receiving welfare; 2) denial of food stamps to legal immigrants; 3) a five-year cutoff of welfare benefits no matter what the recipients’ circumstances; 4) bonuses to states that remove the greatest number of people from welfare rolls; 5) reduced food stamp assistance to millions of children

*To undermine welfare programs, the Reagan Administration demonized recipients as “lazy,” “sexually loose,” and “personally irresponsible.”*

in working families; and 6) payment of a bonus to states that reduce the number of out-of-wedlock births (known among welfare rights activists as the “illegitimacy bonus”).

The media focused on these “get tough on welfare recipients” provisions and the “work first” emphasis of PRWORA, largely missing one of the bill’s central objectives—its emphasis on marriage as a means to improve childrearing and lift recipients out of poverty. The first three of nine declarative statements that introduce the provisions of the bill are:

- Marriage is the foundation of a successful society.
- Marriage is an essential institution of a successful society that promotes the interests of children.
- Promotion of responsible fatherhood and motherhood is integral to successful childrearing and the well-being of children.

The remaining six statements address child support, single-mother families, teen pregnancy, and out-of-wedlock births. None of these statements addresses: poor housing; substandard education; lack of health care; institutional racism and sexism; lack of employment opportunities; or language barriers. The 1996 Republican Congress placed marriage at the

center of its framing of the poverty PRWORA is intended to address.<sup>3</sup>

With the arrival of the George W. Bush Administration in 2000, the federal bureaucracy began to fully implement the marriage and family formation aspects of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. To encourage marriage among welfare recipients and low-income women and men, the Bush



Paul J. Richards/AFP/Getty Images

In 1996 President Bill Clinton signed a “welfare reform” bill, which ended the federal government’s commitment to an indefinite safety net for poor women and their children and emphasized marriage as a means to escape poverty.

Administration created a “Healthy Families” program, among other programs, to direct federal money to “marriage promotion” and “fatherhood” programs. This funding was under the direction of Wade Horn of HHS. Before his appointment to HHS, Horn was the nation’s most prominent leader within the rightist Fatherhood Movement. The Bush Administration also sanctioned the use of federal TANF funds, already cut to an unconscionable level, specifically to fund marriage programs targeting welfare recipients. Today, in 2008, “marriage promotion” programs enjoy the sanction of Congress under the 2005 Federal Appropriations Act and are federally funded at an annual level of more than \$100 million for fiscal years 2006–2010. The federal budget has designated another \$50 million annually to support “fatherhood” programs. Federal officials also encourage states to use their own money to fund marriage and fatherhood programs.

An increase in federal funding for marriage promotion corresponded with the Bush Administration’s federal funding for faith-based initiatives. Sometimes calling it “Charitable Choice,” candidate George W. Bush promoted the idea that federal money for charitable work should be made available to churches and

*An overlooked element of welfare reform under Clinton was its emphasis on marriage as a means to lift recipients out of poverty.*

## The Right Wing Roots of Marriage Promotion

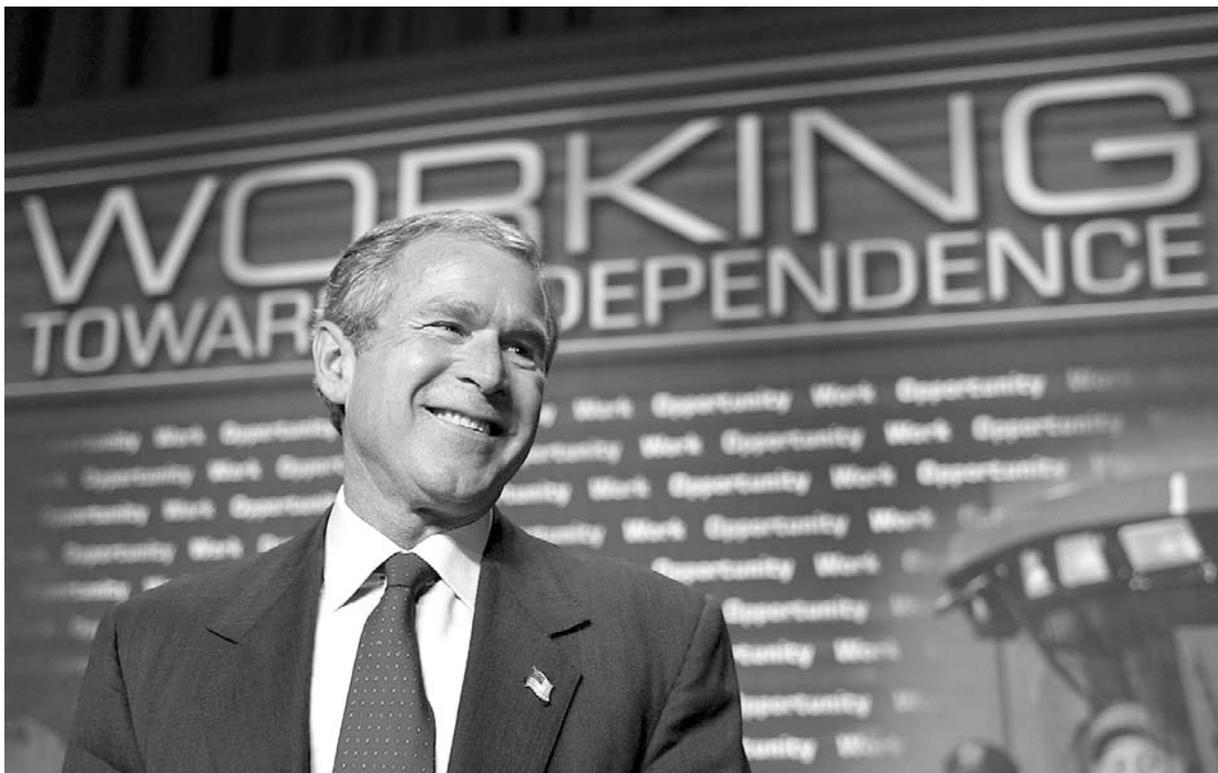
religious organizations, as well as to secular organizations. Although the federal government has long funded religious charities, it previously stipulated that they receive the money through a secular arm and adhere to strict rules for separation of church and state. That meant no prayer or other form of worship in the program, and no religiously-based discrimination in hiring. The Bush Administration has resisted these restrictions and implemented Charitable Choice by administrative fiat since Congress has never passed Charitable Choice legislation. As a result of the Administration's commitment to funding faith-based organizations, much of the federal money for marriage promotion and fatherhood programs has gone to faith-based organizations or to groups heavily influenced by conservative evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity.

Since 1996, mainstream and conservative media have consistently described "welfare reform" legislation as a resounding success. They accurately report that the number of families receiving benefits under the previous AFDC has been reduced by 60 percent. But they tend not to note the reasons. Welfare recipients have been disqualified under the new rules, left welfare by finding work, or simply disappeared and become untraceable. The media invariably portray

those welfare recipients who found work as happier, healthier, and more self-empowered. Those who still receive welfare assistance, knowing that there is now a five-year lifetime limit under the new system, are often represented by the Right as hard-core social problems. Douglas Besharov of the rightist American Enterprise Institute is typical of ultraconservative opponents of welfare programs. He complains that, despite drastic reductions in welfare benefits, a lingering shadow of dependency prevents him from declaring welfare reform a success: some women are still using food stamps, housing subsidies, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) assistance.<sup>4</sup> In this view, government owes nothing to its needy citizens and less than nothing to immigrants, and it has no obligation to address hunger or lack of adequate health care for poor adults or children.

If the welfare rolls have shrunk by more than half and welfare recipients have gone to work, then the poverty rate in the United States must be at an all-time low. But the U.S. Census Bureau's report for 2005, released in August 2006, details a grim picture of poverty in the U.S. The

*Congress appropriated more than \$100 million annually for marriage promotion programs for fiscal years 2006–2010.*



Stephen Jaffe/AFP/Getty Images

The George W. Bush Administration sanctioned the use of scarce federal TANF funds to fund marriage programs targeting welfare recipients.

report finds that the percentage of people living in poverty in 2005 (12.6 percent) contains the highest percentage of people living in “deep poverty” since the government began keeping poverty statistics in 1975. That’s because nearly half (5.4 percent) of those living in poverty are living *below half the poverty line*, of \$17,170 for a family of three, according to 2007 Health and Human Services Guidelines.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the public does not know the extent of deep poverty in the U.S. or the expenditure of federal money to promote marriage among low-income women and to promote fatherhood in family formation. Even if they did know, they might assume that the program was driven by solid evidence from the social sciences that marriage does indeed result in a higher income for poor women. But *there is no such evidence*.<sup>6</sup> This is a program driven by right-wing ide-

ology, a backlash against the social reforms of the 1970s and 1980s, and a commitment by the Republican Party to “restore” the idealized “father knows best” family model of the 1950s. If this were a harmless pursuit of a fantasy ideal, that would explain why it fairly often garners bipartisan support. But on close examination, it is more accurately a cynical social

experiment, using as its subjects the low-income women of the early 21st century.

*All too often the Right’s shaping of public opinion about welfare recipients was accomplished with the collaboration of liberals.*

### AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF MARRIAGE PROMOTION

One of the most important ingredients of a successful movement is a well-articulated vision. For this reason, it is a common saying that “ideas have consequences.” If the ideas are well-thought-out and presented in a manner that grabs the attention of large numbers of people and resonates with their concerns, the movement will grow and gain power. Early in the 1960s, the Right was split and could not agree on a central, unifying vision to reinvigorate its movement.

But during the 1960s, the political Right reached an internal agreement between its two largest factions to compromise, coexist, and meld their political agendas. The two factions were: 1) economic conservatives, whose “religion” was a belief in unregulated free market capitalism; and 2) social conservatives, who saw traditional family values, including the Biblically-

mandated roles of men and women, as the cornerstone of Western civilization. The new conservative consensus allowed the Right to develop public policy recommendations that could reach across rightist ideological sectors. Nowhere are the fruits of this consensus clearer than in the work of The Heritage Foundation. It is no exaggeration to say that in the rise of the U.S. political Right, Heritage has been the most influential nongovernmental organization outside the Republican Party. Immediately after the elections of Presidents Ronald Reagan (1980) and George W. Bush (2000), The Heritage Foundation published thick books titled *Mandate for Leadership*, listing policy and legislative recommendations that served as virtual roadmaps for the administrations to follow.

In 1965, a government report titled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action”—subsequently known as “The Moynihan Report” for its author, Daniel Patrick Moynihan—concluded that the African-American community was plagued by “fatherlessness,” resulting in a culture of pathology.<sup>7</sup> Although the report immediately caused a firestorm of criticism, fifteen years later it became a touchstone for the New Right’s family values arguments. In 1986, with the Right in power, Moynihan pointed out that his prediction of the deterioration of the Negro family had been vindicated.<sup>8</sup>

*Policy Review*, The Heritage Foundation’s signature publication, ran articles throughout the 1970s that laid the groundwork for an outright attack on welfare after the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Arguing that welfare benefits interfere with the free market and its distribution of goods, *Policy Review* articles called for reduced benefits and stricter qualifications for benefits. During the 1980s, the theme of welfare as a destroyer of character emerged, with support from the Reagan Administration. As Lucy Williams argues in “Decades of Distortion,” by the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s:

...the Right adopted a particularly American value-oriented brand of populism, with welfare as a central wedge issue. Thus the justification of the elimination of federal social programs shifted; they should be defunded not because they tax our paychecks, but because they destroy recipients’ character.<sup>9</sup>

For people whose resentment of welfare recipients was unformed or inarticulate, the Right provided the arguments and racial analysis that organized

and reinforced their resentments, casting welfare recipients as unworthy of the aid they received. But before the Right could fully market its analysis of welfare recipients, it had to overcome a long religious tradition in the U.S. of support for “the poor.” Because many religions consider the poor to be more virtuous than the rich, it was important to the Right’s recruitment efforts that it counteract a reluctance on the part of many religious people to attack the poor. This was accomplished by creating a stereotype of them as undeserving, lazy, irresponsible, and even deviant. Additionally, in the post-Civil Rights movement era, it was necessary for the Right to construct a racial critique of welfare very carefully, in order to moderate and submerge overt racism. The creation of a stereotype of the female African-American welfare recipient as the mother of many children, each with different fathers, and the false assertion that these mothers were the majority of welfare recipients and were permanently “on welfare” accomplished the goal of framing the critique as one based on morality rather than race. All too often this shaping of public opinion was accomplished with the collaboration of liberals.

It was equally important for the Right to push back a increasingly popular women’s movement that promoted women’s rights and the empowerment of women. In 1977, as the women’s movement was cresting with a wave of legislation to promote equal rights for women, Stephen Goldberg, professor of sociology at City College of New York, became the Right’s antifeminist voice when he published *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, first in the U.S., then in Britain.<sup>10</sup> Goldberg argues that gender differences are immutable because of “psychophysiological reality.” Here and in a later book, *Why Men Rule*, Goldberg maintains that patriarchy (male authority and leadership in a society) and male dominance (authority in families and couples) are universal throughout history. In *Why Men Rule*, Goldberg argues:

We can observe the feelings of male dominance most clearly during an argument, because it is in times of conflict that the emotional acknowledgement of male authority comes into male and female consciousness. Most of the time when men and women are performing different roles which they and their society define as male and female roles, there is no conflict, and feelings of authority will not come into play.

It is only when there is conflict that this feeling will be apparent to the male, who makes use of it, and to the female, who must get around it.<sup>11</sup>

He dismisses all counterarguments as “fundamentalist reasoning” or unreasonable faith in technological advances in the future that will make gender increasingly irrelevant.

Stephen Goldberg was not alone in carrying the banner of patriarchy. In 1973, George F. Gilder, “an advisor and speech writer on social issues for a number of leading government officials,” published an antifeminist screed titled *Sexual Suicide* that lacked the social science veneer of Goldberg’s books. Gilder’s opening paragraph exemplified his rhetoric: “It is time to declare that sex is too important a subject to leave to the myopic crowd of happy hookers, Dr. Feelgoods, black panthers, white rats, answer men, evangelical lesbians, sensuous psychiatrists, retired baseball players, pornographers, dolphins, swinging priests, displaced revolutionaries, polymorphous perverts, and Playboy philosophers...”<sup>12</sup> Neoconservative commentators such as Midge Decter and magazines such as the secular rightist *National Review* and the neoconservative *Commentary* reviewed and praised Goldberg and Gilder. Their books were not, however, influential in policy circles.

But with Ronald Reagan’s election as President in 1980, the New Right’s profamily platform attained prominence and public support. The arrival of a new Republican Administration corresponded with an expansion of the welfare rolls, providing the Reagan Administration with a politically useful excuse to promote a backlash against welfare.<sup>13</sup> During Reagan’s first year as President, George Gilder’s latest book, *Wealth and Poverty*, was “the book that Ronald Reagan was reading in the White House” and that *Wall Street Journal* columnist Adam Meyerson described in 1981 as “a best-seller and the most hotly discussed book in Washington.”<sup>14</sup> Along with The Heritage Foundation’s *Mandate for Leadership*, it became a handbook of social policy during Reagan’s two terms.<sup>15</sup>

Changing his previous snide tone to one of a more serious scholar, Gilder built on Moynihan’s argument that a female-headed household is dysfunctional, but added an analysis of the need for men

*To Moynihan’s argument that a female-headed household is dysfunctional Gilder added the need for men to lead families.*

to lead families. Gilder restates the Moynihan “anti-matriarchy” analysis, but adds a case for free-market capitalism over liberal social programs as a cure for poverty. According to Gilder, although wealth is there for the taking under capitalism, social service programs discourage hard work. Thus, Gilder supplies an analysis that explained poverty as “the fault of the poor” and offers a critique of liberalism that makes liberal social programs “the real cause of poverty.”

In addition to this denunciation of the “welfare state” and entitlement programs, Gilder offers an

*Right Wing attacks and a collapse of liberal support for welfare programs encouraged negative images of welfare recipients.*

updated version of his formula for success: work, family, and faith. Specifically, according to Gilder, monogamous marriage and family formation cause men to become productive by making them responsible for the maintenance of the family. Compared to the alleged lower productivity of bachelors, Gilder states that “A married man ... is spurred by the claims of family to channel his otherwise disruptive male aggressions into this performance as a provider for a wife and children.”<sup>16</sup> Gilder thus ties marriage to national productivity and asserts that laziness and lack of personal responsibility cause poverty. He goes to great lengths to negate the role of discrimination in creating poverty, and defends capitalism as offering prosperity to anyone who works hard. Women, he asserts, are less and less productive as they age and have children, just as men become more productive.

*Wealth and Poverty* would have been just a ripple on the pond had not the Reagan Administration and its New Right backers found it a boon for their “family values” campaign. The Reagan Administration gave more than lip service to the profamily platform of the New Right, attempting over a three-year period to push a “Family Protection Act” in Congress. Though the bill never passed in a Congress still controlled by Democrats, nearly all of its measures were individually advanced under Reagan through executive orders and administrative regulations and directives.

The New Right’s family values platform was economic, social, and political. It promoted tax breaks for married couples, disputed the notion that there was a meaningful wage gap between men and women, opposed Title IX-mandated sports programs for girls, clearly opposed the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, and promoted parental rights (including the right to inflict corporal

punishment on children) over the rights of children. The antifeminist, “profamily” message was promoted on talk radio shows, popular TV evangelists’ programs, and through the vast network of New Right-affiliated groups, such as Concerned Women for America and The Christian Coalition.<sup>17</sup>

This message was closely tied to the Right’s anti-welfare attacks. Foundational books for these attacks were published before and during the Reagan Administration’s two terms, including: the 1978 *Welfare: The Political Economy of Welfare Reform in the United States* by Martin Anderson, formerly with the Nixon Administration; Charles Murray’s 1984 *Losing Ground*; and Lawrence Mead’s 1986 *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*.<sup>18</sup> Less well-known but equally important are two pamphlets published by The Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation: “The Family, Feminism and the Therapeutic State” by Onalee McGraw; and “The New Traditional Woman” by Connaught “Connie” Marshner.<sup>19</sup> McGraw and Marshner were the resident antifeminist women at Heritage and Free Congress. Their influence on the development of the antifeminist and antiwelfare arguments of the New Right is often underestimated.

But it was not only the New Right that formulated the profamily and antiwelfare framework. Ken Auletta, considered a liberal, published *The Underclass* in 1982;<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Lemann, also considered a liberal, ran two articles in *The Atlantic*;<sup>21</sup> and William Julius Wilson, noted African-American historian and scholar, wrote his own book on the subject.<sup>22</sup> By characterizing a group of poor people as unemployable, riddled with addictions, and prone to brief sexual encounters that produced children but not families, these liberal authors gave credence to the idea that a hard core within the inner city was incorrigible.

Attacks by the Right on welfare recipients and a collapse of support from liberals for existing welfare programs encouraged the public to support a stereotype of welfare recipients as people undeserving of help and incapable of benefiting from it. Public opinion soon solidified around an image of welfare recipients as “free riders.”

Throughout the Reagan Administration’s two terms and the one-term administration of George H.W. Bush, the New Right grew in strength and effectiveness. Soon it shed the title “New Right” and simply became “the Right” or “neoconservatives.”<sup>23</sup> The agenda of the New Right became the agenda of

the Republican Party – nowhere more so than in its family values platform.

As the Right strengthened its hold on political power, increasing its size and influence, the Christian Right became more powerful within the larger New Right movement. During the 1980s and 1990s, Christian Right think tanks and grassroots organizations made huge advances in budget and membership. Whereas in the early 1980s the Christian Right was a political appendage of the New Right, by the 1990s it was the central voter power-base of the movement. The groups that grew during that time are now widely known, including the Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council, Focus on the Family, and Concerned Women for America.

Less well known is the Coalition on Revival (COR), an ultrafundamentalist Christian Right Group that advocates the “revival, renewal and reformation” of the church and society. In short, COR advocates that secular government and laws be based on Biblical principles and mandates. This organization is philosophically at the extreme right end of the Christian Right’s ideological spectrum. COR signaled its position on welfare reform in a 1994 article titled “Is There an Invisible Hand to Help the Poor?” by Calvin Beisner in its magazine, *Crosswinds*. Beisner writes:

Blacks had been narrowing the gap between themselves and whites quite rapidly, and steadily, during the sixty years prior to the start and burgeoning growth of major welfare programs and spending in the 1960s and 1970s. But then the welfare programs began to grow, and because blacks had not closed the gap entirely by that time, their rate of exposure to the “compassionate” ministrations of the welfare state was much higher than that of whites, and so they *developed* higher rates of the debilitating behaviors encouraged by welfare programs, and they *developed* lower rates of the empowering behaviors discouraged by welfare program. They had not so differed in these behaviors in the past.

Thus did the invisible hand of the welfare state stop dead in its tracks, and then reverse, the progressive narrowing of the gap in income and employment between blacks and whites. A secular mind would

see that factor of timing as a tragic accident of history. But a Christian mind must see in it the providence of a God who works all things together toward good for those who love Him.<sup>24</sup> (Emphasis in the original)

In the 1990s, Charles Murray, then at the American Enterprise Institute, began to develop a theme that complimented the rightist marriage and fatherhood analysis: that a dramatic spike in “illegitimate” births in African-American communities was directly linked to rising welfare rolls. Murray, citing the wisdom of “The Moynihan Report,” asserted that welfare benefits, combined with “behavior,” resulted in single motherhood. He writes that:

Black behavior toward both marriage and out-of-wedlock childbearing during the period in which welfare benefits rose so swiftly behaved exactly as one would predict if one expected welfare to discourage women from getting married and induced single women to have babies.<sup>25</sup>

In this right-wing formulation, the logical next step was marriage promotion. The assertion that marriage would cure poverty began to emerge as a programmatic goal of the Right, and enjoyed some support from centrists and even some liberals.

Publications, on-the-ground organizing, and skillful use of media outlets were the building blocks of the Right’s growth. Of central importance was the “pro-family” agenda, which came to be called, in journalistic shorthand, the “social issues.” Political analysts recognize them as strong motivators for voters, and often call voters motivated by conservative social issues “values voters,” leaving the erroneous implication that Democratic voters aren’t motivated by “values.” To succeed politically within the Republican Party, a politician needed (and still needs) to publicly and frequently declare support for the conservative analysis of social issues, often by invoking the notion of a “culture war” in the United States.

*With Charles Murray, the assertion that marriage would cure poverty began to emerge as a programmatic goal of the Right.*

## PRO-MARRIAGE ACTIVISM: FROM GRASSROOTS TO GOVERNMENT

Although ideas have consequences, they do not become policy unless there is pressure brought to bear by institutions, organizers, activists, and voters. This network of national and local institutions, informal groups, and fellow-travelers constitutes a movement “infrastructure.” Attention to nurturing and strengthening this network is usually called “movement building.”

Whatever critique liberals and progressives justifiably make of the Right’s ideas and methods, nearly all students of the Right will agree that its leadership

had a remarkable understanding of the importance of movement building. In studying the specific area of marriage and fatherhood promotion, it is clear how strategically the movement’s organizations molded and mobilized public opinion against single mothers and, most importantly, against single mothers who are welfare recipients. Simultaneously, they elevated the role of “father” to make the

presence of a father necessary for the formation of a healthy family.

The Right’s family values theme helped position it as an antidote to the social changes that had occurred during the preceding thirty years, especially the rise of feminism. In 1995, the rate of divorce stood at approximately 50 percent, presenting a challenge to the traditional inviolability of marriage vows. Families had become increasingly “melded” – made up of two divorced parents and their respective children. Single motherhood had increased dramatically, growing across social classes, and had lost much of its social stigma. At the same time, the number of gay and lesbian families was beginning to grow, presenting perhaps the most serious challenge of all to the traditional heterosexual nuclear family model. The Right’s leadership blasted all these social changes and blamed them on liberalism, and especially the women’s movement and the gay rights movement.

Central to the Right’s identity is its crusade to restore the heterosexual nuclear family as the only approved social unit worthy of the name “family.” By 2000 and the arrival of the George W. Bush Administration, the Right was able to mount a strong

movement campaign, carried out by the movement’s infrastructure, to bring that ideological commitment to bear on public policy. I will review just the most prominent of the organizational mobilizations within the Right that advanced the agenda of marriage and fatherhood as a cure for poverty.

### ***Contract with the American Family***

During the 1994 Congressional election campaign, the Republican Party issued a “Contract with America.” It was a play for votes organized primarily by two members of Congress – Dick Arney (R-TX) and Newt Gingrich (R-GA) – to capture control of Congress for the Republicans. In it, the Republican Party promised to fulfill certain goals if this majority were reached. Those goals were embodied in Acts that the Republican Party would pass if given a majority by the voters. Three of those Acts pertained to the family.

- The Personal Responsibility Act would “discourage illegitimacy and teen pregnancy by prohibiting welfare to minor mothers and denying increased AFDC for additional children while on welfare; cut spending for welfare programs; and enact a tough two-years-and-out provision with work requirements to promote individual responsibility.”
- The Family Reinforcement Act would “increase child support enforcement; provide tax incentives for adoption; strengthen the rights of parents in their children’s education; provide stronger child pornography laws; and pass an elderly dependent care tax credit to reinforce the central role of families in American Society.”
- And finally, the American Dream Restoration Act would “provide \$500 per child in tax credit; begin repeal of the ‘marriage tax penalty;’ and create American Dream Savings Accounts to provide middle-class tax relief.”

Nearly all of the provisions of the Republican Contract with America were passed by a Republican-controlled Congress, though not always in the form proposed in the Contract. These provisions were mostly a combination of President Reagan’s 1985 State of the Union Address and recommendations from The Heritage Foundation. The Contract with America generated an enormous amount of media coverage and became a well-known issue in the 1994 election.

But to the Christian Right, the Contract with America left out many of the issues that carried the

*The Right seeks to restore the heterosexual nuclear family as the only approved social unit worthy of the name “family.”*

most symbolic value for them, such as school prayer, abortion, and teaching creationism in school. These passionately held tenets of the Christian Right were considered too divisive to be included in the Republican Party document. So, after the Republicans captured control of both the House and the Senate in 1994, the Christian Right created its own version of the Contract with America and called it The Contract with the American Family. Although the Christian Coalition, under the titular leadership of Rev. Pat Robertson, headed the effort, the actual leader was “wunderkind” Christian Coalition organizer Ralph Reed. The Christian Coalition had already signed onto, and worked to pass, four aspects of the Contract with America: a balanced budget amendment, family tax relief, welfare reform, and term limits.<sup>26</sup> After a successful 1994 election, the Christian Right felt free to go public with its agenda to address what it called the “cultural crisis” in U.S. society. One of the ten points of The Contract with the American Family was devoted to the subject of abortion, and another, titled “Encouraging Support of Private Charities,” anticipated the Charitable Choice initiative of the Bush Administration, even using the language of “compassion” that the George W. Bush campaign later termed “compassionate conservatism.”

### Promise Keepers

In the late 1990s, as the Clinton Presidency came under increasing attack from the Right, the Christian Right mounted massive Promise Keeper rallies. These evangelical Christian revivals, for men only, were designed to teach men the importance of their role as husbands and fathers. They were also intended to recruit men to the ranks of the Christian Right and lure them back to conservative Christian churches, which for decades have been attended and maintained predominantly by women worshipers.

Founded in 1990 by University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney, Promise Keepers promoted seven principles by which a man could be a good Christian and a good husband and father.

### THE SEVEN PROMISES

1. A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.

3. A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.
4. A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.
5. A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources.
6. A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
7. A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (see Mark 12:30–31) and the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19–20).<sup>27</sup>

Specifically addressing the role of a woman within a marriage, Rev. Tony Evans of the Promise Keepers states in *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*:

I can hear you saying “I want to be a spiritually pure man. Where do I start?” The first thing you do is sit down with your wife and say something like this: “Honey, I’ve made a terrible mistake. I’ve given you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role.”... there can be no compromise here. If you’re going to lead, you must lead. Be sensitive. Listen. Treat the lady gently and lovingly. But *lead*. (Emphasis in the original.)<sup>28</sup>

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The stadium rallies held by Promise Keepers across the country were a media sensation for at least two years. They were huge, professional productions, with a soundstage and production values to rival a large industrial convention. The Promise Keepers budget mainstream in its organizing in 1995 was estimated to be \$22 million.<sup>29</sup> The budget peaked at an estimated \$117 million in 1997.<sup>30</sup>

On October 4, 1997, at the height of its visibility and vitality, Promise Keepers sponsored a rally on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Called *Stand in the Gap: A Sacred Assembly of Men*, it was covered from beginning to end by C-SPAN and attracted over a million men. The echo of the Nation of Islam’s 1995 Million Man March was unmistakable. Like the

Million Man March, the Promise Keepers event was free, and it seems to have drained the coffers of Promise Keepers, resulting in the layoff of its entire staff. From 1998 onwards, Promise Keepers events attracted fewer men and boys, as conservative Christian attention turned to concerns about the upcoming millennium and its possible apocalyptic dimensions.<sup>31</sup> By 2005, its budget had shrunk to slightly over \$25 million.<sup>32</sup> Still, Promise Keepers continues to hold regional events, hosting 19 such events in 2006, as it continues to promote an anti-abortion, antigay, propatriarchal fatherhood conservative Christian agenda.

### ***The Southern Baptist Convention Marriage Resolution***

The Southern Baptist Convention is the largest Baptist group in the world and the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. It is second only to the Roman Catholic Church in U.S. membership.

The Southern Baptist Convention is separate from the American Baptist Churches USA, African-American Baptist groups, or Independent Baptist churches. Historically it has been the dominant Christian church across the U.S. South and Southwest. To the extent that religion and ideology are important to voting patterns, it is politically significant that the Southern Baptist Convention has experienced a conservative take-

over of its leadership, beginning in stealth form in the late 1970s.<sup>33</sup> Steadily, relentlessly, a conservative cabal within the Convention took office and has asserted increasing power over the membership.

In 1984, at the Southern Baptist Convention conference in Kansas City, the leadership manipulated the passage of a “Resolution on Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry.” It reads, in part:

WHEREAS, While Paul commends women and men alike in other roles of ministry and service (Titus 2:1-10), he excludes women from pastoral leadership (1 Tim. 2:12) to preserve a submission God requires because the man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall (1Tim.2:13ff); and

WHEREAS, These Scriptures are not intended to stifle the creative contribution of men and women as co-workers in many roles of church service, both on distant mission fields and in domestic ministries, but imply that women and men are nonetheless divinely gifted for distinctive areas of evangelical engagement; and

WHEREAS, Women are held in high honor for their unique and significant contribution to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and the building of godly homes should be esteemed for its vital contribution to developing personal Christian character and Christlike concern for others.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That we not decide concerns of Christian doctrine and practice by modern cultural, sociological, and ecclesiastical trends or by emotional factors; that we remind ourselves of the dearly bought Baptist principle of the final authority of Scripture in matters of faith and conduct; and that we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination.

The denomination expelled members who protested this and other resolutions and practices, or who were considered too liberal (including many who had held office or had worked for the Southern Baptist Convention). Others left in protest.<sup>34</sup> The principal spokesperson for the ideology behind the new leadership is Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission since 1988. Dr. Land has a weekly radio call-in show called “Richard Land Live!” in which he advocates for an anti-abortion, antigay, antifeminist, antistem-cell research, procreationist agenda as the Southern Baptist Convention's “ethical and moral agenda for the family.” In recognition of his influence within the Republican Party, on May 6, 2007, Fox News named Land the “Power Player of the Week.”

The Southern Baptist Convention's 1998 convention passed a resolution on marriage that reflects the ultratraditionalist values of the new leadership. The resolution stated that wives should voluntarily yield to their husbands, following Saint Paul's words

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to husbands and wives. St. Paul describes the husband-wife relationship as a mirror of Christ's relationship to the church, in which the church yields voluntarily to God's "natural order" of things.<sup>35</sup>

The Southern Baptist Convention continues to promote an ultratraditionalist view of marriage. On its website, a statement titled "Marriage Amendment/ Same-Sex Marriage" reads:

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A hus-

band is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.<sup>36</sup>



Katja Heinemann/Aurora/Getty Images

Covenant marriage, a voluntary option available in three states, makes divorce nearly impossible. This Valentine's Day, 2005, ceremony in Little Rock drew 6,400 participants, including Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee and his wife Janet.

The Southern Baptist Convention's 1998 marriage resolution drew substantial media attention because its adoption followed a hard-fought battle in backrooms and on the convention floor. The resolution's harshly antifeminist view of marriage is consistent with that of fundamentalist evangelicals of the Christian Right, who largely share a loathing of feminist principles and promote strict adherence to Christian fundamentalist marital rules. For example, researcher David T. Morgan, referring to the takeover's leaders, writes that: "By 1987, it was clear

*Both the religious and political Right have singled out no-fault divorce for exceptional vilification.*

that Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson were connected to the NRPR (the New Religious Political Right)," including Pressler's membership in The Council on National Policy, the elite club of leaders of the Christian Right.<sup>37</sup>

The takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention is sometimes described by its new leadership as a "Reformation" and sometimes as a "Conservative Resurgence." It has transformed the denomination from a conservative to a fundamentalist one. This transformation has effectively restored traditionalist marriage rules within the Southern Baptist Convention, including sex-determined marital roles, a hierarchical internal power structure within the marriage, and a prohibition against divorce.

### **Covenant Marriages**

Some conservative evangelical and fundamentalist religious activists and politicians are promoting a new form of marriage known as a "covenant marriage," which is more binding than a conventional marriage and is a voluntary option made available by three states. Covenant marriages make divorce nearly impossible. Their supporters intend to reduce the rate of divorce, especially no-fault divorce. "No-fault" or irreconcilable differences are not grounds for divorce in a covenant marriage.<sup>38</sup>

Covenant marriage as a counterweight to no-fault divorce was first introduced in Louisiana in 1997, and is now also a legal option in Arkansas and Arizona. However, it has not been widely accepted. Covenant marriage legislation failed to pass in California, Florida, and 19 other states.<sup>39</sup> Even in the three states where it is legal, only small numbers of couples have opted for it, somewhere from 1 percent to 2 percent, according to studies.<sup>40</sup>

Both the religious and political Right have singled out no-fault divorce for exceptional vilification. As stated, for example, by Willard Harley, Jr., head of the traditionalist organization Marriage Builders, "From 1935 to the present, state legislatures and state supreme courts have quietly been enacting laws that encourage infidelity." He goes on to describe the development of no-fault divorce laws, from New York to California, and excoriates the resulting increase in divorce rates.<sup>41</sup>

In an effort to decrease those numbers, an organization called Covenant Marriage Movement, located at a P.O. Box in Forest, Virginia, designated Sunday, February 11, 2007 as "Covenant Marriage Sunday." For a little over \$150, pastors could order a Covenant Marriage Kit that included Couple's Commitment Cards and Covenant Marriage Certificates. Included in the kit was a guide to Covenant Marriage Ceremonies. Covenant Marriage Movement is a small organization that describes the movement on its website as "a movement of God." Its executive directors are Phil and Cindy Waugh, professional Christian marriage counselors. The chair of the board is Dr. Tim Clinton, Director of the Center for Counseling and Family Studies at the late Rev. Jerry Falwell's Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Women's rights advocates view covenant marriage as a step backward for women. Activists and some politicians worried about violence against women have raised objections to proposed covenant marriage legislation that offers no recourse to divorce. As a result, current marriage covenant laws allow some very limited causes for divorce: domestic violence; a felony with jail time; or adultery. The issue of danger for women persists, however, because it continues to be difficult for women to prove domestic violence abuse in court.

### **Faith-Based Initiatives**

A centerpiece of George W. Bush's 2000 presidential campaign was his dual commitment to "compassionate conservatism" and "faith-based initiatives." The former appealed to more moderate Republican voters, while the latter attracted Bush's Christian Right base. George W. Bush is himself a conservative, born-again Christian evangelical who is committed to a radically reduced role for government in addressing poverty. His thinking on the federal funding of faith-based groups was influenced, and perhaps molded, by Marvin Olasky, a University of Texas professor and editor-in-chief of *World* maga-

zine. Olasky, a born-again Christian, has written two particularly influential books arguing against welfare programs and in favor of faith-based social service programs.<sup>42</sup> He is also the father of the term “compassionate conservatism.”

When the Bush Administration assumed office after Supreme Court intervention in the 2000 election, Bush immediately established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. The Administration then pressed for passage of a Senate bill establishing “Charitable Choice,” the catch-phrase for directing federal antipoverty funding to faith-based organizations. Resistance to the bill, primarily from Democrats, was based on several concerns: 1) Would government funding of religious organizations violate the separation of church and state? 2) Would faith-based organizations discriminate in their hiring, according to the preferences dictated by their faith? 3) Would the religious beliefs and practices of the providing organizations be forced on those receiving its services? and 4) Would conservative Christian organizations be overwhelmingly favored by government funding?

In the past, when federal money had been funneled to faith-based organizations to address social service needs, the religious organization had to both create a separate, secular entity and abide by antidiscrimination laws in the hiring of staff and provision of services. The Bush Administration opposed this model with three key arguments: 1) no one would be forced to use the services of a religious charity; 2) faith-based organizations should be allowed to employ their faith principles when providing services; and 3) religious organizations should not be forced to hire staff they view as violating their beliefs (e.g., conservative Christian opposition to openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender people).

Publicly, Bush has stated his position that religious groups receiving faith-based grants should not discriminate in providing services by offering those services to only those who are of their faith. He has not publicly discussed the conservative preference for faith-based funding as a way to defund government social service programs. In an era of conservative values and limited federal resources, the size of the pie for social services is particularly restrictive. Thus, funding is a zero sum exercise. Money that goes to faith-based organizations for the provision of social services does not go to secular organizations or government-run programs for those services. Right-wing activist Grover Norquist of the Leave Us Alone

Coalition has famously stated that he would like to “shrink government down to the size that it can be drowned in the bathtub.”<sup>43</sup> Though diverting federal money to faith-based initiatives will not achieve that goal, it will contribute to it.

Questions concerning separation of church and state doomed full-fledged Congressional approval of Bush’s plans. However, the Administration went forward by establishing offices of “Faith-Based and Community Initiatives” in an increasing number of executive departments. By 2006, the Administration was disbursing \$2.1 billion to various faith-based organizations and programs through executive orders, rule changes, managerial realignment, and other innovative uses of presidential powers.<sup>44</sup> Also, a line item in the 2002 federal budget created the \$30 million “Compassion Capital Fund” to channel federal money to faith-based groups at the local level. The Compassion Capital Fund is administered by HHS. Lawsuits are challenging these initiatives, arguing that during the provision of services, some faith-based organizations are introducing the Bible inappropriately, thereby violating the separation of church and state.<sup>45</sup>

Much of federal faith-based funding supports after-school, food, prisoner rehabilitation, and abstinence-only programs. In addition, many faith-based organizations favored by the Bush Administration counsel low-income women and men on “healthy relationships” and promote marriage and “fathers’ rights” to them. This is not surprising since the 1996 “Welfare Reform” bill authorizes the states, if they so choose, to administer and provide TANF funds through nongovernmental entities. Many of these nongovernmental entities are faith-based charities. The bill opened the door to the use of TANF money to promote “healthy marriage.” Arizona and Oklahoma were the first states to use TANF money to fund marriage initiatives, followed by Utah and West Virginia. Beginning in 1996, West Virginia notoriously provided a \$100 monthly welfare bonus to recipients who marry, though the program has since been suspended.

Federal and state faith-based funding, as Jason DeParle says, “seeks a third way between cold government and cool indifference [to those in need]. Yet with much of the money flowing to conservative supporters of President Bush, the [Compassion Capital]

*Upon assuming office Bush immediately established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.*

fund is also a tool of *realpolitik*.<sup>46</sup> The funds advance a systematic Republican courtship of conservative African-American and Latino voters by providing government funding to explicitly African-American and Latino organizations, showcasing support for a segment of those communities.

In addition to rewarding the friends of the Bush Administration, the Compassion Capital Fund allows HHS to advance its marriage promotion agenda. The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, State University of New York, identifies three areas of focus for HHS funding of faith-based and community organizations: abstinence education, mentoring children, and marriage promotion.<sup>47</sup> All three issues have benefited from funding from the Compassion Capital Fund.

### **Anti-Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns**

The Christian Right opposes same-sex marriage with the same fervor that it promotes heterosexual, patriarchal marriage. This dual position on marriage illustrates that the Right's campaign to promote marriage is not driven by a vision of marriage as the commitment of two people to love and care for each other, but rather a vision of a certain form of marriage that corresponds to conservative norms of sexuality and family life—a vision of marriage that has been called “compulsory het-

erosexuality.”<sup>48</sup> When the struggle for gay rights gained momentum in the 1980s, the Right began to argue that lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) people would soon begin to campaign for the right to marry. In the 1990s, fulfilling that prediction, the LGBT movement gained political influence, and within its ranks, a number of influential LGBT organizations began to push for the right to some form of marriage.

Since it rose to public prominence with the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan as President, the Christian Right has been inveighing against women's liberation and feminists as a central threat to the traditional heterosexual family. Its spokespeople have also warned against the dangers of homosexuality, even using AIDS as evidence of God's condemnation of “the gay lifestyle.”<sup>49</sup> Two right-wing organizations have been especially active in the anti-same-sex mar-

riage campaign: Focus on the Family, a Colorado Springs-based communications ministry headed by Dr. James Dobson and boasting an annual budget of over \$100 million and its own ZIP code; and The Family Research Council, originally launched by Focus on the Family, but spun off and moved to Washington, DC in 1992. While both organizations deal with a broad range of issues of importance to the Right's agenda, each is adamantly antigay and active in the campaign to oppose same-sex marriage.<sup>50</sup>

Anticipating a push by the LGBT movement for legal marriage, in 1996 a Congress dominated by conservative Republicans (and with the collaboration of a number of Democrats) proposed and passed DOMA, The Defense of Marriage Act. On the same day that Congress passed it, Democratic President Bill Clinton signed it. The Act contains two principal provisions:

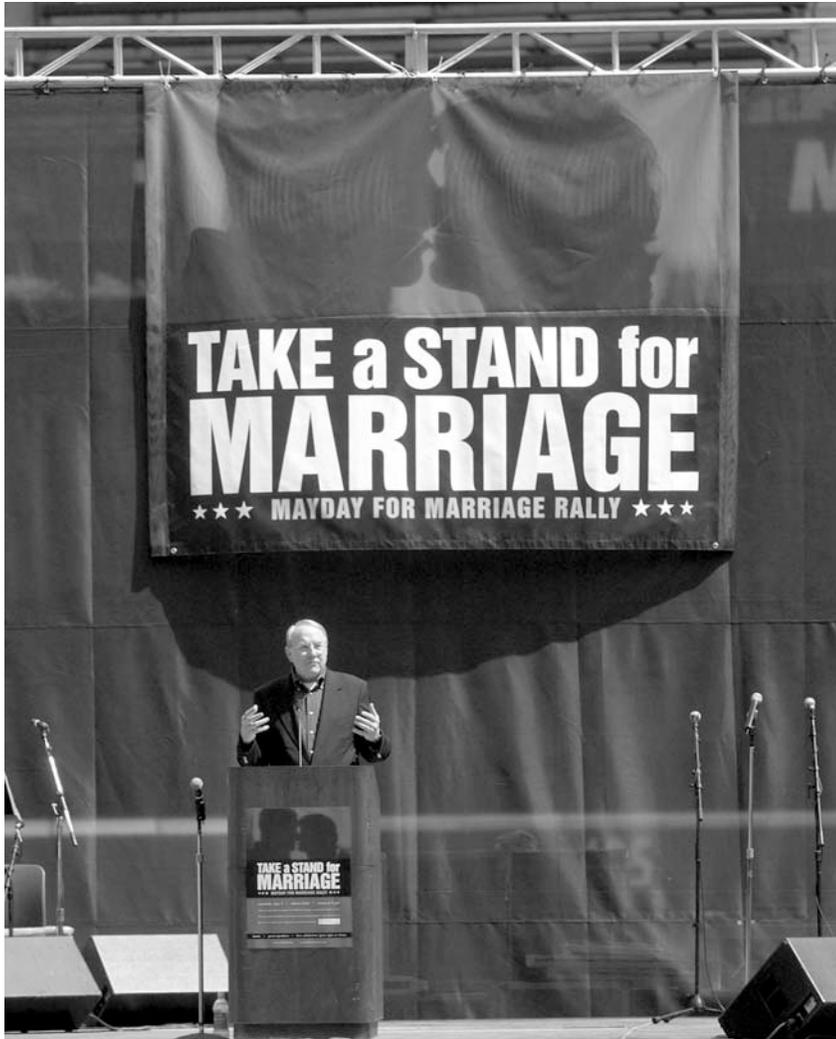
1. It allows each state to deny Constitutional marital rights between same-sex couples, even if they have been granted in another state; and
2. It defines marriage as “a legal union of one man and one woman as husband and wife” and states that “‘spouse’ refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife.”<sup>51</sup>

In July 2000 the Vermont legislature authorized civil unions for same-sex couples in that state. The law stipulates that “Parties to a civil union shall have all the same benefits, protections and responsibilities under Vermont law, whether they derive from statute, policy, administrative or court rule, common law or any other source of civil law, as are granted to spouses in a marriage.” The reaction from right-wing religious and secular groups was immediate. Their leaders and literature claimed that their warnings of the “threat of gay marriage” were now vindicated, that legally sanctioned gay marriage would be next, and that this would end marriage as it has been known for centuries.

This sort of shrill antigay rhetoric reflects the compulsory heterosexuality that has been a bedrock article of faith for conservatives for decades. It gained exceptional prominence as the New Right promoted its “family values” agenda during the two terms of President Ronald Reagan. Newt Gingrich and a large number of organizations ideologically aligned with the Right Wing of the Republican Party furthered it in *The Contract with the American Family*.

In 2003, the Christian Right became more alarmed when the Supreme Judicial Court of

*In 1996 a Congress dominated by conservative Republicans proposed and passed DOMA, The Defense of Marriage Act.*



Ron Wurzer/Getty Images

In 2004, Focus on the Family founder Dr. James Dobson addressed a crowd of 20,000 assembled in Seattle to support Washington State's Defense of Marriage Act. As of 2006, 40 states had enacted laws denying recognition of same-sex marriage.

Massachusetts, in *Goodridge et al. v. Department of Health et al.* handed down a decision stating that "barring an individual from the protections, benefits, and obligations of civil marriage solely because the person would marry a person of the same sex violates the Massachusetts Constitution."<sup>52</sup> In 2008, gay marriage is legal in at least one state in the country.

The Massachusetts decision arrived just in time to serve as a *cause célèbre* for the Republican Party in the 2004 elections and an organizing and fundraising opportunity for the secular and Christian Right. The Republican vote in 2004 was no doubt helped by the eleven initiatives mounted at the state level to amend state constitutions to ban same-sex marriage. These state-level DOMAs have become the principal tool of Republican rightists, though they still push for a federal Constitutional Amendment banning same-

sex marriage.

Although as of 2006, 40 states had enacted laws denying recognition of same-sex marriage, by 2007 six states had laws that recognize some form of same-sex union. The 2008 elections promise to be another opportunity for conservative Republicans to recruit voters to their candidates by appealing to the threat of same-sex marriage. In 2006, eight states (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Wisconsin, South Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) had ballot questions that attempted to ban same-sex marriage and civil unions. Many of them were so punitive that they would also ban all domestic partner benefits. Although the voters approved seven of those eight ballot initiatives, the anti-same-sex marriage campaign seems to be losing steam and is less and less reliable as an organizing device for the Right.<sup>53</sup> In June 2007, the Massachusetts legislature turned back a second effort to reverse same-sex marriage, a strong indication that it will remain

legal in that state. Also in 2007, New York decided to recognize same-sex marriages performed in Massachusetts.

### FATHERHOOD ACTIVISM

#### *The Predominantly White Fatherhood Movement*

While media coverage of Promise Keepers' activities in the 1990s was intense, the press paid little attention to various meetings and rallies that were simultaneously organizing a rightist "fatherhood movement," largely made up of White leaders and members. As a result of its White racial make-up, the movement is focused on issues primarily of concern to White men, such as divorce, custody of children, child support payments, "false" accusations

of abuse, and control of access to children (for instance, by blocking the mother and child/children from moving out of state).

The fatherhood movement represents a serious and sometimes violent attack on divorced women, women who are single parents, and same-sex families. Despite the Right's support for the principles of the fatherhood movement, neither the Contract with America nor The Contract with the American Family anticipated that the federal government might become involved in funding the promotion of fatherhood and marriage to welfare recipients. In the 1990s, neither the Christian Right nor The Heritage Foundation had yet developed such a proposal for the use of federal funds as a legislative program. It was not until the election of George W. Bush in 2000 that this initiative was advanced.

*The fatherhood movement represents a serious and sometimes violent attack on divorced women, women who are single parents, and same-sex families.*

The new fatherhood movement drew together disparate sectors of "family values" advocates. The titular head of the movement was Wade Horn, leader of the largest and most powerful of the fatherhood organizations, the National Fatherhood Initiative. Other prominent leaders included David Blankenhorn, David Popenoe, and Don Eberly.<sup>54</sup>

As Wade Horn acknowledges, these sectors were not all on the same ideological page:

Religiously oriented advocates believe fatherhood is part of God's plan, without recognition of which the institution of fatherhood will not be recovered. Fathers' rights advocates consider the current focus on deadbeat dads inaccurate and counterproductive and lobby for divorce and child custody reforms. Advocates for low-income men believe poor economic circumstances are a primary cause of fatherlessness and see the solution in job training and education programs for disadvantaged and minority men. Culturalists believe fatherlessness is a failure of our culture to reinforce a compelling fatherhood script and seek the definition of one. Marriage advocates believe only a restoration of the institution of marriage will lead to a renewal of fatherhood.<sup>55</sup>

This diversity of ideology and agenda within the fatherhood movement allows the movement to present many faces to the world. Its most militant wing calls itself the "fathers' rights" movement and is made up of rabidly angry and misogynist men, led by fathers on a crusade to put right the injustices done to them by: 1) the divorce court "system;" 2) their "vengeful and spiteful" ex-wives (who were inevitably abetted by "the system"); or 3) "man-hating feminists" and welfare workers who have stolen their children after their wives brought false accusations of battering or incest against them. These groups are the radical underside of the fatherhood movement and differ in the degree of violence in their actions and rhetoric from the portion of the movement that shows a respectable face. For these groups, men are naturally dominant and *can do no wrong*.

Some of the men writing from the perspective of the fathers' rights movement are well connected in the circles of the Right, but do not support the efforts of more mainstream rightist groups. For example, Stephen Baskerville, who regularly publishes in right-wing newsletters and journals, has just released a book titled *Taken Into Custody: The War Against Fathers, Marriage, and The Family*. In it, he rails against the more mainstream rightist fatherhood movement and its leaders Wade Horn, David Blankenhorn, and David Popenoe, calling them "self-styled advocates for fatherhood," condemning them because they fail to begin from the assumption that fathers do not abandon their children and are usually falsely accused of battering their wives and/or children.<sup>56</sup> And Baskerville is particularly angry about the family court system, maintaining that:

Family law today represents the most massive civil rights abuses and the most intrusive perversion of government power in our time. Not since the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II have we seen mass incarcerations without trial, without charge, and without counsel, and what is happening today is on a much larger scale... And never before has the 'health' secretary commanded a gendarmerie of almost 60,000 plainclothes agents, some of them armed, whose sole purpose is to oversee the family lives of citizens.<sup>57</sup>

The Internet plays an important role in the fatherhood movement, especially its most militant



Darren McColester/Getty Images

The Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts in 2003 ruled that same-sex couples are entitled to civil marriage under the state's Constitution. At a 2006 statehouse rally, demonstrators urge lawmakers to send to voters a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

wing. An example of this Internet presence is the pseudonymous Angry Harry, blogging at [www.angry-harry.com](http://www.angry-harry.com). "Harry" comments on the 2006 case of millionaire businessman Darren Mack, who first killed his estranged wife in Reno, Nevada, by stabbing her, then shot family court judge Chuck Weller in a sniper attack because he was angry over a divorce settlement delivered by Judge Weller. In a piece that skates perilously close to justifying the killing and subsequent shooting, he writes:

Of course, the truth of the matter is that many men—including my good self—are reacting very badly to the corrupt systems that western governments have put into place. And, indeed, one of the reasons that so many men in the fathers rights movement seem so "deranged" is because they have been through absolute hell—for a very long time. And some of them are very definitely mentally ill as a result. And some of them look as if they are suffering from PTSD or something like it—even years

after their various turmoils began.

Let's call it Battered Fathers Syndrome, for want of a better term.<sup>58</sup>

In one of many attacks on Wade Horn, the movement's titular leader, Gerald L. Rowles, Ph.D., who owns a private consulting firm and founded Dads Against the Divorce Industry (DA\*DI) in 1993, complains about Horn:

*The titular head of the fatherhood movement was Wade Horn, leader of the National Fatherhood Initiative.*

About two years ago, Dr. Wade Horn asked, Will Fathers Become Extinct in the Next Century? [He said] "The challenge we face as we head into the next century is to turn attitudinal change into behavioral change. If not, future generations will go to the Museum of Natural History to view a display entitled 'The American Father' right next to a display of the Woolly Mammoth. That won't be good news for either fathers or the children who come to stare."

Not so ironically, Dr. Horn is now a member of the George W. Bush administration at HHS. The organization of which he was a former director, “The National Fatherhood Initiative,” remains the most heavily trafficked website of its genre, and was the first to capture the coveted ‘fatherhood.org’ URL. Now apart from the somewhat disingenuous concern expressed in the foregoing quote, Horn has never been a fatherhood supporter. He has made it clear that he, and NFI, are children’s advocates, not father’s advocates.<sup>59</sup>

The development of the more mainstream fatherhood movement owes a debt to the Clinton/Gore Administration. In June 1995, President Clinton launched a government-wide initiative to strengthen the role of fathers in families. As a part of this initiative, HHS expanded its efforts to assist men in their roles as fathers. But it was not until the election of George W.

Bush in 2000 that this initiative was advanced, publicized, and given a large amount of funding.

The debut of the center/right fatherhood movement occurred at a “National Summit on Fatherhood,” held in Dallas, Texas, in October 1994 and sponsored by

The National Fatherhood Initiative, the largest and most respectable of the fatherhood groups. This meeting was followed by a 1996 conference convened in Minneapolis by the movement’s leadership. The Minneapolis conference resulted in the definitive statement of the ideology and agenda of the fatherhood movement, titled “A Call to Fatherhood,” published in a collection of essays titled *The Fatherhood Movement: A Call to Action*.<sup>60</sup> Marvin Olasky, a principal architect of the Bush Administration’s faith-based initiatives, was an original signer of this Call.

While *A Call to Action* is a comprehensive introduction to the movement and required reading for anyone interested in the Bush Administration’s family policy, it tends to present the movement as self-invented by its leadership. The movement actually owes a great deal to several intellectual and activist predecessors, especially: Daniel Patrick Moynihan of the well-known and controversial “Moynihan Report” (1965);<sup>61</sup> George Gilder for his work on the family,

particularly his 1973 book, *Sexual Suicide*;<sup>62</sup> the “family values” agenda developed by the New Right during the Reagan and George H. W. Bush Administrations; the mythopoetic men’s movement headed by Robert Bly and captured in his book, *Iron John: A Book About Men*;<sup>63</sup> and the national activism of Promise Keepers, whose statement of principles appears in its publication, *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*.<sup>64</sup>

The 1999 book, *The Fatherhood Movement*, edited by Wade F. Horn, David Blankenhorn, and Mitchell B. Pearlstein, pulls together the movement’s major articles and serves as its guidebook. The editors and contributors argue that a father must be present in order for a family to be functional and healthy.<sup>65</sup> In 2001, Horn was appointed Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at HHS and put in charge of the Bush Administration’s programs for welfare recipients. The centerpiece of his policy implementation has been to fund marriage promotion and fatherhood programs, putting the federal seal of approval on the importance of a father in low-income families.

Despite its ideological diversity, a few basic tenets run throughout the predominantly White fatherhood movement. Underlying every rightist sector of the movement is a conservative Christian reading of the nature and role of the family. Christian Right theological principles are central, and adherents often refer to Christianity as the basis for the movement’s legitimacy. The movement explicitly supports patriarchy, asserting that it is damaging to children for them to grow up without a father present in the home.

Importantly, there is a liberal sector of the fatherhood movement that is often called “profeminist fatherhood.” Although there are relatively few profeminist fatherhood organizations, they are a growing presence in liberal political circles. These groups, such as Dads and Daughters, the National Center for Fathering, A Call to Men, and the Fathering Program of the Men’s Resource Center for Change, organize men to be better fathers. They work on issues such as: the problems that male supremacy causes within the family; how the politics of masculinity often appears to condone violence in U.S. culture; and their own privilege as men. Rightist fatherhood groups have stereotyped these groups as not representing “real men.”<sup>66</sup>

Senator and presidential candidate Barack Obama, who himself grew up with little contact with his father, has urged fathers in the Black community

*In order to escape the label “racist,” the Right developed a “colorblind” analysis of virtue and achievement.*

to be more responsible *and* has linked their absence to family poverty.<sup>67</sup> Because he is considered a liberal on social and economic issues, his voice is one strain of the liberal profatherhood position, one often expressed by Democrats in the House and Senate. It is unlikely that these liberals will support a repeal of the \$50 million annual allocation in the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act for fatherhood promotion, no matter how strong the Democratic majority should become in both chambers.

### RACIAL FRAMING OF MARRIAGE AND FATHERHOOD

Since the creation of the New Right in the 1970s, the Right's leadership has known the importance of avoiding the label "racist," lest they show their roots in the discredited segregationism of the Old Right. By stereotyping welfare recipients as African-American and demonizing them as women of loose sexual morals who are prone to defraud government agencies, the Right was able to mobilize the racial resentment of large numbers of White voters. In order to escape the label "racist," the Right developed an analysis of virtue and achievement as "colorblind"—adhering to individuals regardless of race.<sup>68</sup> Thus, a campaign against "undeserving" people is not racist, but simply corrects injustices done to "good, working people."

In the most prevalent worldview of the Right, ideology has replaced race as the defining characteristic to determine worthiness. In other words, if you are a good Christian, a good conservative, and a loyal patriot, you should not be criticized for being a person of color. In fact, conservatives of color are useful to the Right's movement and are richly rewarded with jobs and grants.

Though marriage promotion and fatherhood initiatives are promoted by both the conservatives of the Bush Administration and community advocates in communities of color, it should be no surprise that each site of activism brings its own analysis to the problems of poverty. Bush Administration bureaucrats value a conservative analysis of marriage and fatherhood, *especially* when it comes from communities of color. By supporting conservatism within these communities, the Right is building its movement and lending credence to its claim of being colorblind. At the same time, it is promoting its political agenda and public policies from within the communities, rather than a less-subtle imposition of those ideas from the arena of White politics.

The federal government, with its millions of dollars available for marriage promotion and fatherhood projects, is in a position to lure, bribe, and cajole activists from low-income communities of color to its point of view. For instance, the Healthy Families Initiative of HHS's Administration for Children and Families has hired directors to administer special initiatives for African-American, Hispanic, and Native American communities. This demonstrates attention to these communities and allows HHS to conduct gatherings and encourage community activists to adopt the Bush Administration's concerns and analysis as their own.

#### *Fatherhood and Marriage in Communities of Color*

In African-American, Latino, Native American, and Asian communities, fatherhood is invariably intertwined with issues of race, racism, and discrimination. Further, in all low-income communities, the issue of fatherhood occurs within a context of the barriers to marriage mentioned above: lack of job opportunities, poor educational systems, substandard and unsafe housing, high rates of incarceration, and addiction. In low-income communities of color, racial discrimination increases the intensity of those barriers. Also, many more single-mother births occur within very poor communities, and low-income men and women are only about half as likely to marry as those with incomes at three or more times the poverty level.

The right-wing ideologues who maintain that marriage and fatherhood will cure poverty are relying on the analysis of sociologist George Gilder, specifically the way that marriage and fatherhood channel men's aggression and lack of work ethic toward work and maintaining the family.<sup>69</sup> This is one example of bad science: reducing the explanation for phenomena as complex as family formation and poverty to one single factor—marriage. The assertion that marriage will cure poverty and fatherlessness is simply unproven,<sup>70</sup> but serves to reassert the heterosexual nuclear family model, complete with sex role assignments and an assumption that women will be safe because they are married. The Right presents this model as more than a desirable option, but as the only social arrangement that both contributes to free-market capitalism and fully benefits from it.

*Conservatives of color are useful to the Right's movement and are richly rewarded with jobs and grants.*

White marriage and fatherhood promoters see low-income communities of color as their most challenging project. Because many families in these communities do not conform to the model heterosexual, nuclear family configuration, they are identified by rightists and also many liberals as “problem” or “unhealthy” communities. In 2007, because the right wing of the Republican Party is in control of the federal bureaucracy, these promoters are free to experiment with marriage as the “cure” for poverty and fatherhood as the means to change “community culture.”

However, to effect change in low-income communities of color, the primarily White fatherhood movement must gain access to them. Under Horn, HHS developed special programs to create access and good will within communities of color for a conservative analysis of fatherhood and marriage. The primary strategies involved awarding grants to both faith-based and select secular organizations, and sponsoring convenings that targeted specific communities of color. The Healthy Families Initiative of HHS’s Administration for Children and Families, which maintains separate initiatives for African-American, Hispanic, and Native American communities, publishes a newsletter and holds convenings for each community. There doesn’t appear to be an equivalent initiative with Asian-American communities.<sup>71</sup>

“Responsible fatherhood” and “healthy marriage” are the bywords of federal outreach to communities of color and low-income communities. By gaining access and building trust with federal grants, the White fatherhood movement (through its allies in the federal bureaucracy) has an opportunity to recruit men and women in low-income communities of color to collaborate in the Right’s “cure” for their poverty.

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### ***African-American Fatherhood “Outreach”***

HHS often points out that it is particularly concerned with promoting marriage within the African-American community. The justification for this racial “marriage promotion affirmative action” is that, according to the 2000 U.S. Census and 2003 National Center for Health Statistics Report, African-Americans have the lowest marriage rates and the highest divorce rates of any group in the United States, the highest rate of households headed by sin-

gle mothers, and the highest rate of childbirth to single mothers.<sup>72</sup> These statistics have given rise to events such as “Black Marriage Day,” put on in 70 cities by the Wedding Bliss Foundation, with direct assistance from HHS.

By targeting African-Americans for marriage promotion, HHS is responding to the statistics cited above, claiming that marriage promotion must, logically, be most active in the communities with the poorest record on marriage. In this stealth logic, marriage is elevated to the status of a community asset, while the lack of robust marriage statistics is seen as a community deficit (the word “pathology” is no longer popular); therefore the African-American community receives a disproportionate share of marriage promotion efforts. The entire argument rests on the association of a low marriage rate with a lack of community health—such that the government can justify intervening.

Conservative activists in communities of color, often adhering to the rightist notion that issues of race and racism should be “colorblind,” tend to focus on the community itself as the cause of fatherlessness. They argue that blaming poverty, White racism, or joblessness allows the fathers in the community to shirk their responsibility to provide for their children. Traditionalist African-American organizations, such as the Washington, DC-based Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, and new publications, such as *Proud Poppa*, promote the nuclear family model that emphasizes the father as the principal determinant of the success of children and the family. They encourage fathers to be heavily involved in the rearing of children. Many of these more conservative African-American organizations talk very little about the challenges of poverty or the crucial role of the mother in childrearing. Their message is that “fathers make the family.”

It is these few organizations and a number of conservative pastors and ministers that tend to work most closely with the Healthy Marriage Initiative of the George W. Bush Administration. For example, as part of its outreach to African-Americans, HHS’s Administration for Children and Families hosted a 2004 conference in Chicago to spread the word in the African-American community about the government’s efforts to promote marriage. The Forum’s title was, “Why Marriage Matters: The Role of Faith-Based and Community Organizations.” Approximately one-third of the attendees identified themselves as pastors from around the country.<sup>73</sup>

*A disproportionate share of marriage promotion efforts are targeted at the African-American community.*

At the conference, one workshop leader, Rev. Darrell L. Armstrong of Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton, N.J., illustrated the gap between the more conservative marriage analysis promoted by rightists at HHS and a more liberal analysis of marriage when he warned participants to be wary of two groups that would oppose their efforts: advocates against domestic violence, who are concerned that marriage initiatives will encourage people to stay in abusive relationships; and gay and lesbian groups that are fighting for access to marriage.<sup>74</sup> Rev. Armstrong was essentially warning conference attendees against liberals, and implicitly portrayed them as enemies of marriage.

Although liberal fatherhood and marriage organizations of color are equally dedicated to strong families and involved fatherhood, they are less attached to the traditional nuclear family model than are conservative fatherhood organizations. In the words of Ronald Mincy, a scholar who studies African-American fathers, these organizations “encourage fathers, whether married or not, to become more involved in their children’s lives, both emotionally and financially, and to develop a better relationship with the child’s mother.”<sup>75</sup> Liberal fatherhood and marriage advocates tend to see low-income men and woman as part of a group known as “fragile families.” They understand that low-income men of color face barriers in employment, housing, and access to health care, and they promote marriage and fatherhood within the boundaries of that reality.

Researchers are now learning that in low-income families in African-American communities—assumed in the mainstream White media to be predominantly made up of single-mother households—many young men of color are involved with the mothers of their children, and many mothers and fathers are living together.<sup>76</sup> In various ways, the welfare system itself has discouraged welfare recipients from reporting the name of their children’s father or the fact that the father is living with the family. Many mothers are justifiably unwilling to “turn in” the fathers to authority figures or admit the extent to which the father lives with the family for fear of jeopardizing their welfare status. In San Diego it is now legal for investigators from the District Attorney’s office to make unannounced visits to the homes of people applying for welfare benefits and look in medicine cabinets, garbage cans, and laundry baskets in search of evidence of a “man in the house.” If the applicant refuses to allow the visit, welfare benefits

will be denied.<sup>77</sup> Through this sort of “policing” of welfare recipients, the state is making marriage the only acceptable means of family formation. Any other relationship threatens benefits needed to provide basic necessities.

Mainstream advocates for low-income fathers, such as the Washington, D.C.-based National Partnership for Community Leadership (formerly the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership), rather than pushing for increased enforcement of child-support laws, acknowledge that often these men have no money to pay. African-American sociologist William Julius Wilson has long observed that dwindling employment opportunities among young African-American men weakens their prospects for marriage.<sup>78</sup> When fatherhood activism in communities of color addresses the issue of family poverty and incorporates racism, unemployment, and incarceration in the discussion, the resultant organizing promotes fatherhood and addresses poverty at the same time, rather than simply blaming women and men of color. Senator Barack Obama, for instance, in his comments chastising “absentee Black fathers,” also notes that the federal government has “gone AWOL” as low-income families deal with unemployment and lack of health care.<sup>79</sup> These organizations, activists, academics, and politicians appropriately emphasize poverty as the cause of family distress, and then help fathers develop a healthy relationship with their families.

Another ideological sector of the fatherhood movement within the African-American community is nationalistic fatherhood, almost single-handedly represented by the Nation of Islam, which has long emphasized the importance of the family. It called for a million African-American men to come to Washington, DC on October 16, 1995 to stand up for “unity, atonement, and brotherhood.” Organized by Minister Louis Farrakhan, then leader of the Nation of Islam, it was one of the largest marches ever seen on the Mall. Speakers from the podium called on African-American men to “clean up their lives and rebuild their neighborhoods.”

The March drew many who were not affiliated with the Nation of Islam, but wanted to make a statement in support of African-American empowerment. While the March promoted a conservative agenda of

*By “policing” welfare recipients, the state is making marriage the only acceptable means of family formation.*

personal responsibility, it also stood against the Right's attacks on programs like welfare, Medicaid, public housing, student aid programs, and liberal education curricula. The event also included efforts to convince African Americans to register and to vote. The number of men who actually gathered was never established, though media sources agreed that it was fewer than the million men expected.

### **Latino Fatherhood "Outreach"**

HHS has also targeted Latino communities for fatherhood organizing and promotion of the conservative analysis of fatherhood and marriage. However, a majority of the grants from HHS's Administration of Children and Families address communications skills and tools for the Spanish-speaking family rather than fatherhood training. The vast majority of grants related to fatherhood go to

White, non-Latino organizations that have developed Spanish language curriculum to offer Spanish-speaking clients.

This approach relies on the false assumption that translation is all that is needed to transfer materials from one setting to another. For example, the predominant stereotype in the White community of the Spanish-speaking

family is of a close-knit, highly religious family unit that is averse to divorce. However, 2003 Census statistics (which use the term "Hispanic" and do not include Hispanic immigrants) present a more complex profile. Only 48 percent of Hispanics are married and living with a spouse, compared with 56 percent of non-Hispanic Whites, 55 percent of Asians, and 33 percent of African Americans. This figure, lower than Whites and Asians, but higher than African Americans, does not fit the family-oriented Latino stereotype.<sup>80</sup>

A more authentic model of organizing is offered by the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute (NLFFI), headed by Jerry Tello and based in East Los Angeles, California. The Institute offers programs on Latino fatherhood, Latino men's health, and domestic violence, and holds an annual National Latino Fatherhood Conference. NLFFI uses a program titled *Con Los Padres*, a young fatherhood mentoring and education program that provides fatherhood parenting classes, counseling, tutoring, job training, and mentoring. NLFFI is a member of the

National Latino Male Involvement Network, with affiliates across the country. The work of NLFFI is based within the Chicano/Latino communities which it serves. While NLFFI should not be forced into a "liberal" category without the ownership of that term by the organization itself, it is sensitive to, and responsible to, its Latino community; thus, its programs are not imposed by the Bush Administration.

### **Native American Fatherhood "Outreach"**

Native American communities were singled out for special attention in the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act that created welfare reauthorization rules. Of the \$100 million allocated to "healthy marriage" promotion, up to \$2 million was earmarked to be spent within Native American communities. *Indian Country Today* columnist Scott Richard Lyons points out that there are two grants available for child care, but 16 available for marriage promotion. Lyons speculates that the reason is the Bush Administration's devotion to "the two fundamentalisms that govern our lives these days. Religious fundamentalism is obsessed with making sure that women don't have sex out of wedlock, while market fundamentalism preaches that the 'free market' will provide everything that we need."<sup>81</sup>

A pathbreaking Native American organization is the Native American Fatherhood and Families Association (NAFFA), based in Mesa, Arizona. Acknowledging that there were virtually no other Native American fatherhood organizations at that time, NAFFA held its first national conference, "Fatherhood is Sacred," in November 2006. Its curriculum, also called "Fatherhood is Sacred," now has a matching curriculum, "Motherhood is Sacred." The two curricula are offered to the public in tandem. Recognizing the difficulties that incarceration poses for Native families, NAFFA is especially active in prisons in Arizona. The spirituality that suffuses the NAFFA programs is that of Native American culture rather than conservative Christianity, the religious perspective of the White, conservative fatherhood movement.

Albert Pooley, the founder of NAFFA and a popular speaker, presented at the Administration for Children and Families' Healthy Marriage Initiative Training and Technical Assistance Conference in July 2007.

*The vast majority of grants for Latino fatherhood programs go to White organizations that have developed Spanish language curricula.*

### **Asian-American Fatherhood “Outreach”**

Asian-American communities have not been singled out for special attention from HHS, perhaps because the White stereotype of the Asian father is of a strict, distant father, but one who is clearly the leader of his nuclear family. A related stereotype is of the Asian-American family that is economically well-off, having “made it” in the U.S. free market setting, and thus not a target of programs that address poverty. Both stereotypes do not correspond with the facts of the Asian-American family. As more research is done on Asian-American fathers, the stereotype of the strict father is breaking down.<sup>82</sup> Another stereotype—that Asian-Pacific-American families do not divorce—is belied by the doubling of the number of divorced Asian-Pacific-Americans between 1996 and 2002.<sup>83</sup>

It is impossible to discuss these developments without a complex analysis that takes into account the enormous variations among diverse immigrant communities, as well as different types of discrimination and poverty among different generations of immigrant communities. Such an analysis requires deep familiarity with the communities themselves. To apply a single template to “cure” poverty, especially when based on unproven assumptions, is an approach that is long on ideology and short on understanding.

More liberal Asian groups, such as the Los Angeles-based Korean Churches for Community Development’s Asian Pacific American Healthy Marriage Network, fully acknowledge both the cultural and economic challenges faced by immigrant families. More conservative Asian-American organizations, such as Marriage Savers, a ministry at the Light of Love Church, focus more narrowly on biblical principles, prevention, healing, research, and enhancing communications skills.

### **Illusive Unity**

Ideological common ground between liberal and conservative fatherhood groups is illusive at best. The best recent effort to achieve some degree of unity was a moderate statement, signed by 50 participants at a multiracial 1999 conference held at Morehouse College and cosponsored by the Morehouse Research Institute and the conservative Institute for American Values. The statement, whose signatories ranged from conservative to liberal, cites declining economic opportunity for inner-city Black men, racial discrimination, and a culture that increasingly has become uninterested in marriage. In an article in

*Christian Century*, a liberal-leaning magazine for Christians that has been publishing since 1900, researcher Carol Browning described this statement as having “broken the ideological logjam clogging many ongoing debates over family values.”<sup>84</sup> But clearly that unity has not held. The fatherhood model promoted by HHS, which so strongly favors the conservative analysis of “fatherlessness,” has gained dominance in funding and media attention over other models. With the addition of \$50 million a year for fatherhood work distributed by the George W. Bush Administration, the conservative fatherhood analysis now has even greater dominance in the field of fatherhood.

### **IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT’S IDEOLOGY IN POLICIES AND PROGRAMS**

The measure of a social movement’s lasting success is the extent to which its ideology and policy proposals become dominant in the country, and eventually become law. When George W. Bush assumed the Presidency in 2000, the Right for the first time had control of both the Executive Branch and Congress, creating an opportunity for it, as a movement, to reap the full benefits of success and power. Primary among these benefits has been implementation of the programs and policies that reflect the movement’s ideology.<sup>85</sup> The golden opportunity had arrived in terms of the Right’s support for marriage promotion as a cure for poverty, and promotion of “responsible fatherhood” to restore community health.

The Bush Administration sent the strongest possible signal of its support for such policies when it appointed Wade Horn to oversee federal welfare programs at HHS. Welfare would now be brought under the ideological discipline of the Right, most notably of the Heritage Foundation’s policy and program suggestions. Horn and Heritage’s Robert Rector have been the principal craftsmen of “welfare reform” in the George W. Bush Administration.

Complementing this strong policy initiative was a belief, signaled by Bush throughout his presidential campaign, that his Administration would not see the need for a true separation between church and state.

*Wade Horn and Heritage Foundation’s Robert Rector have been the principal craftsmen of “welfare reform” in the George W. Bush Administration.*

When he spoke at Bob Jones University on February 3, 2000, Bush's appearance was criticized because Bob Jones University prohibits interracial dating on campus.<sup>86</sup> But because Bob Jones U. is known to be a private, Protestant *fundamentalist* liberal arts university in Greenville, South Carolina, the signal sent by the Bush campaign was also targeted to his Christian Right base—a message that his compassionate conservatism was based in very conservative evangelical Christianity.

*The redirection of welfare benefits into fatherhood and marriage promotion programs is the equivalent of taking food off the table of the poor.*

In 1999, John Ashcroft, then U.S. Senator from Missouri, but soon to become Attorney General, said at Bob Jones University, “Unique among the nations, America recognized the source of our character as being godly and eternal, not being civic and temporal.”<sup>87</sup>

Especially in his theme of “compassionate conservatism,”

Bush made clear that he saw government support for religion, especially evangelical Protestantism, as both legitimate and desirable. This right-wing opposition to a bright line of separation between church and state would profoundly influence the implementation of federal funding of marriage and fatherhood policies and programs.

Marriage promotion programs, developed by The Heritage Foundation and the Bush Administration, and now being implemented across the country with federal and state funding, include:

1. Public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage and the skills needed to increase marital stability and health.
2. Education in high schools on the value of marriage, relationship skills, and budgeting.
3. Marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs that may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement, for nonmarried pregnant women and nonmarried expectant fathers.
4. Premarital education and marriage skills training for engaged couples and for couples or individuals interested in marriage.
5. Marriage enhancement and marriage skills training programs for married couples.
6. Divorce reduction programs that teach relationship skills.
7. Marriage mentoring programs which use married couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities.

8. Programs to reduce the disincentives to marriage in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any activity described above.<sup>88</sup>

As federal and state allocations for marriage promotion and fatherhood programs have dramatically increased, welfare benefits themselves have steadily fallen.<sup>89</sup> While “trimming the fat” of welfare benefits, implementing “disincentives” for welfare recipients to have children (such as “family cap”), and implementing a five-year lifetime cutoff for welfare recipients, the Bush Administration, Congress, and some states now lavish money on untested and unproven ideological experiments. This redirection of benefits—ostensibly intended for low-income families and those unable to meet their own needs, is the equivalent of taking food off the table of the poor. To the injury of the draconian provisions of PRWORA, the Bush Administration has now added the insult of social experimentation on poor people, primarily women and children.

This social experimentation is augmented by social manipulation of low-income women and men. An increasingly “attractive” tactic in the eyes of conservative marriage promotion advocates is to take advantage of the “magic moment” when a mother gives birth to her child, and the father is often most involved with both mother and child. A number of federal and state programs are targeting this moment to press the couple to marry.<sup>90</sup>

Grants from the federal “Healthy Marriage Initiative” are awarded on a competitive basis and are granted by HHS. Both private and public entities may apply for funds. In addition, state governments have engaged in a number of activities to promote marriage—some paid for with TANF funds and some funded by the states themselves. The state-based activities fall into ten categories:<sup>91</sup>

- Campaigns, commissions, and proclamations
- Divorce laws and procedures
- Marriage and relationship preparation and education
- State tax policies
- State cash assistance policies
- State Medicaid policies
- State vital statistics
- Marriage support and promotion
- Youth education and development
- Specialty programs

It is difficult to know exactly how much state and federal money goes to support marriage promotion

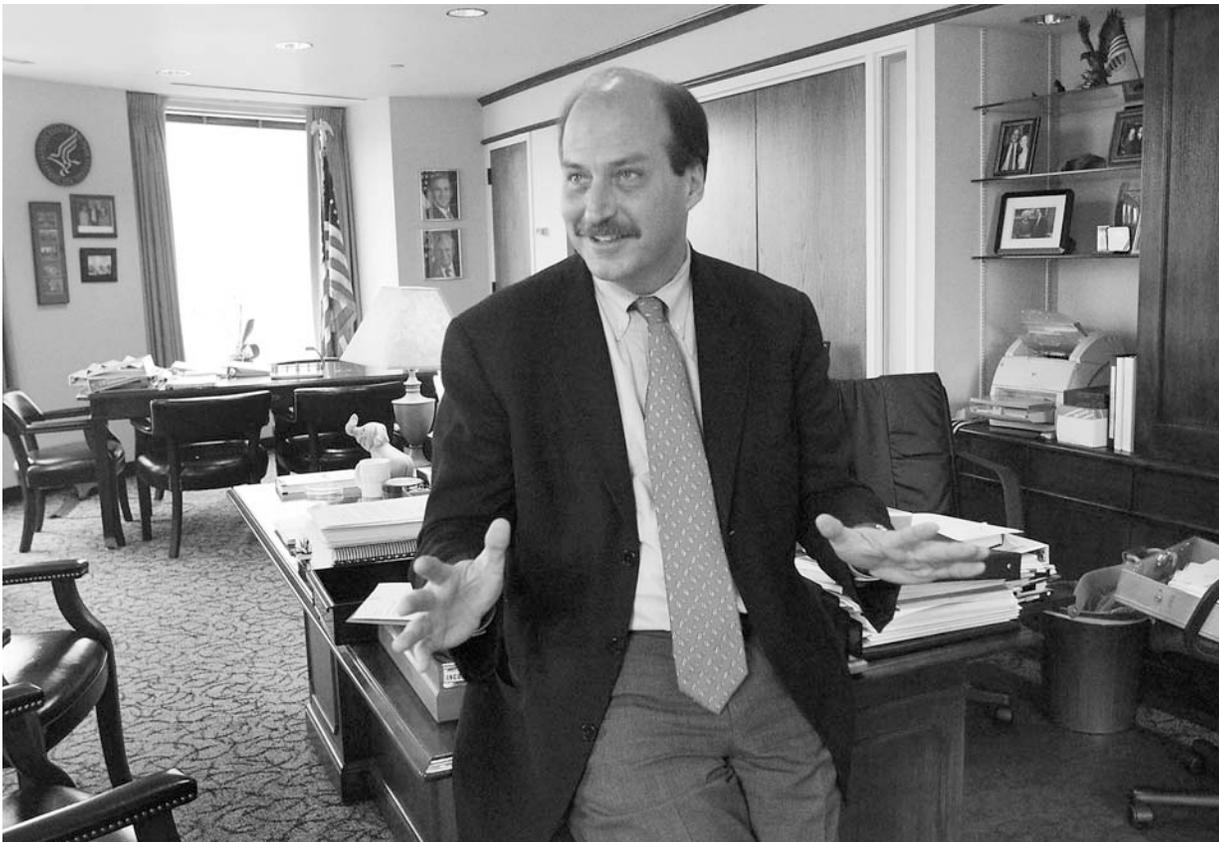
programs. The 2005 Deficit Reduction Act has authorized \$100 million per year for five years for a total of \$500 million. But, according to Timothy Casey of Legal Momentum, it is not possible to name the exact figure.<sup>92</sup> One complicating factor in researching the amount of money awarded to programs and states for marriage promotion is that some marriage promotion grants are made through Executive Branch departments other than HHS. For example, Grant No. 2001-DD-BX-0079 was awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, to support a 2004 report, “Can Government Strengthen Marriage? Evidence from the Social Sciences,” published by the National Fatherhood Initiative, the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, and the Institute for American Values—three rightist organizations, one of which was formerly headed by Wade Horn of HHS.

Although the HHS website provides a list of its marriage promotion grants, it does not list the amount of each grant or the exact total of each of five sources of funding. These sources are:

- Healthy Marriage Initiative funding before and after passage of the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act;
- Charitable Choice or faith-based funding (\$2 billion in 2004);<sup>93</sup>
- Compassion Capital Fund, a separate source of funding within the Administration;
- State programs mandated and funded by the states;
- State programs carried out with TANF funds; and
- Grants from other programs within HHS made in furtherance of marriage promotion.

### FEDERAL MARRIAGE PROMOTION GRANTEE PROFILES

Although Congress did not specifically allocate federal funding for marriage promotion and fatherhood programs until the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 passed in 2006, federal money had previously been flowing to marriage promotion and



In 2001, fatherhood movement leader Wade Horn was appointed Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at HHS and put in charge of the Bush Administration’s programs for welfare recipients. Horn’s priority was to fund marriage promotion and fatherhood programs.

fatherhood programs. HHS and many other federal departments and agencies had been supporting research, demonstration projects, and specific organizations since at least early 2002. Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation estimates that the federal government had spent \$24 million annually on marriage promotion and responsible fatherhood before the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act, an estimate that is undoubtedly far too low.<sup>94</sup>

Examples of 2002 funding not specifically directed by Congress are two large grants of \$19 million and \$40 million from the Administration for Children and Families, an agency within HHS. The grants, to create demonstration projects on “healthy marriage,” were awarded to Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. for a program called Building Strong Families, and to the Manpower Research Corporation (MDRC) for a report, “Moving Families from Welfare to Work.”<sup>95</sup>

When states fund marriage and fatherhood programs, they often use federal money received in the form of block grants and sometimes provide additional funding themselves. Two of the most active states have been Arizona and Oklahoma. Often abstinence-only sex education programs merge with marriage promotion programs to create a greater push toward marriage. For example, Arizona supplemented its abstinence education program by adding an abstinence-until-marriage component.

The following four federal grantees are but a sampling of those that have received money from HHS and other government departments to promote marriage and fatherhood. While not a scientific sampling, they are representative of the range of federal grantees:

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### **The Gottman Institute**

The Gottman Institute is one of several research centers founded and run by Dr. John Gottman, Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington, and his wife, Dr. Julie Schwartz Gottman. They are prominent pioneers in the field of improving intimate relationships among middle-class people. When they were tapped by HHS to work with other grantees on marriage promotion for low-income women and men, they brought their research on middle-class couples to

the Mathematica demonstration project, working with low-income women and men.<sup>96</sup>

Federal grants to The Gottman Institute illustrate that not all federal money is directed to conservative Christian organizations or rightist ideologues. John Gottman has stated that he and his wife are interested in understanding violence in relationships, and that “learning [about relationships in diverse communities] is going to come from the bottom up, because a lot of the middle-class couples in this country are lost, existentially.”<sup>97</sup> This work might well deserve support based on its merits, rather than on the ideologically-driven agenda of the George W. Bush Administration.

The Gottmans are simultaneously pop psychologists and serious, respected scientists. They are committed to the survival of relationships, and do not seem to bring a political agenda to their work. They have praised same-sex relationships as “strong and resilient” and are committed to providing their relationship techniques to same-sex couples. Their research finds that gay and lesbian relationships have some qualities of strength that are specific to these couples. Julie Schwartz Gottman has published research showing that daughters of lesbian mothers do as well as those raised by straight mothers.<sup>98</sup>

### **PREP/Preventive and Relationship Enhancement Program**

PREP is a twelve-hour curriculum of mini-lectures and discussions on topics that include communication, conflict management, forgiveness, religious beliefs and practices, expectations, fun, and friendship. The curriculum is available in both secular and Christian versions, and the Christian version may be taught by either lay leaders or clergy.

Its creators, self-identified conservative Dr. Scott Stanley and liberal Dr. Howard Markham, are based at the University of Denver. Their book, *12 Hours to a Great Marriage*, captures the promise made by PREP that it will “transform your marriage.”<sup>99</sup>

PREP too was used with, and targeted to, middle-income couples. Scott Stanley admits that: “Adapting PREP for low-income populations has been a huge undertaking.”<sup>100</sup> Here again, we see the federally-funded counselors learning on the job. With little knowledge of or experience with low-income communities or communities of color, both PREP and The Gottman Institute are attempting to deliver services to an audience with which they have almost no familiarity.

*Federal grants to The Gottman Institute illustrate that not all federal money is directed to conservative Christian organizations or rightist ideologues.*

PREP is now used by so many federally and state-funded marriage promotion programs that it has almost become the federally-sanctioned marriage promotion curriculum. It is promoted on the website of the Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, at HHS. It has also received tacit approval from the American Psychological Association (APA) in an online article that identifies it as one of three "research-based" marital programs.<sup>101</sup> Both the Army and the Marine Corps also use PREP.<sup>102</sup> It appears that the military uses the Christian version of the curriculum. On its website, The Marine Corps writes: "Your Marine Corps Team Building Staff and your chaplains have teamed up to offer you a truly out-standing program known as PREP."<sup>103</sup>

PREP, which is also used by the Missouri National Guard, is the centerpiece of the influential Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI), which was launched in 1999 by then Governor Frank Keating to address Oklahoma's exceptionally high divorce rate. It was originally funded with \$10 million from Oklahoma's TANF funds. At the invitation of HHS, Rev. George Young, a Baptist minister from OMI, has been speaking to people around the country to encourage similar state-based marriage initiative programs, presumably funded out of TANF funds. Rev. Young says that: "Marriage was created. We believe that God did this in the first chapter of Genesis (the first book of the Bible). If the church is the steward of the institution of marriage, we ought to be the ones involved with doing it."<sup>104</sup> In PREP, as in many other marriage promotion programs, there is a constant tension between religious proselytizing and secular counseling.

The use of TANF funds for these programs by necessity means a decrease in other TANF benefits for low-income recipients.<sup>105</sup> This diversion of funding from the meager coffers of federal money for low-income people is another form of defunding the social safety net authorized by Congress.

### **Marriage Savers, Inc.**

Unlike PREP, which is a marriage program, Marriage Savers is a marriage movement organization. Founded in 1996 by Mike McManus and based in Potomac, Maryland, it describes itself as "a ministry that equips local communities, principally through local congregations, to help men and women to: [p]repare for lifelong marriage; [s]trength-

en existing marriages; and [r]estore troubled marriage[s]."<sup>106</sup> Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary at HHS, was on the founding Board of Directors.

With the help of early funding from the ultra-conservative Scaife Foundation, McManus developed the Community Marriage Project® to "help the clergy of 197 cities and towns (by 10/05) to adopt the goal of 'radically reduc[ing] the divorce rate in area churches....' Clergy join together across denominational and racial lines and sign a covenant to make healthy marriages a priority in their congregations."<sup>107</sup> McManus released a study at the National Press Club in 2004 that documented a decline in divorce rates in 114 counties where his Community Marriage Policies® had been used by ministers and pastors. It showed that those counties, when compared with a control group of counties, showed a decrease in divorces. The study had been paid for, in part, by the federal government. Horn joined McManus onstage at the press conference, touting the study's results.

Marriage Savers received \$49,000 from a group that receives HHS money to promote marriage to unwed couples who are having children.<sup>108</sup> But it is not the commingling of Christian evangelism and federal funding that has gotten Marriage Savers and McManus in trouble. Beginning in 1981, McManus has consistently written a column, syndicated to over 30 newspapers, called "Ethics and Religion." In the January 2005 issue of the Web magazine Salon.com, Eric Boehlert revealed that McManus had been hired as a subcontractor by HHS to promote a George Bush-approved marriage initiative. McManus wrote columns and appeared on television and radio touting the Community Healthy Marriage Initiative. Acting as a journalist, McManus never mentioned that he was being paid by HHS. Horn distanced himself from the resulting uproar and vowed that it would not happen again.<sup>109</sup>

### **Northwest Marriage Institute**

Founded in 2004 and incorporated in 2005, the Northwest Marriage Institute's mission is to provide "Bible education in marriage and related subjects, and to provide professional, Bible-based premarital and marriage counseling." Founder Dr. Robert Whiddon Jr., a Churches of Christ minister, is an

*Marriage Savers' McManus publicly promoted a Bush-approved marriage initiative without revealing that he had been hired by HHS to do so.*

ultraconservative Christian who has said: “God designed marriage,” and, “I use the Bible as my counseling manual;” and defines the first step in marriage counseling as “to stop fighting against God and His guidance.”<sup>110</sup> Whiddon does not lead his own church, but instead seeks those who are “unchurched” in the Vancouver, Washington area and promotes his marriage counseling program to them. The Institute’s literature encourages women to follow the example of the New Testament and influence their husbands by remaining quiet. Women are instructed to remember that the Bible says that the husband is the head of the wife, and she should submit to the husband.<sup>111</sup> The logo for the Northwest Marriage Institute is an ambulance with a cross on its side and the slogan “Every Marriage Saved.”

*The Northwest Marriage Institute’s literature encourages women to follow the example of the New Testament and influence their husbands by remaining quiet.*

The Institute has received three marriage promotion grants from the federal government. The first, for \$47,750, was from the Institute for Youth Development, which was chosen by HHS as an intermediary organization to provide training, technical assistance, and subgrants to small, faith-based organizations seeking to improve

their chances to win future government grants. The second grant, for \$50,000, was awarded by HHS’s Compassion Capital Fund. The third, for \$246,000, was from the Healthy Marriage Initiative, authorized by Congress as part of the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act. The last grant is renewable annually for four years.

In September 2006, 13 complainants, organized by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, filed a lawsuit against Michael Leavitt, Secretary of HHS, the Institute for Youth Development, and the Northwest Marriage Institute. The suit, *Christianson v. Leavitt*, alleged that the Northwest Marriage Institute uses federal money to create materials with explicitly religious content, to purchase supplies and equipment used in religious programming, and to pay a portion of the salaries of the employees who conduct Bible-based counseling. The complaint rests on a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.<sup>112</sup> In March 2007 the judge in the case ruled that the federal faith-based grants to the Northwest Marriage Institute did not violate the con-

stitutional separation of church and state because Whiddon had created a secular counseling program in order to apply for federal funding.

The Alliance Defense Fund, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, offered free legal representation to the Institute. Founded in 1994 by a group of well-known leaders of the Christian Right, including Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, and Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family, it identifies itself as a counter-force to the American Civil Liberties Union. Its mission is to provide help so that right-wing groups can “keep the door open for the spread of the Gospel.”<sup>113</sup>

Although religious groups have not been barred in the past from receiving federal money, they have had to create a secular vehicle to receive the funds. Under Bush Administration guidelines, this is no longer necessary, though federal grant money even now may only be used for secular purposes, not “worship, religious instruction, or proselytization.”<sup>114</sup> The judge’s ruling in the suit against the Northwest Marriage Institute, though denying the case made by Americans United, did add that “An absolute in Establishment Clause jurisprudence is the prohibition against government-financed or government-sponsored indoctrination into the beliefs of a particular religious faith.”<sup>115</sup> In other words, the federal government is required to diligently protect the separation of federal funding from religious practices.

## WADE HORN DEPARTS

On April 2, 2007, Wade Horn unexpectedly resigned his position at HHS. Researcher Bill Berkowitz notes that Horn may have decided that it was time to leave when the Democrats recaptured control of Congress and began to hold hearings on questionable actions within the Executive Branch of the George W. Bush Administration. Horn’s questionable actions included a capacity-building grant for nearly \$1 million and no-bid contracts of over \$2 million that he directed to the National Fatherhood Initiative, the organization he had led before coming to HHS. Further, as the HHS official in charge of abstinence-only education, he had authorized millions of dollars for programs that have been discredited.<sup>116</sup> Recent research has found that teens who have gone through abstinence programs are no less likely to have sex before marriage than young people who have not.<sup>117</sup>

Horn also authorized the hiring of Maggie Gallagher and Mike McManus, both involved in scandals for promoting HHS programs without revealing that they were being paid to do so.<sup>118</sup> Horn's wife, Claudia Horn, heads Performance Results, Inc., a company that conducts evaluations, whose clients include the Department of Justice, the Office of Personnel Management, HUD, and the National Fatherhood Initiative.

Horn has taken a job with Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, formerly known as Deloitte & Touche, one of the world's largest firms providing audit, tax, consulting, and financial services to corporations and companies. Horn's former boss, former Secretary of HHS Tommy Thompson, briefly a 2008 presidential candidate, is also at Deloitte. In 2000, Deloitte had \$2 million in contracts with HHS. Between 2005 and 2006 that figure increased to over \$25 million.<sup>119</sup> The collegial relationship between HHS and Deloitte, followed by Horn's employment there, certainly warrants Congressional hearings to determine if this constitutes a mutual agreement to trade favors through the use of federal contracts.

Horn's replacement appointee is Diane D. Rath, Chair and Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission. Rath was appointed to the three-member Texas Workforce Commission in 1996 by George W. Bush when he was Governor of Texas. In June 1998, he appointed her as its Chairman. Her term expires in 2007. Before her appointment to the Texas Workforce Commission, Rath was Senior Director of Public Affairs for Kinetic Concepts, Inc., a medical supplies company, and earlier was Managing Director of the Sports Medicine Rehabilitation Clinic.

In 2007, at the time of her appointment, Rath could take a good deal of credit for a 71 percent decrease in the Texas "welfare rolls."<sup>120</sup> Touted as an achievement by her supporters in the Bush Administration and the Texas Republican Party, it could also be seen as evidence of a draconian application of the "work first" commitment to "ending welfare as we *knew* it." There is little evidence that she knows about, or has any particular understanding of, families, but her track record as an effective "welfare to work" bureaucrat and loyal Bush supporter should make welfare rights advocates very wary. When appointed, she was a member of the Texas Conservative Coalition, whose four core principles are: limited government, individual liberties, free enterprise, and traditional family values (known as LIFT). Rath has stated that welfare reform has been

"one of the most successful social reforms of the past 50 years."<sup>121</sup>

Diane Rath won't carry Horn's baggage of fatherhood rights activism, but in her new job, she may represent no change at all from the HHS pattern of elevating individual responsibility as a mantra and ignoring the institutional and environmental factors that low-income women and men face.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

When reviewing the ill-conceived marriage promotion programs of the George W. Bush Administration, it is tempting to recommend nothing less than a campaign to change the public's attitudes toward poverty and welfare. Law Professor Nancy E. Dowd, who studies single-parent families, points out that a major (if not *the* major) impediment to improving the welfare system is the public's negative attitude toward single mothers.<sup>122</sup> Although attitude changes would clearly lead to policy changes, for the sake of welfare recipients, welfare rights advocates may not be justified in waiting for public attitudes to change.

Certainly we need to demand that policies addressing poverty, the welfare system, and its clients (both women and children) be based on accurate research rather than an ideological agenda. The Right's commitment to restoring the traditional family drives its policy formulations and warps its policy recommendations. Because "family values" are the centerpiece of the Right's ideology, which narrowly defines the family as nuclear, heterosexual, and patriarchal, federal policy under the Bush Administration has viewed this family as the key to success for women and children of all classes. Equally important, the Right refuses to acknowledge the existence of structural racism and gender discrimination, claiming that U.S. society is one of equal opportunity, and, therefore, poverty or exclusion is the fault of the individual. In one resulting stereotype, a woman of color who is a single mother and lives in poverty with her children lacks the prerequisite moral fiber and work ethic to improve her lot. If we, as a country, could escape the grip of the Right's ideology, an entirely different set of public policies regarding poverty would become possible. Once the public rejected the stereo-

*The Right refuses to acknowledge structural racism and gender discrimination. Poverty or exclusion is the fault of the individual.*

type of the welfare recipient that stigmatizes her and assigns to her viciously negative motives and attributes—claiming that she is lazy, sexually “loose,” inclined to fraud, frequently addicted to drugs or alcohol, and a neglectful mother—we might see alternative explanations for her poverty. As Nancy Dowd puts it:

To be clear: the economic circumstances of most single parents are not caused by family form but rather by the consequences of a complex combination of entrenched gender roles, failure to acknowledge and deal with dependency, and the debilitating consequences of ongoing racism.<sup>123</sup>

*Neither a strong antipoverty Democratic platform nor a well-funded and highly active welfare rights movement seems likely at this moment.*

Comprehensive reform of attitudes toward poverty and the creation of a more socially just welfare system would be daunting tasks to achieve, even if promoted by a very muscular Democratic Party and backed by a strong welfare rights movement. Neither a strong antipoverty Democratic platform nor a well-funded and highly active welfare rights movement seems likely at this moment. But it is no

less important to have a plan for reform, even if its implementation may be slow and incremental. Such a plan should not address marriage promotion exclusively, but also the context in which this program is thriving.

Based on existing research, I would recommend:

1. A return to policies known to alleviate poverty—subsidized housing, health care, child care, and the provision of educational and job training opportunities, provided without resentment, in a supportive environment, and with federal money.
2. Federal support for: groups fighting poverty; groups advocating for the rights of welfare recipients; and groups providing services to low-income people without racial, religious, sexual preference, or gender discrimination.;

3. Protecting women from violence (now acknowledged in current marriage promotion policies) should be at the center of all government and private antipoverty programs;
4. The elimination of the five-years-in-a-lifetime limit on welfare benefits;
5. The elimination of the “child exclusion provision” or “family cap,” and the “illegitimacy bonus”—changes that would defend the right of low-income women to bear and raise children;
6. Comprehensive federally-funded jobs, housing, and health care programs that address the needs of those low-income families that fall “between the cracks” of the current, punitive Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) guidelines;
7. The reversal of exclusionary provisions that deny social services to documented and undocumented immigrants;
8. Objective social science research to examine the social and economic consequences of the expenditure of federal money to promote marriage among low-income women and men; and
9. A federally-funded public education effort to counteract the last twenty-five years of ideologically driven demonization of low-income people, especially welfare recipients, with special emphasis on institutional and systemic causes of poverty.

Unfortunately, it is an open question whether Democratic politicians and policy makers will undertake such a reform of welfare policy and such an effort to re-educate the public after two decades of misinformation promoted by the Right. Only public pressure will push these Democrats to repair and reform the welfare system. Welfare recipients continue to be relatively invisible to the media and lack political power. With the exception of the John Edwards’ 2008 Presidential campaign, candidates rarely mention poverty. Though poverty as an issue is traditionally claimed by the Democratic Party, it remains to be seen if it will be addressed forcefully during and after the 2008 Presidential election.

. . .

## Conclusion

Every newly-elected President brings a new agenda to the office. Cabinet appointments, judicial appointments, a certain “mandate” from the voters who approved of campaign promises—all these are expected from a change in administrations in Washington, D.C. But the George W. Bush Administration came to Washington representing a disciplined, ideology-driven, right-wing social movement. Far from seeing itself as a typical conservative administration intent on preserving the *status quo*, it arrived with a political agenda for radical change. The agenda and its implementation are well-illustrated by the Administration’s initiatives to promote marriage and fatherhood for welfare recipients in order to “cure” their poverty.

According to the Right’s analysis, poverty is largely self-inflicted. Because rightists believe so fervently that the free market system offers all members of the society a chance to rise in economic class and social status, they oppose “handouts” such as welfare benefits on the grounds that these weaken the recipient’s ambition and create more social problems than they solve. Neglect of the systemic causes of poverty and their consequences is consistent with traditional conservatism, which advocates a strictly “hands-off” government. But this review of the Bush Administration’s welfare policies reveals an *activist* agenda that supports policies that intervene in the personal lives and decisions of the poorest members of society. Certainly, marriage and fatherhood are two of the most personal issues that people of any class face.

In examining the Bush Administration’s ideology, policies, and programs on marriage and fatherhood, it is clear just how thoroughly politicized U.S. welfare policy has become. Driven by appointees drawn from both secular and Christian right-wing organizations, the federal bureaucracy has funded a minor industry of marriage counselors, relationship “experts,” and fatherhood gurus to entice and push low-income women and men into traditional hetero-

sexual family formations. In the process, federal policy and religious goals have intermingled in ways that seriously threaten the separation of church and state.

The contemporary U.S. is so economically stratified and the distance between rich and poor is so vast (and growing) that it is difficult for low-income families to survive. At the same time, the constant shrinkage of federal allocations to address poverty further squeezes low-income people. In this context, diverting government funding from proven remedies for poverty to the pie-in-the-sky reconstruction of traditional family mores is not just bad public policy; it is morally reprehensible and disingenuous. Much as we have recently discovered that abstinence-only sex education is utterly ineffective,<sup>124</sup> marriage promotion and fatherhood initiatives deserve similar evaluation. In the absence of a well-funded evaluation using sophisticated social science methodologies to assess changes in the economic lives of welfare recipients and their children, many policy makers will continue to follow the lead of the Right and support marriage and fatherhood programs as a cure for poverty. Meanwhile, programs to provide jobs, housing, income supplements, health care, and education are defunded.

As the federal government and some state governments pursue programs that interfere in the personal decisions of low-income people, while cutting programs that address their poverty, we face a stark choice. It is up to the public and policy makers to take a stand against ideologically-driven programs and to demand implementation of proven methods of addressing poverty, remembering that the social and economic harm of the Right’s programs are visited on the most vulnerable women and their families.

*It is up to the public and policy makers to take a stand against ideologically-driven programs and to demand implementation of proven methods of addressing poverty.*

# Notes

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- <sup>12</sup> George Gilder, *Sexual Suicide* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975).
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- <sup>69</sup> George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty*, op. cit.
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- <sup>113</sup> Description provided on the website of People for the American Way. Accessed at: <http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=4457>. Also see the Alliance Defense Fund website at: <http://www.alliancedefensefund.org/main/default.aspx>. Both sites accessed on 7/26/07.
- <sup>114</sup> Neela Banerjee, "Lawsuit Challenges use of Federal Aid for Bible-Based Counseling," *New York Times*, September 13, 2006.
- <sup>115</sup> *Christianson v. Leavitt*, 48 F. Supp. 2nd 1237.
- <sup>116</sup> Bill Berkowitz, "Wade Horn cashes out," Media Transparency; posted April 25, 2007 at [www.mediatransparency.com](http://www.mediatransparency.com).

<sup>117</sup> Christopher Trenholm, Barbara Devaney, Ken Forston, Lisa Quay, Justin Wheeler, and Melissa Clark, “Impacts of Four Title V, Section 510 Abstinence Education Programs.” Available at: [www.mathematica-mpr.com](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com). This research was funded by HHS and conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

<sup>118</sup> Cynthia Cooper, “Hand That Feeds,” Talk2Action, March 3, 2007. Accessed at [www.talk2action.org/printpage/2007/3/3/184933/3474](http://www.talk2action.org/printpage/2007/3/3/184933/3474).

<sup>119</sup> Bill Berkowitz, op. cit.

<sup>120</sup> See: Press Release titled “Statement by Mike Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services, On the Nomination of Diane D. Rath as Assistant Secretary for Children and Families,” July 9, 2007 at: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2007pres/07/pr20070709a.html>. Also see: <http://www.n-email.com/html-editor/viewonline.asp?FileID=10693>. *Workforce Report*, published by Workforce Associates, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana, January, 2005.

<sup>121</sup> Don Baylor and Walter Moreau, accessed at the website of the Center for Public Policy Priorities, <http://www.cppp.org/files/3/austinbiz.pdf>.

<sup>122</sup> Nancy E. Dowd, *In Defense of Single-Parent Families* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 6.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p. xiv.

<sup>124</sup> Christopher Trenholm et al., op. cit.

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POLITICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Founded in 1990, the **Women of Color Resource Center (WCRC)** is headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area and promotes the political, economic, social and cultural well being of women and girls of color in the United States. Informed by a social justice perspective that takes into account the status of women internationally, WCRC is committed to organizing and educating women of color across lines of race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, class, sexual orientation, physical ability and age.

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