

The Hypocrite in the Closet by Dan Jacoby

This is not about Mark Foley and Ted Haggard – exactly. It is about all the politicians, particularly those who are running for President, who aren't telling the truth about their views on equality for gays.

Every one of them claims to be against same-sex marriage. Every one of them also claims to be against discrimination. The problem is, those two claims are irreconcilable. The only way to eliminate discrimination in our laws against members of the LGBT community must include opening marriage to any two adults. Anything less denies the right to divorce, full child custody, and a host of other rights based solely on sexual or gender identity.

Don't think the politicians don't know this. They're all at least moderately intelligent, they're all very well informed, and you can bet the farm that every one of them has discussed this issue with advisors, friends and political consultants.

Meanwhile, as the parade of "anti-gay" political and religious figures, from Foley to Haggard to former Spokane mayor James West, are exposed for the liars and frauds that they are, we continue to fail to learn the right message.

We have a society that actively discriminates against people based on sexual or gender identity. This active discrimination remains the last ugly bastion of open bigotry in America. As long as people fear the consequences of being "outed", they will take refuge in joining the ranks of the bigots.

Fifty years after the Montgomery bus boycott, and forty years after passage of the Civil Rights Act, we are still a long way from being a racially blind society. Black Americans are still, for the most part, far worse off than white Americans. But the climate of fear and subjugation that permeated this country has greatly subsided. Opportunities are slowly but inexorably opening up.

There are exceptions, as the recent shooting of Sean Bell in a hail of gunfire in New York City demonstrates. Almost every time someone is beaten or killed by police, the victim is African-American. But this pattern is more an example of how far we have to go, rather than a failure to get anywhere. Yesterday's protest march, in which tens of thousands of people participated, came off without major incident; that would never have happened in the 60s.

But even as things are, on the whole, moving in the right direction for racial minorities, they are moving in the wrong direction for gays and lesbians. Seven states passed new discrimination laws this year (only Arizona had the courage to stand up and say "no"). The movement to write discrimination into the Constitution is still strong, and is being fed by some of the very politicians who claim to be against discrimination.

We are a long way from the days when people were beaten and raped simply for wearing the "wrong" clothes. But we are heading in the wrong direction. And every leading political figure, while pretending to be for equality is helping push us down that repulsive, blatantly unequal ravine.