

The Times They Are a-Changin'

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It's not so much that the September 11 terrorist attacks have changed gay politics. The usual suspects are engaged in their customary guilty American breast-beating, caring passionately and earnestly scrambling for that imaginary global-thinking moral high ground. Gay and lesbian moderates, libertarians and conservatives remain as unimpressed as ever, and go about their independent ways. The political landscape, though—now that's a different matter. If ever we needed proof that context is everything, we have in the wake of 9-11: it's the "progressives" who are on the defensive in our communities, and the everyday "assimilated" patriots the high-profile bridge-builders.

The heart of the change in the times is a breathtaking opportunity for non-leftist gay men and lesbians to emerge from the shadow of the politically correct queer identity politics crowd, to be seen as representative of our demographic in our own right, and to destabilize the propaganda from both right and left that identifies not only gay rights but homosexuality and lesbianism themselves with leftist politics. We are at last poised to reaffirm that gay rights are simply the individual rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with everyone else who cherishes freedom as we defend the civilization built upon these principles.

Shelby Steele recently noted that in some communities, "a little anti-Americanism becomes a sophistication, a mark of authenticity." We see this writ large in both the politics and culture of the gay community, this "subversively winking countercultural hipness [that] serves up American self-hate ... as idealism." Taking pride in the ideals of the Founders is for those tacky straight people that our legends have us leaving behind in small towns and suburbs, as we become our true, fabulous urban sophisticate selves emerging into a quasi-ethnic queer culture.

An Oakland *Tribune* article reflected this stereotype when it asked, "Can patriotism, gay pride mix?" In response, one feminist bookstore owner said she wrestled with her decision to fly the Stars and Stripes because she "didn't want the flag to be interpreted as part of the pro-war bandwagon." Right on cue, another Bay Area lesbian said her "community activism" was the real patriotism. The world's worst sexist, homophobic fundamentalist oppressors have finally thrown down the gauntlet, and it's Uncle Sam, not "the masses," rising to the challenge. No wonder all the "gentle, angry people" don't know whether to squat in the menstrual hut or go visually challenged.

Preventing ourselves from getting sucked down into irrelevance along with the LGBT left should be a simple matter of asserting our existence—and our numbers. We had already demonstrated, before 9-11, that a significant portion of our community eschews political correctness and envisions a live-and-let-live alternative to participation in an apocalyptic struggle between queer and theocrat. The existence of a "silent significant minority" of mainstream and/or libertarian and/or conservative gay men and lesbians has been happily acknowledged by all but the most troglodytic and fundamentalist conservatives. David Horowitz' FrontPageMag.com links to Andrew Sullivan's online column daily. Even WorldNetDaily.com, where the word

"gay" still gets put in quote marks, gave straightforward play to Tammy Bruce's new book.

On the gay movement side, how long were the Log Cabin Republicans a dirty little joke among left-liberal gay leadership, dismissed as effete politico queens compulsively cruising rough Republican trade? Nobody's laughing anymore. They're looking at a newly visible gay political mainstream and warning that gay "conservatives," meaning dissenters from the great multicultural coalition faith, are "the enemy." Going from joke to threat is tacit acknowledgment that non-leftist gay men and lesbians are a significant demographic that must now be taken seriously. It is also a sign of the profound crisis of faith that began for the American left with the Twin Tower wake-up call.

The current trend is a shift in perceptions of uncloseted and "unrepentant" gays and lesbians. Many of those who viewed us all as a threat in and of ourselves are now making distinctions between statist queers and freedom-loving gays and lesbians—and seeing the latter as allies standing tall for America.

It may be that all we can do at this historical juncture is the equivalent of "institutional advertising," that is, maintaining target market awareness of our "brand" of gay men and lesbians. On the other hand, we have an opportunity to build up our own non-queer gay community and movement so that we can step assertively into the vacuum that may be left by the self-discrediting of anti-American queer activists. To a great extent, moderate, libertarian and conservative gay men and lesbians have been intimidated into silence in our own community through ridicule and queer "attitude." There are many more of us, but they're hidden away in another kind of closet, unsure of their place in the larger world yet unable to count on the support of the community that nags them to come out.

Within this community, we can deny leftist gays their assumption that all of us agree on a single brand of politics, catch-all progressivism. At the risk of stereotype (lesbian writer using sports metaphor), it's like Jerry Rice going over the middle to take the slant pass: yeah, he could catch it, but every time he does, he's going to take a hard hit from some linebacker. Every time one of us actively dissents from an expression of groupthink, we apply just that kind of defensive back hit. The effect, both psychologically and playing skills-wise, is cumulative; late in the game, when it counts, receivers can become less effective and more prone to error as they reflexively tense up in anticipation of physical contact.

Many of our "queer" types are cowards: they can only function in environments that reinforce the concept that only the stupid, venal and evil disagree with leftist queer PC. They become less effective, and more prone to error, if in the back of their mind they know that every time they mouth off they will face a rhetorical challenge from some gay dissenter. Given that they like to intimidate into silence, if not agreement, those doubtful of their political slant, we can thoroughly rattle them while also creating "safe space" for more of our moderate brothers and sisters to express their own views—as well as to be "out" in general.

We appear to be in the early stages of a significant paradigm shift. We cannot plan change—that is the great statist, activist government delusion. We can, however, keep our eyes open for opportunities as the shifting landscape presents them, and call upon our considerable creativity and fortitude to act effectively as they arise. We can rebuild a movement based on the concept of individual rights, and take our

rightful place in the sunshine as gay and lesbian Americans.

Brothers and sisters, let's roll.

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