

North Carolina may have made the news for barring trans people from using the bathroom corresponding to their gender identity, but the state's infamous House Bill 2 is just the tip of the iceberg in a growing wave of anti-trans action sweeping the country. While the past few years have witnessed the rapid advance of a trans "civil rights frontier," they have also seen epidemic levels of violence against trans women and dozens of new bills aimed at limiting trans rights. In our cover story this issue, "The Christian Right on the Gender Frontier" (pg. 4), PRA research analyst L. Cole Parke finds that the hostility isn't merely backlash but rather the result of a carefully coordinated Christian Right campaign. In the current "post marriage-equality moment," a coalition of major conservative Christian organizations are mobilizing around gender identity—by exploiting divisions within the LGBTQ community, employing old tropes about protecting women, and disseminating policy proposals to public institutions across the U.S.—as though their movement's life depended on it. Because, in a way, Parke writes, it does.

In our commentary this issue, "Georgian Homophobia Sets the Stage for the World Congress of Families" (pg. 3), contributor Gillian Kane reports on the latest gathering of the WCF, an international and cross-denominational coalition of "pro-family" activists brought together around shared opposition to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The group's 10th international conference was set in Georgia, highlighting how the pro-family movement navigates East-West tensions between the U.S. and Western Europe on one side and Russia and post-Soviet states on the other. But when it comes to the WCF's culture war objectives, the two camps represent a distinction without a difference. As Kane writes: "East-West interpretations of family values are actually one and the same. And they continue being used by their defenders all over the world to violate basic human rights."

When Sen. Ted Cruz failed to secure the Republican nomination for president, it seemed to some observers that the school of Christian Right theology known as dominionism might be on its last legs. But just as with so many previous declarations that the Religious Right is dead, that's just not so, finds PRA Senior Fellow Frederick Clarkson in "Dominionism Rising: A Theocratic Movement Hiding in Plain Sight" (pg. 12). For more than 40 years, dominionism—the broad term for the concept that God commands Christians to take control of the world's politics and culture—has been helping to shape the direction and objectives of the Right. A "movement of ideas that transcends denominations," dominionism has been represented by candidates in the three most recent presidential elections and in numerous state and local level elections. But its influence goes beyond political figures. Dominionism has also inspired violent anti-abortion activism; midwived the interfaith partnership of Catholics and evangelicals; and today is taking shape most notably in the Right's strategic use of the idea of religious freedom. Although the current election cycle may obscure the steady presence of this theological movement, Clarkson reminds us that dominionism is "not a passing fashion but a historic trend."

In Reports in Review (pg. 22), Jamie Shore looks at the Campaign for Accountability's new report, "Documenting Discrimination," on how the proliferation of recent religious freedom bills is being used as cover for anti-LGBTQ laws and Cassandra Osei reviews the Southern Poverty Law Center's "More Harm Than Good," on trying minors as adults in New Orleans.

Lastly, our cover features a 1914 ink drawing entitled "Pandemonium" by artist and political satirist George Grosz. Much of Grosz's work was a response to the social and political climate in Berlin post-World War I to Hitler's rise to power.

Thanks for reading.

Best,  
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ISSUE 87

www.politicalresearch.org

BY GILLIAN KANE

# Georgian Homophobia Sets the Stage for the World Congress of Families

The scene at the restaurant was Monty Python-esque—sausage and meat skewer-wielding men attacking peaceful vegan diners. Except this was Tbilisi, Georgia, and the attackers were allegedly neonazi skinheads intent on harassing patrons with non-conforming identities. Kiwi Café, a Tbilisi restaurant known for being friendly to foreigners and LGBTQ people, was the site of the fraught confrontation on May 29. LGBTQ people have long been under siege in Georgia, where intolerance against a range of progressive social issues runs deep. And lately, conservative activists from outside the country are starting to take note.

Just two weeks earlier, from May 15-18, Tbilisi was host to the U.S.-organized World Congress of Families (WCF), which held its 10th international conference in the capital's massive glass and steel State Concert Hall. The WCF, a convening of right-wing activists, has, since its first congress in Prague in 1997, tapped into the highest ranks of government, church, and civil society in order to reshape global norms on gender and reproductive rights. And they do so by promoting the idea of family values.

Family values, as envisioned by its defenders, describes a religiously-oriented family, headed by a father who is the primary breadwinner, and his stay-at-home wife and their children. Anything outside this norm is considered anti-family values, including abortion, divorce, single-parent households, same-sex marriage and adoption, and secularism. This family values frame is used by conservative activists, both religious and secular, and their allied politicians to not just censor or denigrate issues with which they disagree, but to take away legal



*This May the World Congress of Families X met in Tbilisi, Georgia.*

rights.

Religious conservatives in Western countries like the U.S., and in Eastern European countries like Russia, all lay claim to the original family narrative. Yet it gets complicated for U.S. promoters—who claim that family values are Western values—when Russia and its neighbors aggressively assert that the West is exporting dangerous “anti-family” values that include abortion and “gay lifestyles.”

This argument has become a staple of the international “pro-family” coalition—a community that draws on significant leadership from the U.S., even as it lambasts the cultural influence of the United States in promoting liberal attitudes to reproductive and sexuality issues around the world. In May, East met West when this coalition came together for a family values huddle in Georgia.

The previous nine international meetings of the WCF have been scattered

around the world—some in socially conservative countries like Poland, others in hedonistically liberal capitals like Amsterdam. This year’s meeting appeared to be an effort to knit the various global spheres of influence closer together. Wedged between Europe and Asia, Georgia suggests a middle ground of sorts. The former Soviet Republic has long sought to disentangle itself from Russian influence while pursuing engagement with the European Union. Yet its social and policy positions on abortion and LGBTQ people are squarely Hard Right.

The confluence of political and religious powerbrokers at May’s meeting in Tbilisi was striking. It included the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Russian oligarchs, ambassadors, and members of parliament from Europe and Central and Eastern Europe. Featured prominently was Natalia Yakunina,<sup>1</sup> a leading anti-abortion activist and the wife of Vladimir Yakunin, the former Russian Railways chief. Mr. Yakunin is on a U.S. sanctions<sup>2</sup> list because of his close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Sending warm greetings was no less than President George W. Bush.<sup>3</sup>

The WCF network, which operates out of Rockford, Illinois, aims to create—they would argue revert to—a world where a man only marries a woman, solely for reasons of procreation, and where there is no abortion, no gay marriage, and no comprehensive sexuality education. They have little compunction about making common cause with marginal figures on the Far Right. This includes Scott Lively, a longtime anti-LGBTQ warrior. Lively is currently being sued in a U.S. court for human rights violations stemming from his involvement in Uganda’s so-

**Commentary, continued on page 21**

# The Christian Right on the Gender Frontier

## The Growing Anti-Trans Offensive

In June 2014, *TIME* magazine declared that the U.S. had reached the “transgender tipping point” and was venturing toward trans inclusion as its next “civil rights frontier.”<sup>1</sup> That month’s cover featured Laverne Cox, a Black transgender actress famous for her portrayal of Sophia Burset on the popular television series *Orange Is the New Black*. The accompanying coverage inside the magazine—which included an extensive “Transgender 101” article, a photo essay portraying a diverse range of transgender people and experiences, a nuanced exploration of the various obstacles faced by trans people, and a personal interview with Cox—was hailed by *ThinkProgress*’ Zach Ford as “perhaps the most positive and in-depth representation of transgender life experiences ever presented in mainstream print media.”<sup>2</sup>

The following year, a record number of transgender women were killed in the United States.

### WHO’S UNDER ATTACK?

In 2015, 23 trans women<sup>3</sup> were murdered in this country. Though not all of these deaths have been labeled “hate crimes,” the shared thread of trans feminine identity is indicative of an undeniably heightened threat to trans women. Research from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs indicates that the majority of victims of hate violence homicides are trans women,<sup>4</sup> and NCAVP described the 2015 crisis as “epidemic” in proportion.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the rate of targeted violence and persecution against trans and gender-nonconforming people shows no signs of waning.

All across the country, and in various areas of public life, manifestations of anti-trans sentiment are actually on the rise, in forms that extend far beyond



People protesting the anti-trans HB 2 head to the North Carolina legislative building during the Moral Monday rally on April 25th, 2016. Photo courtesy of Nathania Johnson via Flickr.

physical violence. So far, 2016 has seen at least 44 anti-trans bills proposed in 16 states, aimed at putting an already vulnerable community at even greater risk for harassment, abuse, ostracization, and discrimination.<sup>6</sup> This unprecedented wave of legislative attacks against trans and gender-nonconforming people isn’t restricted to red states, rural communities, or the Bible Belt. Neither spontaneous nor coincidental, it’s the result of a nationally coordinated effort led by the Christian Right.

North Carolina proved the strength and viability of this effort in March 2016, when the state’s General Assembly approved House Bill 2 (HB 2),<sup>7</sup> which invalidated the recent expansion of non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ individuals in the city of Charlotte, and additionally prevented all municipalities in the state from adding any new protections. Charlotte’s ordinance would have, among other things, granted transgender individuals the right to use public facilities that correspond to the gender with which they identify.

Governor Pat McCrory signed the bill—described by Sarah Preston, acting Executive Director of the ACLU of North Carolina, as “the most extreme anti-LGBT bill in the nation”—following a one-day special session called expressly for the purpose of eliminating Charlotte’s expanded nondiscrimination ordinance, costing taxpayers \$42,000.<sup>8</sup> (It should be noted that HB 2 was an attack on more than just LGBTQ people. The bill also gutted the North Carolina Equal Employment Practices Act, which had provided core anti-discrimination protections for workers, making North Carolina one of only two states in the country without any state law protecting private sector employees from workplace discrimination. Additionally, HB 2 gave the state the power to override local efforts to increase the minimum wage.<sup>9</sup>)

McCrory had previously stated that Charlotte’s nondiscrimination policy would “create major public safety issues by putting citizens in possible danger from deviant actions by individuals taking improper advantage of a bad poli-

cy.”<sup>10</sup>

These talking points reflect the handiwork of the coalition of national players behind the bill. Over the last several years, right-wing opponents of social justice have steadily honed their anti-trans tactics and rhetoric. We’re now seeing the effects of their well-resourced, diligent campaigning.

#### HIS/HER/HIRSTORY: HOW DID WE GET HERE?

*TIME*’s use of the term “frontier” in its 2014 “transgender tipping point” cover story might have foreshadowed this pending surge of anti-trans attacks. A frontier is often understood to be that edge between the known and the unknown, the settled and the “wild.” For some, it’s a place of adventure and possibility, but for others—especially those who already live there—familiar territories that are suddenly deemed “frontiers” can quickly become places of great danger, thanks to the encroachment of invading pioneers.

And in this contemporary gender frontier, the Christian Right is on the attack, using flawed religious rhetoric and claims of “protecting women and children” to support an onslaught of transphobic violence and oppression.

The tropes at play are familiar. In the 1970s, Anita Bryant’s anti-gay “Save Our Children” campaign equated homosexuality with pedophilia in order to mobilize voters to repeal a Florida county’s anti-discrimination ordinance that protected gay and lesbian citizens in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Today’s opponents to nondiscrimination protections for transgender people echo similar fear-mongering myths.

But the manipulation of people’s protective instincts toward those regarded as vulnerable dates back much further than 1977. In the aftermath of HB 2, Dr. Honor Sachs, assistant professor of history at Western Carolina University, outlined in *The Huffington Post* how throughout history false accusations of rape and sexual assault have been deployed to negate the social and political advances of minority groups when those in power feel threatened. To catalyze violence against indigenous populations during the 17th and 18th centu-

ries, American Indians were depicted as “savage” and “predatorial” and therefore a threat to sexually vulnerable Anglo-American women. From the 19th century into the mid-20th century, Whites justified the lynching of countless Black men in the name of avenging alleged sexual assaults against White women (as with Emmett Till).<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, the same line of reasoning was used to rationalize racially segregated facilities in the Jim Crow South.

This racialized thread, woven tightly into the “protective” narrative, helps make one thing very clear: conservative rhetoric about protecting women rarely has anything to do with actually protecting women.

The modern version of this old claim is

ognized (thanks, in part, to the visibility—and popularity—of trans women like Laverne Cox) they were swimming against the current of trans visibility and acceptance.

In March 2016, the Human Rights Campaign published research that indicates 35 percent of likely voters personally know or work with a transgender person, as compared to just 22 percent the previous year.<sup>12</sup> As more and more people become familiar with the transgender “frontier,” it is increasingly difficult to pass off falsehoods about trans people as indisputable. In order to attract more moderates and expand their base, the Christian Right needed to present a more nuanced message.

Many anti-trans activists have begun



Right-wing campaigns, such as the recent #KeepNCSafe campaign supporting North Carolina’s HB2, rebrand non-discrimination bills as “Bathroom Bills” and manipulate fear of violence against women.

encapsulated in the rebranding of trans-inclusive nondiscrimination laws as “bathroom bills.” Because existing and proposed efforts to extend nondiscrimination protections to trans and gender-nonconforming people include public spaces, the opposition has chosen to highlight the fact that public spaces include public bathrooms. The message being deployed is that these nondiscrimination laws would “allow men into women’s bathrooms.”

Initially, these warnings aimed to bring into question the “authentic” gender of trans women, suggesting that gender is fixed and immutable. However, factions of the Right gradually rec-

focusing more on the theoretical risk of male sexual predators taking advantage of nondiscrimination laws designed to protect trans people by dressing up as women and *pretending* to be transgender in order to gain access to women. It’s basically the 2.0 version of an Anita Bryant-style witch hunt—rather than paint all trans people as personally deviant and dangerous, opponents suggest that granting nondiscrimination protections to trans people will effectively enable the deviant and dangerous behavior of others.

In February 2016, anti-trans opponents went so far as to stage such a scenario. The previous December, the

Washington State Human Rights Commission had added “gender identity” to the state’s pre-existing public accommodation protections.<sup>13</sup> Opponents quickly introduced several pieces of legislation to overturn the protections, but when they failed to advance, conservatives instead pushed for a voter initiative. As part of their effort to garner support, opponents sought to incite “bathroom panic” by recruiting a non-transgender man to enter a women’s locker room at a Seattle public pool.<sup>14</sup>

The Human Rights Commission responded to the stunt with a statement explaining, “Men cannot go into the women’s locker room, as this man claimed he had the right to do. Only women, including transgender women, can go into the women’s locker room. Persons who enter the wrong gender-segregated facility for nefarious purposes can be asked to leave in no uncertain terms. And they would have no recourse.”<sup>15</sup>

As Sunnive Brydom, managing editor for *The Advocate*, notes, “There has never been a verifiable, reported instance of a trans person harassing a cisgender person, nor have there been any confirmed reports of male predators ‘pretending’ to be transgender to gain access to women’s spaces and commit crimes against them.”<sup>16</sup>

Facts and clarifications, however, seemingly do little to dissuade these anti-trans attacks. The Family Policy

Institute of Washington (FPIW), a Focus on the Family affiliate, persisted in claiming, “[P]eople of any sex can enter a locker room of the opposite sex and defend their right to be there based on gender identity, a subjective concept that is impossible to prove.”<sup>17</sup>

Increasingly, right-wing opponents are attempting to “prove” that their manufactured risks are viable. According to YWCA Pierce County CEO Miriam Barnett, trans rights advocates have reported that the anti-trans alliance coordinating Washington’s repeal effort (primarily led by FPIW under the name “Just Want Privacy”) has instructed men gathering signatures to position themselves outside of women’s bathrooms. If a woman declines to sign, they are encouraged to follow her in, ostensibly to demonstrate how dangerous trans-inclusive bathroom policies are.

Using these sorts of scare tactics and provocations, the repeal effort targeting the 2015 expansion of nondiscrimination protections gained substantial momentum, but ultimately the campaign failed to gather the necessary number of signatures to qualify for the ballot.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, LGBTQ activists remain wary. Kris Hayashi, Executive Director of the Transgender Law Center, warns, “I anticipate seeing much worse going into 2017.”<sup>19</sup>

#### WHO’S BEHIND IT ALL?

A national coalition of Christian Right

powerhouse organizations has been plotting this campaign since long before the concept of a “post-marriage equality moment” even existed. Not merely a response to the Supreme Court’s *Obergefell* decision on same-sex marriage or Laverne Cox’s celebrity status, this recent wave of anti-trans attacks has deep social, political, and theological roots. Three key groups leading the effort are Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, and the Alliance Defending Freedom.

Focus on the Family (FOTF) is one of the most powerful Christian Right parachurch organizations in the country. With annual revenue of over \$88 million<sup>20</sup> and 13 international offices (in addition to its massive headquarters in Colorado Springs), FOTF’s influence is truly global.

In a series of articles on “transgenderism” originally published in 2008, FOTF reveals a remarkable depth of awareness regarding some of the deep internal rifts within the LGBTQ community:

For decades, lesbian, gay and bisexual activist (LGB) leaders worked hard to keep those who called themselves “transgender” or “transsexual” as far out of the public eye as possible. By their own admission, the last thing they wanted was a bunch of “drag queens” and cross-dressers to scare away potential allies and ruin any hope for their community to achieve its political goals. So the activists only portrayed homosexuals in favorable and non-threatening ways.

But recent years have seen a sea-change in attitudes about cultural acceptance of homosexuality. And LGB activists believe that sufficient political gains have been won at the local, state and federal levels that they can now turn their attention to adding the “T”—for transgender—to the LGB acronym that represents their community.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, anti-trans dissonance has long plagued the LGBTQ justice movement, leaving trans and gender-nonconforming people especially susceptible to attack. Contemporary consequences of this internal strife became particularly evident during what became known as the “ENDA debacle” of 2007. After over two decades of legislative advocacy, the

#### Nondiscrimination Protections for LGBTQ People

Currently, federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and pregnancy or childbirth.<sup>78</sup> In July 2014, President Obama signed Executive Order 13672, expanded these protections to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” in hiring and employment on the part of federal government contractors and sub-contractors. These categories of protection also exist for the federal civilian workforce.

Some states and municipalities have also elected to independently expand nondiscrimination protections to include sexual orientation and gender identity, but 32 states still lack clear, fully inclusive nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people.<sup>79</sup>

The Equality Act, proposed in 2015, would change this by establishing explicit, permanent protections against discrimination based on an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity in matters of employment, housing, access to public places, federal funding, credit, education and jury service. Additionally, it would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in federal funding and access to public places.

Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) appeared to finally be gaining the necessary support to extend federal nondiscrimination protections to include LGBTQ people. However, when certain LGBTQ power players and political insiders became concerned that the bill didn't have quite enough votes to pass, they dropped "gender identity" from the list of protected statuses in an attempt to make it more palatable to those legislators who were still on the fence, thereby leaving out trans and gender-nonconforming people. The revision was soundly rejected by a coalition of progressive organizations and activists who refused to deprioritize some of the most vulnerable members of the LGBTQ community. In any case, the revised bill failed.

There's no such thing as a discreet family dispute when you're a political movement representing millions of LGBTQ people. Of course, Christian Right

groups were paying attention, and FOTF has sought to exploit these rifts. From its sprawling 45-acre campus, FOTF has captained the Christian Right's advances against trans and gender-nonconforming people for years. But this went relatively unnoticed until recently, in part, because many of FOTF's anti-trans attacks have been mislabeled. For example, James Dobson, founder and longtime president of FOTF, has been warning parents against letting their young boys embrace feminine characteristics since as far back as the 1970s. Critics accuse him of being homophobic, but in reality, he's also tapping into the undercurrents of transphobia. For Dobson and his followers, the fear wasn't just about men loving—or even having sex with—other men. What's also at play is a deeper fear that such a relationship would entail men behaving like women.

Now those undercurrents have swelled into a raging river, and though LGB activists may finally be prepared to "turn their attention to adding the 'T,'" as FOTF puts it, the Christian Right already has an established infrastructure and anti-trans game plan, putting them

light years ahead. With the help of its political arm, the Family Policy Alliance (formerly CitizenLink), FOTF is mobilizing its constituents across the country, depicting trans-inclusive nondiscrimination ordinances as "insanity," and arguing that they will allow "sexual predators" access to young girls.<sup>22</sup>

Family Policy Alliance (FPA) is a multi-million dollar operation that oversees a national network of 38 state-based "family policy councils" collectively committed to restricting access to abortion and reproductive justice, resisting efforts toward LGBTQ equality, and redefining religious freedom into a dangerous tool of oppression.<sup>23</sup> All but four of the states

**For Dobson and his followers, the fear wasn't just about men loving—or even having sex with—other men. What's also at play is a deeper fear that such a relationship would entail men behaving like women.**

considering anti-trans legislation this year have an FPA-affiliated family policy council.

FPA says it provides its state-based affiliates, like the previously mentioned Family Policy Institute of Washington, with "training, funding and strategic coordination to engage in elections, advance pro-family legislation, mobilize churches on critical issues and be a voice for biblical citizens within their states."<sup>24</sup>

North Carolina's affiliate is the North Carolina Family Policy Council (NCFPC). In the case of NCFPC, FPA has played an especially significant role in supporting the group financially. According to the most recently available tax filings from both organizations, FPA contributed nearly \$170,000<sup>25</sup> to NCFPC in 2013, which amounts to approximately one third of NCFPC's operating budget that year.<sup>26</sup>

John Rustin, president of the NCFPC (whose total compensation in 2013, incidentally, was just shy of \$170,000) wrote a letter to Gov. McCrory following the passage of Charlotte's trans-inclusive nondiscrimination ordinance, de-

manding that the General Assembly call a special session to overturn it and "pre-empt any other municipality or county in the state from enacting a similar ordinance."<sup>27</sup> And that is exactly what happened.

While FOTF taps into the motivating elements of fear in order to advance the Christian Right's anti-trans agenda, the Family Research Council (FRC) attempts to provide the intellectual backing for their campaign.

FRC, a Christian Right political advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., came into existence during the same time period as FOTF, and the two organizations have remained in close relationship throughout their shared history; from 1988-1992 FRC was even subsumed as a division of FOTF. Today, the two function as organizational partners, collaborating on numerous projects.<sup>28</sup>

In June 2015, FRC laid out a five-point plan for "responding to the transgender movement." The position paper was co-authored by Peter Sprigg, a senior fellow at FRC, and Dale O'Leary, a Catholic writer based in Avon Park, Florida. Sprigg, a proponent of so-called "reparative therapy"—a psychological treatment based on the assumption that homosexuality is a mental disorder that can and should be fixed or changed—has argued that transgender people suffer from "delusions."<sup>29</sup> O'Leary claims that "same-sex attraction is a preventable and treatable psychological disorder,"<sup>30</sup> and has suggested that "sexual liberationists" are "targeting children" in order to expose them to "molesters and exhibitionists masquerading as sex educators."<sup>31</sup>

Ignoring trans-affirming positions from the American Medical Association,<sup>32</sup> the American Psychological Association,<sup>33</sup> and the American Psychiatric Society,<sup>34</sup> the two dredged up obscure and outdated scientific theories in an attempt to pathologize transgender people, then outlined a strategy for advancing anti-trans public policy.<sup>35</sup> Specifically, FRC argues against providing trans people with gender-affirming health-

care, access to gender transition procedures (often understood to be life-saving for transgender people), legal recognition, protection from discrimination, and the right to serve in the military.

As longtime transgender rights activist Brynn Tannehill explains, it's a plan "to legislate transgender people out of existence by making the legal, medical, and social climate too hostile for anyone to transition [from one gender to another]."<sup>36</sup>

Sprigg and O'Leary, like most other right-wing opponents of trans and gender-nonconforming people, draw many of their arguments from Dr. Paul McHugh, professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University. In that position, McHugh has actively worked against the medical treatment of trans people since the 1970s. In a 1992 essay published in *The American Scholar*, a quarterly literary magazine, McHugh actually indicates that part of his incentive for taking over Johns Hopkins' psychiatry department in 1975 was to shut down the institution's Gender Identity Clinic, which since 1966 had been at the forefront of transgender medicine.<sup>37</sup>

"It was part of my intention, when I arrived in Baltimore in 1975, to help end it," he wrote.<sup>38</sup> In 1979, he succeeded.

But he didn't stop there. As a member of the American College of Pediatricians, a right-wing breakaway group that split from the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2002,<sup>39</sup> McHugh recently helped author a new position statement claiming that respecting transgender children's identities causes them harm and is akin to "child abuse."<sup>40</sup>

As I have written elsewhere, Sprigg, O'Leary, and McHugh also selectively highlight the scholarship of a small group of highly controversial academics and activists described by their critics as "Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists" (TERFs). Although most categorized as TERFs reject the label and consider it to be insulting, they openly espouse the notion that trans women "aren't really women," and that real womanhood is exclusively determined on a natal, biological level. These arguments (key elements of what's called "gender essentialism") align themselves with and fuel the flames of right-wing transphobia,

providing the Right an intellectual foundation upon which to build an argument that would appeal to both conservatives and certain sectors of the Left.<sup>41</sup>

Much like the example of the 2007 ENDA debacle, TERF scholarship is merely an outgrowth of anti-trans trends that have been consistently prevalent in feminist circles for decades. The Right has simply become more adept at exploiting them.



*The American College of Pediatricians was founded in 2002 when a small group of anti-LGBTQ physicians and other healthcare professionals split from the 60,000 member American Academy of Pediatrics.*

Rounding out the hearts-and-minds campaign work of FOTF and FRC is the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a right-wing Christian legal group based in Scottsdale, Arizona.

ADF was founded in 1994 by five of the Christian Right's top strategists of the day, including FOTF's James Dobson. Today, ADF counts more than 3,000 "allied attorneys" on its roster, all of whom are working to "preserve and defend" their definition of religious freedom, which they consider "our most cherished birthright." ADF claims that its army of Christian Right lawyers has racked up 47 victories at the U.S. Supreme Court since it was launched in 1994, and has played a role in "hundreds of international legal matters affecting religious freedom."<sup>42</sup>

Founded in 1994 under the name "Alliance Defense Fund," ADF's initial goal was to collect money from Christian Right donors and parcel it out to other, already established groups that were

active in courts.<sup>43</sup> Over time, however, ADF has come to dominate the smaller organizations it once served to support. Acknowledging this shift, in 2012 ADF changed its name to "reflect the organization's shift in focus from funding allied attorneys to litigating cases."<sup>44</sup>

And ADF continues to grow, both in terms of the size of its coffers and the scope of its work. From 2001 to 2013, annual contributions and grants increased from \$14.7 million to \$38.9 million.<sup>45</sup> With that growth, ADF's strategy has also expanded, now reaching far beyond the courtroom, aggressively implementing its agenda in statehouses, churches, and schools.

In 2014, ADF teamed up with FOTF to promote a "Student Physical Privacy Policy" for schools, which provides model guidelines supposedly designed to protect students in areas such as bathrooms and locker rooms.<sup>46</sup> In reality, "physical privacy rights" as outlined in these policies clearly do not apply to all students; instead, they encode trans-exclusionary guidelines and subject transgender students to further scrutiny and interrogation when it comes to their privacy.

After testing the waters in a handful of districts, ADF launched an all-out offensive in December 2014. ADF announced that it had emailed public school superintendents nationwide to preemptively "advise them of a recommended policy and letter that protects the physical safety and privacy of students in restrooms and locker rooms while providing a solution for school officials concerned about students struggling with their sexual identity." ADF also warned that any school district supporting trans-inclusive policies "would clearly expose itself—and its teachers—to tort liability."<sup>47</sup> At the same time, ADF promised *pro bono* legal defense to schools choosing to adopt ADF's model policy.

Within weeks of ADF's announcement, the Gloucester County School Board in Virginia adopted ADF's model policy.<sup>48</sup> The policy was subsequently used to deny Gavin Grimm, a transgender male student at Gloucester High School, access to the boys' restroom. The ACLU filed a lawsuit against the district, and in April 2016, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled in favor

of Grimm, concluding that Title IX protects the rights of transgender students to use sex-segregated facilities that are consistent with their gender identity.<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless, thanks to joint outreach efforts made by ADF and FOTF,<sup>50</sup> school boards across the country are now equipped with the language, tools, and resources to adopt new, trans-exclusionary policies, writing oppression and discrimination into their student handbooks.

ADF is highly involved in the current outbreak of anti-trans legislative efforts, too. Like their discriminatory school policy, ADF has drafted a model state level bill, the language of which is evident in anti-trans legislation proposed in Kentucky, Nevada, Minnesota, Texas, and elsewhere.<sup>51</sup>



Albert Mohler, considered one of the most influential evangelicals of all time, has a long history of preaching and campaigning against LGBTQ rights. Photo by James Thompson via Flickr.

## THE TRANSPHOBIC ROOTS OF HOMOPHOBIC THEOLOGY

A fourth key player on the frontlines of anti-trans attacks is the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). With more than 15 million members, the SBC is the largest Protestant denomination in the country, and has often been considered a bellwether for Christian conservatism.<sup>52</sup> In 1976, the denomination's Executive Committee passed its first resolution on homosexuality, declaring that affiliated churches and agencies should not "afford the practice of homosexuality any

degree of approval through ordination, employment, or other designations of normal life-style (sic)." Since then, the denomination has passed more than 40 resolutions dealing directly or indirectly

with LGBTQ people.<sup>53</sup>

In a 1992 editorial published in the *Christian Index*, Albert Mohler (who previously served as vice chairman of FOTF's board of directors) wrote that "Southern Baptists no longer have the false comfort" of regarding homosexuality "as someone else's problem. The moral and theological integrity of our denomination is at stake, at every level."<sup>54</sup>

With this declaration, Mohler, now president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) in Louisville, Kentucky, positioned himself as an early leader in the SBC's anti-LGBTQ crusade. In the subsequent decades, he has continued to write, preach, and aggressively campaign against LGBTQ people. Of the various topics covered on his website—which features a personal blog, regular commentary, and recordings from his two different radio programs—homosexuality is second only to theology in the list of categories, with nearly 400 different entries.<sup>55</sup>

In response to LGBTQ activist and writer Matthew Vines' controversial 2014 book, *God and the Gay Christian:*

*The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*, which made a case for LGBTQ equality from a Christian perspective, Mohler organized a formal response in the form of a free e-book titled

**The theological roots of the Christian Right's assault on trans and gender-nonconforming people date much further back—long before anyone felt compelled to insert anti-trans language into official church doctrine.**

*God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines.*<sup>56</sup> Four other SBTS professors contributed to the text, including Denny Burk.

Burk, a professor of biblical studies at SBTS's Boyce College, has previously encouraged Christians to stop using the phrase "gay Christian" because, he suggested, it's an impossible contradiction in terms. "Christians never speak of 'lying Christians,' 'adulterer Christians,' 'fornicating Christians,' 'murderer Christians,' or 'thieving Christians,'" he wrote.<sup>57</sup> In more recent years, Burk has graduated from the long established anti-gay school of theology, making a name for himself as one of the Christian Right's leading anti-trans pioneers.

Reflecting on *TIME*'s transgender "tipping point" pronouncement in a June 2014 blog post, Burk wrote, "Just as homosexuality has been mainstreamed, so the revolutionaries seek to mainstream transgender (sic) as well." "Christians," he continued, "are going to have to meet the transgender challenge as a matter of great pastoral and missional urgency. We must be clear about what the Bible teaches and be faithful to live that message out in a culture that is increasingly out of step with biblical norms."<sup>58</sup>

A resolution "On Transgender Identity" authored by Burk and adopted by the SBC's Resolutions Committee in 2014 reinforces patriarchal and misogynistic notions of "complementarity": the notion that men and women have different but complementary roles in relationships, family life, work, and society. It also declares that gender identity is "determined by biological sex and not by one's self-perception." Burk's resolution further describes transgender and

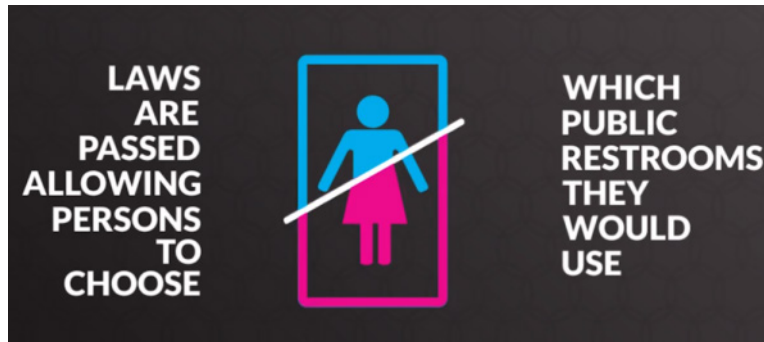


intersex people as “psychological” and “biological” manifestations of “human fallenness” respectively, and expresses opposition to any form of physical gender transition, as well as any governmental or cultural validations of transgender identities. The document is the latest in a long string of anti-LGBTQ resolutions issued by the denomination.<sup>59</sup>

In October 2015, Burk presented at the “first-ever” evangelical conference on the subject of “transgenderism” in Louisville, Kentucky. Convened by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC), a network of thousands of conservative Christian counselors who oppose the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, and the complementarity-focused Council for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, the event focused on “Transgender Confusion and Transformational Christianity.”

As reported by Zack Ford at *Think-Progress*, in Burk’s lecture, “A Gospel-Centered Assessment of Gender Identity, Transgender, and Polygamy,” the Southern Baptist professor dismissed all research<sup>60</sup> that has determined gender identity to be a biological phenomenon and that has found there are serious mental health consequences to denying a person’s gender identity. According to Burk, “The task of parenting—the task of disciplining—requires understanding

conforming people date much further back—long before anyone felt compelled to insert anti-trans language into official church doctrine. In 1987, the Council for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood (CBMW) was founded to promote the views of complementarity—specifically that “men and women are complementary, possessing equal dignity and worth as the image of God, and called to different roles that each glorify him.”<sup>62</sup>



Screenshot from a promotional video for the 2015 “Transgender Confusion and Transformational Christianity” conference. Full video at: <https://vimeo.com/117870540>.

Initially, complementarity was used as a core argument for the one-man-one-woman marriage proponents: that God’s design and intention was for wedded partners to create a balance between the unique characteristics predicated by their biological sex as the only appropriate formula for a legal marriage. But with the fight for same-sex marriage equality more or less behind us (unless, of course, you happen to be in the market for a gay wedding cake in a conservative, one-bakeshop town), the Christian Right is unearthing the deeper roots of gender essentialism for its current anti-trans offensive.

Another contributor to Mohler’s e-book response to Matthew Vines was Owen Strachan, a young champion of complementarity. The 34-year-old took over as Executive Director of CBMW in 2012, and in 2014 was promoted to President.<sup>63</sup> Under his leadership, the organization has more than tripled its annual revenue,<sup>64</sup> exponentially increased its social media presence, and launched a new international

outreach program, hosting events in the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Canada, and England.<sup>65</sup>

At CBMW’s 2016 conference in Louisville on “The Beauty of Complementarity,” Strachan declared that he “would rather die” than let a young transgender girl share the restroom with his daughter (ironically specifying that such an occasion shouldn’t happen “without me in there”). He went on to reject and deny the existence of trans people, instead reiterating the strictly defined roles of gender essentialism. “Men are called to lead, provide, and protect,” he explained, “and women are called to nurture, support, and follow.”<sup>66</sup>

Strachan has since stepped down as CBMW’s president. Denny Burk, author of SBC’s resolution “On Transgender Identity,” has assumed leadership of the organization.<sup>67</sup>

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE ANTI-TRANS LEGAL OFFENSIVE

Despite the anti-trans campaigns, progress is still evident. In May, U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch took a bold stand for transgender people, announcing that the Department of Justice was suing North Carolina for violating federal civil rights protections with its passage of HB 2. Speaking to the people of North Carolina, her home state, Lynch said,

You have been told that this law protects vulnerable populations from harm. That is just not the case. What this law does is inflict further indignity for a population that has already suffered far more than its fair share. This law provides no benefit to society, and all it does is harm innocent Americans.<sup>68</sup>

The lawsuit seeks to establish HB 2 as discriminatory under Title VII and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act and in violation of the Violence Against Women Act.

Title IX has been a primary point of contention in the fight for trans equality since the Obama administration expanded the reach of its protections in April 2014—less than two months

## The Southern Baptist Convention’s 2014 resolution describes transgender and intersex people as “psychological” and “biological” manifestations of “human fallenness.”

those [gender] norms and to inculcate those norms into our children and to those who want to follow Christ, even those who have deep conflicts about these things.”<sup>61</sup>

### COMPLEMENTARITY: GENDER ESSENTIALISM’S FAVORITE FORMULA

The theological roots of the Christian Right’s assault on trans and gender-non-

before Laverne Cox graced the cover of *TIME*. Under the new guidelines, Title IX prohibits discrimination in publicly funded schools not only on the basis of sex, but also on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, and disability.

The ACLU of North Carolina flagged this element of the potential harm caused by HB 2, noting in a press release that in addition to eliminating protections for LGBTQ people, the bill “jeopardizes the more than \$4.5 billion in federal funding that North Carolina receives for secondary and post-secondary schools under Title IX, which prohibits sex discrimination, including discrimination against transgender students.”<sup>69</sup>

Interpretation of this new policy had remained uncertain, but the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals’ decision in favor of Gavin Grimm (the transgender male student seeking equal access to male bathroom facilities), issued in April 2016, established a clear legal precedent.<sup>70</sup>

The Christian Right anticipated this. According to a report from the Human Rights Campaign, within months of the 2014 change dozens of religious colleges and universities had applied for and been granted a “religious exemption” from the law. George Fox University, a privately owned conservative Quaker school in Oregon that receives federal funding, was one of the first to do so — a reactionary measure taken to prevent a transgender male student, Jayce M., from living in campus housing designated for male students.<sup>71</sup>

Paul Southwick, a lawyer representing Jayce, argued that George Fox didn’t have any policies or theological positions prohibiting a student from transitioning or expressing a transgender identity.<sup>72</sup> Denny Burk, author of SBC’s anti-trans resolution, recognized the risk of this loophole. Upon introducing his initial draft of what would become the SBC’s new policy, he explained, “the resolution will be a reference point for Southern Baptist colleges, hospitals, and other institutions that may be facing legal challenges for their stance on this issue.”<sup>73</sup>

The ADF also understands the significance of establishing a theological precedent for anti-trans legal offensives. In

May 2016, ADF filed a lawsuit designed to exclude trans students from using the bathroom that aligns with their gender identity, arguing that the current policy of Illinois’ Township High School District 211, which grants students the right to access bathroom facilities that align with their gender identity, is illegal because it violates the rights of non-trans students.<sup>74</sup>

In the suit, ADF lays out many of the familiar arguments about privacy and “protecting” girls, but it also includes

**If their children share bathroom facilities with trans students, the ADF argued, parents’ “sincerely held religious beliefs about modesty and other religious doctrines” could be violated.**

a new, religious argument, one that builds on the revised standard established by the Supreme Court’s 2014 *Hobby Lobby* decision. Using this new precedent, ADF argued in Illinois that many parents have “sincerely held religious beliefs about modesty and other religious doctrines”; if their children share bathroom facilities with trans students, the ADF argued, these beliefs would be violated. Therefore, the policy interferes with parents’ ability “to freely live out their religious beliefs.”<sup>75</sup>

In 2004, ADF President Alan Sears told supporters, “One by one, more and more bricks that make up the artificial ‘wall of separation’ between church and state are being removed, and Christians are once again being allowed to exercise their constitutional right to equal access to public facilities and funding.”<sup>76</sup>

Twelve years later, Sears and his team are still relentlessly chipping away. As PRA senior research fellow Frederick Clarkson laid out in his 2016 report, *When Exemption is the Rule: The Religious Freedom Strategy of the Christian Right*, their ultimate goal is to “impose a conservative Christian social order inspired by religious law.”<sup>77</sup> To be clear, that conservative Christian social order has no place for trans and gender-nonconforming people, so for it to be realized, it’s necessary to erase their existence.

## EXISTENCE AS RESISTANCE

As the Christian Right attempts to forcefully construct its idealized vision of how the world should be (to the detriment of all who fail to fall in line), they cannot ignore the reality that bad things happen. Sexual assault and rape happen. Children are abused. Women experience untold amounts of violence. None of this can be refuted, however, our notions of who or what is to blame can vary dramatically.

Front and center in the Christian

Right’s anti-trans offensive is the notion that increased rights, protections, and access for trans people will equate to increased violence, abuse, sexual assault, and rape (specifically for women and children). Such falsehoods shift blame away from the patriarchal and racist structures that perpetuate the culture of violence that continuously inflicts harm and eliminates any sense of sustained safety for women, children, LGBTQ people, disabled people, and countless others. These structures are essential to the maintenance of the Christian Right’s dominance.

Yet the very existence of trans people challenges this dominance by refuting the narrative that God’s design is limited to two distinct, immutable genders—the primary premise used by the Christian Right to propagate homophobia and transphobia around the world. As trans communities assert their rights, gaining visibility and some measure of social acceptance, the Christian Right is inevitably fighting tooth and nail to preserve its world view. ☹

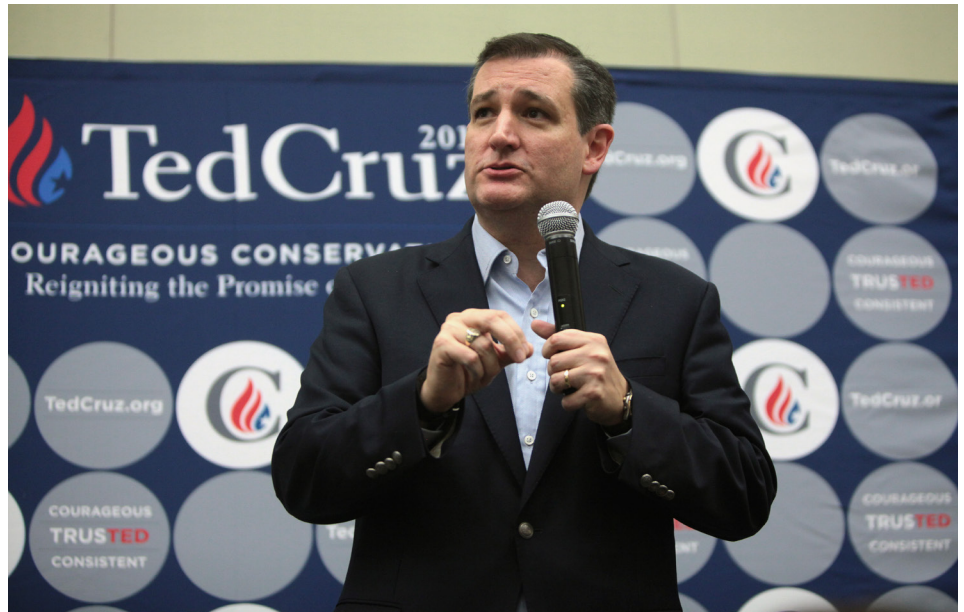
*L. Cole Parke is PRA’s LGBTQ & Gender Justice Researcher, and has been working at the intersections of faith, gender, and sexuality as an activist, organizer, and scholar for the past ten years.*

## Dominionism Rising A Theocratic Movement Hiding in Plain Sight

In June 2016, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) held a private meeting with conservative movement leaders to plot his political future. Attendees afterwards cast him in the role of Ronald Reagan, who'd lost the 1976 Republican presidential nomination to Gerald Ford but led a conservative comeback in 1980 that made Jimmy Carter a one-term president. The thinking was that Cruz did well enough in the 2016 Republican presidential primaries before losing to celebrity billionaire Donald Trump that he could plan to run again in 2020 or 2024. "He was with kindred spirits," said Brent Bozell, the conservative activist who hosted the meeting, "and I would say most people in that room see him as the leader of the conservative movement."<sup>1</sup>

The rise of Ted Cruz is a singular event in American political history. The son of a Cuban refugee and evangelical pastor, Cruz was raised in the kind of evangelicalism-with-a-theocratic-bent that has come to epitomize a significant and growing trend in American public life. That is, dominionism: a dynamic ideology that arose from the swirls and eddies of American evangelicalism to animate the Christian Right, and become a defining feature of modern politics and culture.

Dominionism is the theocratic idea that regardless of theological camp, means, or timetable, God has called conservative Christians to exercise dominion over society by taking control of political and cultural institutions. The term describes a broad tendency across a wide swath of American Christianity. People who embrace this idea are referred to as dominionists. Although Chip Berlet, then of Political Research Associates, and I defined and popularized the term for many in the 1990s,<sup>2</sup> in



U.S. Senator Ted Cruz speaking with supporters in Des Moines, Iowa in November 2015. Photo courtesy of Gage Skidmore via Flickr.

fact it had (along with the term dominion theology) been in use by both evangelical proponents and critics for many years.<sup>3</sup>

In many ways, Ted Cruz personifies the story of dominionism: how it became the ideological engine of the Christian Right, and how it illuminates the changes underway in U.S. politics, culture and religion that have helped shape recent history.

Ted Cruz's father, Rafael, who served as his son's principal campaign surrogate during his senate and presidential campaigns, has been a profound and colorful influence. The elder Cruz was a member of the Texas board of the Religious Roundtable,<sup>4</sup> a leading Christian Right organization of the late 1970s.<sup>5</sup> "Our conversation around the dinner table centered around politics—as to why we had to get rid of this leftist progressive called Jimmy Carter," Rafael

Cruz told an interviewer. "Ted got a dose of conservative politics from a biblical worldview for a whole year when he was nine years old."<sup>6</sup> That was the year the Religious Roundtable hosted the historic National Affairs Briefing conference in Dallas. It was held in tandem with the 1980 Republican National Convention, and attended by some 17,000 conservative Christians. It was there that Ronald Reagan famously declared: "I know you can't endorse me, but I endorse you and what you are doing."<sup>7</sup>

Some see Ted Cruz as not only following in the footsteps of Reagan, but fulfilling a religious destiny. "Talk to me about your son and his rise. This must be a thing of God. It's meteoric," David Brody, chief political correspondent for the Christian Broadcasting Network, asked Rafael Cruz in an interview in 2013, during Ted's first year as senator.<sup>8</sup> Evangelical historian John Fea explained why

Cruz might be viewed this way. During a sermon at the New Beginnings Church in Bedford, Texas, in 2012, Rafael had described his son's Senate campaign as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy that "God would anoint Christian 'kings' to preside over an 'end-time transfer of wealth' from the wicked to the righteous."

"According to his father and [New Beginnings Pastor Larry] Huch, Ted Cruz is anointed by God to help Christians in their effort to "go to the marketplace and occupy the land ... and take dominion" over it, Fea continued. "This 'end-time transfer of wealth' will relieve Christians of all financial woes, allowing true believers to ascend to a position of political and cultural power in which they can build a Christian civilization. When

Seven Mountains dominionism (popularly abbreviated as 7M) emerged in the 2000s through a campaign in the form of popular books, videos, sermons, and seminars.<sup>10</sup> It has spread like wildfire across Pentecostalism ever since.

The Cruzes are close to Christian nationalist author and longtime Texas Republican leader David Barton, who headed a super PAC in support of Cruz's presidential bid. Barton embraces 7M<sup>11</sup> even while disingenuously<sup>12</sup> claiming the term dominionism is an invention of liberals intended to smear Christians. "It's like saying 'Oh, you're a Nazi, oh, you're an anti-Semite, you're a bigot, you're a racist, you're a Dominionist,'" he said in a 2011 radio broadcast.<sup>13</sup>

Ted Cruz has, perhaps shrewdly, neither publicly affirmed nor denied the dominionism that surrounds him. He is a longtime member of a prominent Houston Baptist congregation, but his embrace of the dominionist vision is evident to those who are paying attention. When Cruz speaks of religious liberty, says John Fea, he means it as "a code word for defending the right of Christians to continue to hold cultural authority and privilege." Cruz, according to Fea, is engaged in the "dominionist battle" of our time.<sup>14</sup>

All of this was pretty hot stuff and dominionism would no doubt have become more of an issue had Ted Cruz's 2016 campaign lasted longer. But Cruz is 45 years old in 2016 and appears to have a bright—and perhaps historic—political future. He won statewide office on his first try and has benefited from being underestimated. Since arriving in the Senate in 2013, he has made a show of sticking to his principles, much to the chagrin of his colleagues. But following his presidential run, Cruz is now one of the best known politicians in the country and possible heir-apparent to the Reagan revolution.

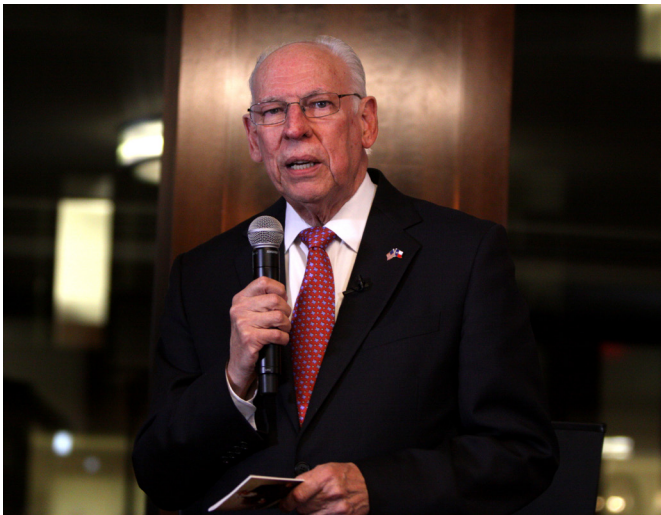
No small achievement for a freshman senator.

Meanwhile Cruz and other national polls comprise the tip of a very large, but hard-to-measure political iceberg. There are untold numbers of dominionist and dominionism-influenced politicians and public officials at all levels of government and who even after leaving office, shape our political discourse. Roy Moore, the elected Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, has been a rallying figure for dominionists of all stripes for the better part of two decades. Most recently, he has led efforts to exempt Alabama from federal court ordered compliance with marriage equality, citing his view of "God's law." Moore's fellow Alabaman, Justice Tom Parker, has been on the court since 2004, and has employed theocratic legal theorist John Eidsmoe as his chief of staff.<sup>15</sup> Others at the top of recent American political life have included Sarah Palin, Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry, Mike Huckabee,<sup>16</sup> and Newt Gingrich.<sup>17</sup> Other prominent elected officials in the dominionist camp include Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick (R-TX),<sup>18</sup> Gov. Sam Brownback (R-KS),<sup>19</sup> Sen. James Lankford (R-OK),<sup>20</sup> and Rep. Steve King (R-IA).<sup>21</sup>

Prominent politicians' involvement in dominionism is certainly the most visible evidence of the movement's advances over the past half-century, but it's not the only result. Dominionism is a story not widely or well understood. Because this is so, it is important to know what dominionism is and where it came from, so we can see it more clearly and better understand its contemporary significance.

## TWO STREAMS INTO THE MAINSTREAM

There are two main expressions of dominionism, each influential far beyond their foundational thinkers. Briefly, Christian Reconstructionism, founded by the late theologian R.J. Rushdoony (1916-2001) advances the idea that Christians must not only dominate society, but institute and enforce Old Testament biblical law. Unlike the doctrines developed within specific denominations, Christian Reconstructionism has been a movement of ideas that transcends denominations and has influ-



*Ted Cruz's political ambitions owe much to his father's belief in Seven Mountains dominionism. Photo courtesy of Gage Skidmore via Flickr. License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/>*

this Christian nation is in place (or back in place), Jesus will return."<sup>9</sup>

Rafael Cruz and Huch have long embraced a strain of evangelical theology called Seven Mountains dominionism, which calls for believers to take control over seven leading aspects of culture: family, religion, education, media, entertainment, business, and government. The name is derived from the biblical book of Isaiah 2:2 (New King James Version): "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains."

enced far more people than those who ever adopted the label. One of the movement's main contributions has been to provide a biblical rationale for political action for the Christian Right and a theory of government and public policy development.

Religion scholar Michael McVicar has found that Rushdoony's writings began to reflect an interest in dominion in the late 1950s.<sup>22</sup> His vision of how to bring forth "dominion men," via advancement of a "Biblical worldview" helped lead conservative evangelicals towards aggressive political engagement since the 1970s. Rushdoony is also credited with laying the foundation for, among other things, the modern homeschooling movement and fighting for maximum latitude for private Christian schools on issues like accreditation—normally a matter of government oversight, but something Rushdoony compared to government tyranny.<sup>23</sup>

The other main strain of contemporary dominionism (which in turn has also been deeply influenced by Reconstructionism) is 7M dominionism, advocated by Pentecostals of the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR).<sup>24</sup> 7M is rooted in a Pentecostal movement of the 1940s, according to an academic book by John Weaver published in 2015.<sup>25</sup> The Latter Rain movement taught that there would be an outpouring of supernatural pow-

ers in a coming generation, allowing them to subdue or take dominion over nations. The Latter Rain movement promised this would happen along with the restoration of "the neglected offices in the contemporary church of apostles and prophets."<sup>26</sup> Teachings about the supernatural authority of the apostles have provided key theological and structural elements of contemporary dominionism. These teachings, previously rejected as "deviant" by Pentecostal denominations are now so ubiquitous that they are more tolerated than opposed.<sup>27</sup>

Latter Rain theology was revived under the aegis of longtime Fuller Theological Seminary professor C. Peter Wagner, who organized a global network of hundreds of apostles. Many of these apostles lead groups of non-denominational churches and ministries called "apostolic networks," which sometimes comprise tens of thousands of members. Today, NAR theology and its apostles and prophets have assumed an increasingly high profile in religious and civic life in the U.S. They were well known in the past decade, for example, for mass rallies named TheCall, led by Lou Engle, who is also internationally known for his anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ activism.<sup>28</sup> They have also gained political influence. For example, several leading apostles were among the three-dozen "conveners" of a June 2016 meeting at

which Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump courted the support of some 1,000 evangelical leaders.<sup>29</sup>

Within the NAR, the justification for the offices of apostle and prophet is based on the biblical book of Ephesians (4:11). They are said to complement or complete the offices of minister, teacher and evangelist into what is called the "five-fold ministry." Apostles and prophets are top leaders, usually operating outside of denominations—which they are intent on dissolving in the name of Christian unity. They, respectively, lead these non-denominational networks, and offer guidance with prescient thoughts and sometimes direct revelations from God. Sometimes, the roles are combined.<sup>30</sup> This is a very different religious environment than any other sector of Christianity and underscores the way that doctrines among the dominion-minded can be rather fluid, even as they see themselves headed toward the same or similar goals.

It is important to underscore that dominionism, even as it evolves, is not a passing fashion but an historic trend. This trend featured fierce theological battles in the 1980s that pitted the largely apolitical pre-millennial dispensationalism that characterized most of 20th Century evangelicalism<sup>31</sup> against a politicized, dominion-oriented postmillennialism.

The turning point in this theological struggle was the 1973 publication of Rushdoony's 800-page *Institutes of Biblical Law*, which offered what he believed was a "foundation" for a future biblically-based society, and his vision of generations of "dominion men" advancing the "dominion mandate" described in the biblical book of Genesis.<sup>32</sup> *The Institutes* sought to describe what a biblically-based Christian society would look like. It included a legal code based on the Ten Commandments, and the laws of Old Testament Israel. This included a long list of capital offences—mostly religious or sexual crimes.<sup>33</sup> But Rushdoony and other leading Reconstructionists did not believe that "Biblical Law" could be imposed in a top down fashion by a national theocracy. They thought the biblical kingdom would emerge from the gradual conversion of people who would

## Dominionism Defined

Dominionism is the theocratic idea that regardless of theological view, means, or timetable, Christians are called by God to exercise dominion over every aspect of society by taking control of political and cultural institutions.

Analyst Chip Berlet and I have suggested that there is a dominionist spectrum running from soft to hard as a way of making some broad distinctions among dominionists without getting mired in theological minutiae.<sup>105</sup> But we also agree that:

1. Dominionists celebrate Christian nationalism, in that they believe that the United States once was, and should again be, a Christian nation. In this way, they deny the Enlightenment roots of American democracy.
2. Dominionists promote religious supremacy, insofar as they generally do not respect the equality of other religions, or even other versions of Christianity.
3. Dominionists endorse theocratic visions, insofar as they believe that the Ten Commandments, or "biblical law," should be the foundation of American law, and that the U.S. Constitution should be seen as a vehicle for implementing biblical principles.<sup>106</sup>

Of course, Christian nationalism takes a distinct form in the United States, but dominionism in all of its variants has a vision for all nations.

embrace what they consider to be the whole word of God, and that this could take hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of years. Rushdoony and many Reconstructionists also believed strongly in a vastly decentralized form of government. Theorist Gary North writes, for example, that, “It isn’t possible to ramrod God’s blessings from the top down, unless you’re God. Only humanists think that man is God.”<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, Reconstructionist thinkers could not prevent others from feeling a greater sense of urgency about moving up the timetable,<sup>35</sup> or from taking dramatic political action, or in the case of anti-abortion activists, even committing vigilante violence.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, *The Institutes* and the Reconstructionist works that followed provided a justification for political action that pulled many evangelicals from the political sidelines and into the fray. They also provided an optimistic theology of inevitable victory, suggesting therefore that political action was not only possible but necessary. In the longer term, it also established the often unacknowledged ideological framing for the Christian Right, the basis for 21st Century politics, and the possibility of a Ted Cruz as a major figure in public life.

#### THE BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE

One influential body of Reconstructionist thought was published by Gary North in the mid-1980s. A ten-volume series, called *Biblical Blueprints* and written by different authors, sought to flesh out and update the vision by engaging contemporary matters from education to economics and from politics to divorce. By the late 1980s, a dynamic conversation was well underway about the nature of conservative Christian political action—what it could reasonably expect to accomplish, on what timeframe, by what means, and whether it was necessary at all. These and other Reconstructionist authors were discussed in evangelical leadership circles. But controversy broke out in 1987 following a major critical report in *Christianity Today* that detailed their theocratic agenda. This article introduced Christian Reconstructionism, and the terms

dominion, dominion theology and dominionism to many evangelicals.<sup>37</sup> A still wider public learned about Reconstructionism the same year when PBS broadcast a series on the Religious Right by Bill Moyers.<sup>38</sup>

Books by prominent evangelical authors and academics opposing dominion theology soon followed, including one by Hal Lindsey, the bestselling evangelical author of his time.<sup>39</sup> Evangelical religious historian Bruce Barron warned of a growing “dominionist impulse.”<sup>40</sup>

This was perhaps the height of the battle over evangelical theology, in which

**Dominionism, even as it evolves, is not a passing fashion but an historic trend.**

the premillennial dispensationalist camp—which believed that in the End Times, true Christians would be “raptured” into the clouds, and Jesus would return to defeat the forces of Satan—was challenged by the post-millennialist Christian Reconstructionists—who argued that Jesus could not return until the world had become perfectly Christian and the faithful had ruled for 1,000 years. One of the longstanding consequences of this difference had been that premillennialists were disinclined to political action, while the postmillennial position required it in order to build nations based on biblical principles or even biblical laws. Christian Reconstructionist authors brought an additional and epochal piece to the puzzle, by outlining for the first time what Christian or biblical governance should look like.

An additional strain of dominionist thought has also been deeply influential in the wider evangelical community. The popular 20th Century theologian Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) sold some three million books, some of which are still in print. Together with his son Frank, he also made a series of influential films. Schaeffer’s 1981 book, *A Christian Manifesto*, published at the dawn of the Reagan era, famously served as a catalyst for the evangelical wing of the antiabortion movement, the

broader Christian Right, and the creeping theocratization of the Republican Party.<sup>41</sup>

Schaeffer advocated massive resistance to what he saw as a looming anti-Christian society. His work inspired dominionist political action even though he claimed to support religious pluralism and oppose overt theocracy. One major difference between Schaeffer and the Reconstructionists is that while they agreed about the threat to Christianity, Schaeffer did not believe in the contemporary applicability of Old Testament laws and Rushdoony’s slow motion approach to dominion. Instead, Schaeffer emphasized the need for militant Christian resistance to what he called “tyranny.”

Schaeffer argued that “the common people had the right and duty to disobedience and rebellion if state officials ruled contrary to the Bible. To do otherwise would be rebellion against God.”<sup>42</sup>

According to historian John Fea, “Schaeffer played an important role in shaping the Christian Right’s belief in a Christian America,” drawing an ideological plumb line from the Bible to the Declaration of Independence, via the theologians of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>43</sup> Schaeffer said that the situations that justified revolution against tyranny in the past are “exactly what we are facing today.” The whole structure of our society, Schaeffer concluded, “is being attacked and destroyed.”<sup>44</sup>

To fight that trend, Schaeffer advocated what he called “co-belligerency”: strategic partnerships that set aside theological differences in order to cooperate on a shared political agenda. (Thirty years later, the best expression of co-belligerency may be the 2009 “Manhattan Declaration,” a three-part platform declaring “life, marriage and religious liberty” as conservative believers’ defining concerns. This agenda is now shared by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, much of the evangelical Christian Right, and allied politicians in the Republican Party.<sup>45</sup>)

But Schaeffer didn’t articulate a political agenda much beyond the issues of what would later be called the culture war. He believed America was founded as a Christian nation, but he remained

in the premillennialist camp and so effectively ceded the playing field of law and public policy to Rushdoony, who offered a standard by which all others would be measured.

Nevertheless, Schaeffer's work probably caused more people to turn to overt dominionism than any other thought

lump all dominionists together, dominionists have differences and disagreements about means and ends, just like any other movement. (They also change over time.) For example, Rushdoony proposed the civil disobedience advocated by Schaeffer and left the board of the Rutherford Institute, the public interest law firm

he had started with John Whitehead, because Whitehead and fellow director Gary North supported the tactic. And while North supported non-violent direct action, he

**Schaeffer's work probably caused more people to turn to overt dominionism than any other thought leader before or since.**

disagreed with the vigilante murder of abortion providers as advocated (and ultimately committed) by fellow Christian Reconstructionist Paul Hill.<sup>49</sup>

But it is the broad vision that dominionists share that should be of greatest interest and concern to those outside the movement. C. Peter Wagner traces the lineage of his version of dominion theology "through R.J. Rushdoony" and theologians of the Protestant Reformation in his 2008 book, *Dominion! How Kingdom Action Can Change the World*.<sup>50</sup> Wagner adopted an old concept: "sphere sovereignty," the idea that all areas of life must be brought under a comprehensive biblical worldview. While Rushdoony called this "theonomy," Wagner's 7M theology offered a contemporary version with a Pentecostal twist. (There is some metaphorical flexibility in this sector as the term "mountains" is sometimes used interchangeably with "spheres" or "gates.") Reflecting the trend away from premillennialism, Wagner emphasized the "primacy" of the cultural (or dominion) mandate, over evangelism.<sup>51</sup>

Part of the significance of the convergence of these strains of dominionism is that 7M provides a popularized vision of the reconstructed society that does not require an advanced degree in theology to understand. "[W]e have an assignment from God to take dominion

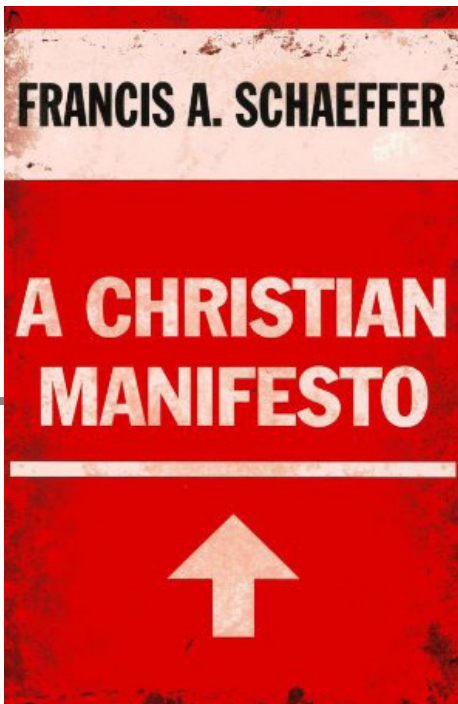
and transform society,"<sup>52</sup> Wagner simply declares. This break with the archaic and esoteric language of the Latter Rain and Christian Reconstructionist writers, and even Francis Schaeffer, has enabled the dominionist movement to broaden and deepen its reach. This synthesis and more palatable approach was decades in the making. There had been Pentecostal and Reconstructionist dialogues over the years that allowed Reconstructionist thought leaders to see that it was possible get wider swaths of Christianity to adopt their foundational ideas. After one such dialogue in Dallas in 1987,<sup>53</sup> Christian Reconstructionist pastor Joseph Morecraft exclaimed, "God is blending Presbyterian theology with Charismatic zeal into a force that cannot be stopped!"<sup>54</sup>

#### **DOMINIONISM REFRAMED AS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

The emergence of religious liberty as one of the central issues of our time stems from multiple sources.<sup>55</sup> But the issue is far from being just a disagreement about how to balance the religious freedom of some with civil and constitutional rights of others. In fact, religious freedom has long been seen by dominionist strategists as a weakness of constitutional democracy that they can exploit to advance their agendas.

The U.S. approach to religious freedom was largely an outgrowth of the thinking of Thomas Jefferson, whose Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom was drafted in 1777, and finally passed under the legislative leadership of James Madison in 1787. The bill, which helped inform the Constitution's and later the First Amendment's approach to religion, provided that one's religious identity "shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."<sup>56</sup> Dominionist leaders generally recognize that Jeffersonian notions of religious freedom and the society they envision are almost entirely mutually exclusive ideas. So they have chosen to be smart about it.

"We must use the doctrine of religious liberty," Christian Reconstructionist theorist Gary North declared in 1982, "to gain independence for Christian schools until we train up a generation of people who know that there is no religious neutrality, no neutral law, no



A Christian Manifesto was published by Crossway Books in 1982.

leader before or since. For many, Schaeffer was the beginning of a theological journey from antiabortion activism to dominionism. Randall Terry, the founder of the antiabortion direct action group Operation Rescue, in the 1980s said, "You have to read Schaeffer's *Christian Manifesto* if you want to understand Operation Rescue."<sup>46</sup> But by the '90s, he was wondering what would come next. In his own 1995 book, *The Sword: The Blessing of Righteous Government and the Overthrow of Tyrants*, Terry seemed to supply the answer, demonstrating the influence of his conversations with Gary North.<sup>47</sup> "I gladly confess that I want to see civic law in America (and every nation) restored to and based on the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai," Terry wrote. He considers it to be "flawless, infallible and unimprovable—the very best we could possibly build on."<sup>48</sup>

Although some writers have tended to

neutral education, and no neutral civil government. Then they will get busy in constructing a Bible-based social, political and religious order which finally denies the religious liberty of the enemies

not parochial. It would represent any kind of Christian and even groups that were “heretical and non-Christian” (the Church of Scientology was mentioned as one example) in cases that would have precedential value for advancing their vision of Christianity.<sup>59</sup>

Dominionist theorists view the Jeffersonian idea of religious equality under the law as inherently tyrannical. “There are two major stages in the attack on religious liberty,” Rushdoony declared in 1965. “First is the state is secularized in the name

said, “and I don’t think that’s patriotism. I think America needs to make room for liberty.”<sup>61</sup> But Wagner knows there is no actual room for religious liberty in a dominionist society, as he made clear when the NPR listeners weren’t tuned in: “Dominion has to do with control. Dominion has to do with rulership,” Wagner declared at an NAR conference in 2008, continuing:

Dominion has to do with authority and subduing, and it relates to society. In other words, what the values are in Heaven need to be made manifest here on earth. Dominion means being the head and not the tail. Dominion means ruling as kings. It says in Revelation Chapter 1:6 that He has made us kings and priests—and check the rest of that verse; it says for dominion. So we are kings for dominion.<sup>62</sup>

Significantly, Rushdoony and the late Howard Phillips, the Christian Reconstructionist founder of the Constitution Party, did considerable organizing around the Bob Jones University tax case—the *cause celebre* of the 1970s and early ‘80s that is widely credited with galvanizing the Christian Right as a political movement. In the landmark case of *Bob Jones University v. United States*, the Supreme Court ruled that the Greenville, South Carolina-based school was not entitled to federal tax exemption if it maintained its policy against interracial dating. The case epitomized the Recon-



Photo courtesy of American Life League via Flickr.

of God.”<sup>57</sup>

North believes that the Constitution generally, and specifically the proscription against religious tests for public office included in Article 6, are “legal barrier[s] to Christian theocracy.” But he envisions a day when biblically-correct Christians gain enough political power to be able to amend the Constitution to limit access to the franchise and civil offices to “communicant members of Trinitarian churches.”<sup>58</sup>

Rushdoony was not interested in religious freedom except insofar as it had implications for “Christian freedom.” In 1980, after many years of legal advocacy for Christian home-schooling and private schools, Rushdoony asked a protégé, attorney John Whitehead, to create a public interest law firm, the “Christian Rights Foundation.” The organization that emerged was ultimately named the Rutherford Institute, after the 17th Century theologian Samuel Rutherford, who asserted that even the King of England must obey God’s laws. The Institute was to be strategic and

of freedom and second, every prerogative of the church is attacked in an indirect manner so that ... its right to exist is denied.”<sup>60</sup> This is the thinking that informs many contemporary claims of attacks on the religious liberty and fears of persecution by a secular totalitarian government.

Religious liberty arguments, which can at once cloak and advance a conservative religious agenda, are increasingly ubiquitous on the Christian Right, and

are sometimes intended to baffle liberals. In 2011, C. Peter Wagner seemed to make a surprising case for religious tolerance to a National Public Radio audience. “I’m sorry that some radicals speak up strongly against having a mosque in their neighborhood,” he

**// We must use the doctrine of religious liberty to gain independence for Christian schools until we train up a generation of people who know that there is no religious neutrality, no neutral law, no neutral education, and no neutral civil government. Then they will get busy in constructing a Bible-based social, political and religious order which finally denies the religious liberty of the enemies of God.**

**Gary North**

structionist and Schaefferite view of the perpetual showdown between a “biblical worldview” and “secular humanism.” The case is a forerunner to today’s efforts to gain exemption from the law based on religious liberty claims.<sup>63</sup>

Today, the major issues of the culture



war have been substantially reframed in terms of religious liberty, as the co-belligerents seek to declare their individual and institutional religious consciences are violated in various ways, and therefore are exempt from what jurists call the “generally applicable laws.” The re-

**C. Peter Wagner, in his book, *Dominion!*, says he wants to get his people “into positions of leadership” to reshape the country “from top to bottom.”**

sults have been mixed.

The religious freedom argument deployed against contraception and abortion won a major victory in the Supreme Court case of *Hobby Lobby v. Sebelius*, where the court held that closely held corporations have a right to freedom of conscience sufficient for the evangelical family-owned Hobby Lobby chain not to have to include certain contraceptives in their employees’ health insurance.

In the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, religious liberty arguments could not overcome the civil rights argument for marriage equality,<sup>64</sup> but similar arguments have informed state-level versions of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which have sometimes sought for example, to exempt businesses from having to provide services related to same-sex marriages.

#### DOMINION BY MAJORITY

Dominionist theorists and contemporary leaders know that they need to move carefully, lest they provoke powerful opposition. Some leading dominionists will go so far as to say that they do not seek a theocracy when that is clearly their goal. For example, C. Peter Wagner, in his book, *Dominion!*, says he wants to get his people “into positions of leadership” to reshape the country “from top to bottom.”<sup>65</sup>

Wagner’s successor as the convener of the United States Coalition of Apostolic Leaders (USCAL), Joseph Mattera, takes the same approach.<sup>66</sup> USCAL is one of several NAR leadership groupings that

teach that Christians of the right sort must hold governmental power and implement a biblical approach to the law.<sup>67</sup>

Mattera, who pastors a church in Brooklyn, New York, adds that the historic evangelical goal of universal conversion is unnecessary to achieve dominion. One of the “keys to dominion,” he says, is prolific reproduction and indoctrination of Christian children. Christians, he believes, should seek to multiply faster than those who are limiting the size of their families, so their children would “have

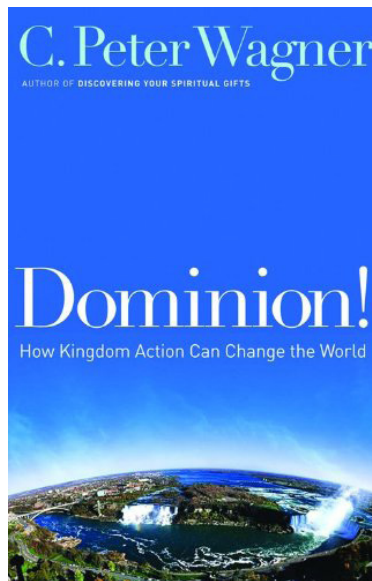
Democratic primary challenge to his incumbent state senator in 2014,<sup>72</sup> and tried again in 2016 with backing from charter school development interests).<sup>73</sup>

Christian Reconstructionists involved in the natalist Quiverfull movement have a similar view. As Kathryn Joyce explained in *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement*, they envision themselves producing arrows in God’s quiver in the war for dominion.<sup>74</sup> Although certainly not all homeschoolers are Christian dominionists, those who understand the concept of Quiverfull as a metaphor for their role in this epochal struggle. “The womb is such a powerful weapon,” Nancy Campbell, who has six children and 35 grandchildren, told National Public Radio, “it’s a weapon against the enemy.” Families in her church have an average of 8.5 children. Campbell said, “My greatest impact is through my children. The more children I have, the more ability I have to impact the world for God.”<sup>75</sup>

Additionally, Quiverfull children are usually homeschooled, and as religion scholar Julie Ingersoll explained in her 2015 book on Reconstructionism, that’s also part of Rushdoony’s long-term plan. As Rushdoony wrote, “the explicit goal of Christian education is dominion.”<sup>76</sup> The Reconstructionists, Ingersoll concludes, are building a “separate and distinct subculture in which they can raise their large families without the influence of ‘humanism.’”<sup>77</sup>

For the Apostles and Prophets who comprise Mattera’s USCAL, 7M roads to dominion are just as clear. The government officials that emerge from their ranks must be informed by a “biblical worldview” and their “every purpose must be to establish or further the Kingdom of Jesus on earth.”<sup>78</sup>

This may be a less peaceful process than Wagner and some 7M readers would have us believe. Many dominionists of all stripes anticipate deepening political tensions, violence and even religious or secessionist war, especially in the wake of legal and social acceptance of marriage equality and permanent access to legal abortion.<sup>79</sup> Gary North thought this was likely. He predicted in 1989 that as the dominionist movement rose, the idea of constitutionally pro-



*Dominion!: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World* was published by Chosen Books in February 2008.

more influence... [and]...more votes than anybody else and we would have the most power on the earth.”<sup>68</sup> (Mattera’s gradualism is not limited to waiting for babies. His regional Apostolic Leadership team includes Democratic New York City Councilman Fernando Cabrera,<sup>69</sup> who has also taught at Mattera’s Leadership Institute on waging a “Kingdom Revolution” to advance a “biblical worldview.”<sup>70</sup> They waged an unsuccessful Democratic primary effort in 2014 against five candidates in an apparent effort to make the Democratic-dominated Council more conservative.<sup>71</sup> Cabrera himself ran an unsuccessful

tected religious pluralism “will be shot to pieces in an ideological (and perhaps even literal) crossfire” as Christians and humanists continue to square off in “an escalating religious war.”<sup>80</sup> [emphasis in the original]

One contemporary example will suffice. David Lane, a leading Christian Right electoral organizer, declared in a 2013 essay that religious war may be on the horizon.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile he has shifted the electoral emphasis of his Mississippi-based American Renewal Project. (The group hosts all-expenses paid policy briefings for clergy and their spouses, featuring top politicians like Gov. Mike Pence (R-IN), Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL), Gingrich, Huckabee, Cruz, and often David Barton. Republican presidential contender Donald Trump addressed one such event in August 2016.<sup>82</sup>) They are currently recruiting and training clergy with a dominionist vision to run for office at all levels.<sup>83</sup>

Lane’s own pastor, Rob McCoy, won a city council seat in Thousand Oaks, California, in 2016.<sup>84</sup> Lane’s vision is clear: “I don’t think there’s any such thing as a separation of church and state. This was not established as a secular nation, and anybody that says that it is, they’re not reading American history. This was established by Christians for the advancement of the Christian faith. My goal is to return—to restore a biblically based culture and a Judeo-Christian heritage.”<sup>85</sup>

Lane reprised the theme of his inflammatory essay in dog whistle fashion in 2015, invoking the names of two warriors of Old Testament Israel. “We just need a Gideon or Rahab the Harlot to stand,” he declared.<sup>86</sup> But one does not invoke these biblical figures to call for religious revival, elect candidates to city council, or to advance a legislative agenda. The biblical Gideon leads an Israelite army in an ethnic cleansing of the Midianites who were oppressors and worshiped false gods. (Lane’s piece was titled, “To Retake America, We Must Defeat Her False Religion.”) Rahab shel-

tered two Israelite spies in preparation for the sacking of the city of Jericho by Joshua’s army, resulting in the massacre of everyone but Rahab and her family.

It is worth noting that NAR events often begin with processions of young men marching to the military beat of drums and blowing Shofars—ram horns used for battle signals in ancient Israel.<sup>87</sup>

#### THE SMEARS OF AUGUST

The election of 2008 saw the first ma-



Ted and Rafael Cruz along with David Barton at the Pastor’s Conference, Iowa Renewal Project, Des Moines, Iowa, July 2013. Photo via Youtube.

ajor party candidate for national office who had been obviously influenced by dominionist thought. GOP vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin was a longtime member of an NAR-affiliated church, and had been mentored in poli-

Gov. Rick Perry (R-TX)<sup>89</sup> threatened to make dominionism a household word. It was reported that, among other things, Bachmann’s law school mentor at Oral Roberts University was Christian Reconstructionist John Eidsmoe.<sup>90</sup> (Reconstructionist Herb Titus also served on the school’s small law school faculty.) And leading NAR figures staged an unprecedented prayer rally of some 30,000 people in Houston to launch Gov. Perry’s campaign, to which even C. Peter Wagner traveled from Colorado to attend.

The thought that dominionism might become an issue in the presidential campaign must have sent Republican-oriented PR shops into panic mode. Journalists, scholars and activists who had written about dominionism were soon subjected to a wide-ranging smear campaign that featured nationally syndicated columnists from *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*.<sup>91</sup>

This effort sought to discredit the idea that dominionism was a real thing or, even if real, that it was of much significance. The real purpose of those using the term, the columnists alleged, was to tar evangelicals. Lisa Miller of the *Post*

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tics by Alaskan Apostle Mary Glazier for two decades. The revelation of these ties when Palin came onto the national stage resulted in explosive, if short-lived, media attention.<sup>88</sup>

Controversy erupted again in the run up to the 2012 election primary season. Media reports about dominionist influences on GOP presidential contenders Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN) and

wrote, “‘Dominionism’ is the paranoid mot du jour.”<sup>92</sup> Bachmann and Perry’s campaigns ultimately lost traction for other reasons. And in spite of many vigorous responses to the columnists’ pooh poohery,<sup>93</sup> media coverage of dominionism collapsed even as dominionist thought continued to animate and sustain the Christian Right.

Dominionism denial exists within a

wider context of a culture of doubt and denial about the strength and resiliency of the Christian Right itself.<sup>94</sup> It can be difficult to take dominionism seriously if you think that the movement it drives is dead, dying, or deeply diminished. That said, it is also true that some writers use have used the term dominionism as an all-purpose epithet and have thereby unfairly broad-brushed people who do not embrace the harsh theocratic future envisioned by some.

But these distracting outliers are not as significant as the writing about dominionism from a wide variety of points of view that has been published over more than four decades. For example, in 1996, Rice University sociologist

William Martin published *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* as a companion volume to the PBS documentary series by the same title.<sup>95</sup> Authors of hundreds of books<sup>96</sup> and articles<sup>97</sup> have discussed dominionism before and since 2011. (Dominionism denial nevertheless resurfaced as Ted Cruz's presidential prospects rose in 2016 and the role of dominionism began to be discussed.<sup>98</sup>)

In any case, ideas about dominion, dominionism, and dominion theology and the terms themselves, have been a central part of the discussion of evangelicalism and the development of the Christian Right for decades. This will continue, regardless of what politically motivated dominionism denialists may publish next.

#### **DELIVER US FROM HILLARY**

Dominionism now appears to be a permanent feature of politics at all levels. For three presidential elections in a row, dominionist politicians have played prominent roles. Following Mike Huckabee and Sarah Palin in 2008, Michele Bachmann and Rick Perry in 2012, and the remarkable run of Ted Cruz in 2016, dominionists are among the most prominent politicians in the country and enjoy significant public support and acceptance as a legitimate part of the po-

litical mix.

While Senator Cruz's campaign was supported by leading NAR figures and most other Christian Right leaders, there was always a Plan B as well. One NAR prophet said God had told him in July 2015 that he will use Donald Trump to "expose darkness and perversion."<sup>99</sup> Donald Trump also enjoyed significant support from other Christian Right figures, notably 7M theorist Lance Wallnau (who also sits on the board of an NAR political arm, the Oak Initiative<sup>100</sup>).

**What is remarkable today is that the nature of this driving ideology of the Christian Right remains obscure to most of society, most of the time.**

Wallnau sought to explain the paradox of evangelical Christians supporting Trump from early on even though he didn't seem like a good fit. Trump, as has been much discussed, was a longtime supporter of abortion and LGBTQ rights, a thrice-married philanderer, a failed casino magnate with ties to organized crime,<sup>101</sup> and someone whose Christian credentials were dubious at best. Nevertheless, Wallnau suggested that God could use Trump to achieve his purposes even though he was a flawed vessel. Wallnau recalled the story of Cyrus, the King of Persia in the biblical book of Isaiah who, as had been earlier prophesied, freed the Jews who had been captive in Babylon for 70 years, and helped to build the temple in Jerusalem. God used the pagan Cyrus, as Wallnau put it, as a "wrecking ball" for his purposes.<sup>102</sup> Wallnau thought God would use Trump to challenge "an increasingly hostile anti-Christian culture"<sup>103</sup> and "deliver us from Hillary."<sup>104</sup>

Wallnau's story makes clear that at least some 7Mers do not require moral or doctrinal conformity to accept someone as a co-belligerent, or even as a leader, as long as they can help get them part of the way down the road to dominion. It also underscores that while the various doctrines feeding into the dominionist movement are clear,

the degree to which they are adopted, and the means and timeline by which dominionists may seek to achieve their goals, will vary according to individual and factional interests.

Dominionism, like the Christian Right itself, has come a long way from obscure beginnings. What is remarkable today is that the nature of this driving ideology of the Christian Right remains obscure to most of society, most of the time. Dominionism's proponents and their allies know it takes time to infuse their ideas

into the constituencies most likely to be receptive. They also know it is likely—and rightly—to alarm many others.

Religion scholar Michael McVicar recounts an illuminating anecdote

from that pivotal 1980 gathering of the Religious Roundtable addressed by Ronald Reagan. During the meeting, Robert Billings, one of the founders of the Moral Majority, privately observed to Gary North that, "If it weren't for [Rushdoony's] books, none of us would be here." North replied, "No one in the audience understands that." Billings replied, "True. But we do."

"Insiders knew about Rushdoony's influence, even if the rank and file did not," McVicar concludes.<sup>105</sup> That continues to be true. The role of dominionism is largely hidden in plain sight from those most affected, on all sides. ☞

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called “Kill the Gays” bill. The WCF is sufficiently bigoted—members have supported criminalizing abortion and homosexuality—that the Southern Poverty Law Center has designated the network an anti-LGBTQ hate group.

Many of the organizations participating in the WCF hold similar views. Several countries, especially Russia, which leads in this area, are successfully codifying so-called family values in dangerous laws restricting individual rights and freedoms. Russia has criminalized abortion and homosexual “propaganda,” and arrested individuals, journalists, and artists thought to pose a threat to family values. Most famously, in 2012, several members of the protest punk band Pussy Riot<sup>4</sup> were jailed for “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred.” Some countries, including Russia and Lithuania, have imposed fines for contempt of family values, and others, like Georgia, the Slovak Republic, and Croatia, have proposed or passed laws restricting marriage to between a man and a woman.

In an effort to lure its former Soviet republics away from the European Union and the temptations of the indulgent West, Putin’s government is well known for tapping into rising nationalism and neoconservatism and exporting homophobia<sup>5</sup> to neighboring countries. Russia is particularly influential in countries like Hungary, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Slovakia, where it is fostering connections with far-right organizations and political parties with pro-Russia platforms.

Which raises the question: in choosing Georgia, was the WCF knowingly responding to Russia’s bidding? Radio Free Europe reported that Levan Vasadze, WCF’s Georgian organizer, a well-known anti-gay activist and Russia apologist, used his opening WCF address to foster solidarity between Moscow and Georgia.<sup>6</sup> Or perhaps the relationship is symbiotic. WCF leaders often speak of Russia taking the helm on family values; in 2013 WCF Managing Director Larry Jacobs mused, “The Russians might be the Christian saviors of the world.”<sup>7</sup>

This October Georgia holds national elections and they are predicted to be contentious. Georgian Dream—Democratic Georgia, the governing coalition,

supports closer ties to the West; yet both Russia and the Orthodox Church exert considerable influence in Georgia, particularly in the media. While the U.S.-organized WCF conference was a Western invasion of sorts, it actually suited Russia’s agenda in Georgia, and the region, to spread its anti-Western, anti-EU message.

**In an effort to lure its former Soviet republics away from the European Union and the temptations of the indulgent West, Putin’s government is well known for tapping into rising nationalism and neo-conservatism and exporting homophobia to neighboring countries.**

But really, on the issue of family values, right-wing Georgians don’t need much urging from Russian or U.S. conservatives. The climate against gay and trans people is not just hostile; it’s downright violent. Three years ago, in May 2013, as the LGBTQ community gathered in Tbilisi to commemorate the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, the Georgian Orthodox Church hierarchy called for counter-demonstrations. Right-wing activists, including armed priests and allegedly WCF’s Vasadze,<sup>8</sup> responded to the appeal by attacking peaceful LGBTQ marchers, and smashing shop windows, heads, and minivans.<sup>9</sup> Both the U.S. State Department and the European Union condemned the violence.

The WCF summit purposefully<sup>10</sup> ended on May 17, three years to the day when the Orthodox Church led these attacks against LGBTQ Georgians, a day which Georgian Orthodox Patriarch Ilia II, WCF keynote speaker, has since renamed the “Day of the Family.”

The homophobic demagoguery at this year’s WCF, however, was quite unlike the muted rhetoric of WCF IX, which was held in Utah last year. Perhaps this was because the WCF was facing public criticism in the U.S. from human rights groups critical of the network’s stance against LGBTQ rights. WCF Utah was light on homophobia, which had the effect of reducing media attention, and perhaps emboldened them to speak more freely in Tbilisi. Certainly much of

the anti-LGBTQ rhetoric in Tbilisi came from the Georgian hosts, but equally troubling were comments made by Russian and American speakers repeatedly linking homosexuality to fascism.

The American Orthodox priest Father Josiah Trenham’s comments were most inflammatory. When Trenham cited a Koran passage endorsing the death penalty

for anyone committing a homosexual act, the mainly Orthodox and Christian crowd applauded. Closing out his presentation with a string of hyperbolic flourishes, Trenham pressed the audience to tell the “LGBT tolerance-tyrant, this lavender mafia, these homo-fascists, these rainbow radicals, that they are not welcome to promote their anti-religious and anti-civilizational propaganda in your nations.”<sup>11</sup>

The disconnect between U.S. claims of family values as Western values, and the repeated accusations by Eastern European countries that Western values will only lead to immorality and decadent behavior, may have been lost on the American WCF organizers who said they were looking to “establish a beachhead in the region.”<sup>12</sup> But this might just be a question of splitting hairs: East-West interpretations of family values are actually one and the same. And they continue being used by their defenders all over the world to violate basic human rights and intimidate and censor those deemed threats. The WCF’s ambition to set up a beachhead in the region is unnecessary; it’s already there. ☹

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## Documenting Discrimination: How the Religious-Right Convinces Politicians to Enact Anti-LGBTQ Legislation

Campaign for Accountability, July 2016

Increasingly, the Religious Right's strategy to institutionalize discrimination against LGBTQ people relies on appeals to "religious freedom," codified in bills like Kansas' or Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which could be used to combat existing non-discrimination measures or allow businesses to refuse to serve or employ LGBTQ people. In *Documenting Discrimination*, the Campaign for Accountability (CfA) examines how RFRA-like bills have been proposed in Arizona, Arkansas, Kentucky and Texas since 2003, and how this wave of similar legislation has come about.

While these bills are often presented as locally inspired, they're in fact the result of coordination and advocacy from national groups like Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) and the Family Research Council (FRC). Through dozens of open records requests, CfA has documented the relationships between individual lawmakers, state-based organizations, and national right-wing organizations that are "working together to push an agenda of hate, intolerance, and discrimination."

In Arizona, the Center for Arizona Policy (CAP), a small religious-right organization, has launched multiple efforts to pass religious freedom bills in the state. With every effort, they were supported by the Alliance Defending Freedom, a right-wing behemoth with a multi-million dollar budget that wages legal battles on behalf of conservative causes at the U.S. Supreme Court and internationally. ADF helped with the initial drafting of the bill and met with aides from the Arizona governor's office, alongside members of CAP. CfA also determined that certain phrases were removed from the bill upon CAP's request.

CAP has another national partner in the Family Research Council, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that equates homosexuality with pedophilia. FRC worked with CAP to provide model legislation supporting the Boy Scout's "Don't Ask Don't Tell Policy," and on April 9, 2013, the Arizona House of Representatives passed that resolution.

In Texas, national right-wing groups again worked alongside local advocates on religious freedom bills. Among them was the 2015 Pastor Protection Act, which allows clergy members to refuse to officiate same-sex marriages (despite the fact that clergy members are not in danger of being forced to perform same-sex marriages). The national religious-right group First Liberty founded the group that pushed the Pastor Protection Act, Texas Action, in order to have a "Texas focused effort" to advance these religious freedom values. CfA also learned that FRC and the right-wing think tank the Heritage Foundation contacted staffers in the Texas governor's and attorney general's office with a draft executive order expressing support for religious freedom in light of the *Obergefell v. Hodge* decision, which declared that marriage is a fundamental right guaranteed to same-sex couples. On June 26, 2015, the governor issued that executive order.

In Kentucky, the Florida-based Liberty Council represented Rowan County Clerk Kimberly Davis when she refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples and to comply with state information laws with regard to CfA's information requests. Liberty Council also worked alongside the Alliance Defending Freedom to block an Arkansas district school board from adding protections for sexual orientation and gender identity.

The religious freedom frame is an essential strategy of the Religious Right to block not only LGBTQ rights but reproductive and labor rights as well. By explicitly detailing the specific actions taken by right-wing organizations to influence anti-LGBTQ policy, CfA has documented the Right's simultaneous work at the national and local levels.

—Jamie Shore

## More Harm Than Good: How Children Are Unjustly Tried As Adults In New Orleans

Southern Poverty Law Center, February 2016

### MORE HARM THAN GOOD

HOW CHILDREN ARE UNJUSTLY TRIED AS ADULTS IN NEW ORLEANS



SPLC Southern Poverty Law Center

Over the past decade, 28 states have taken steps to remove juveniles from the adult criminal justice system, yet many children are still tried in adult courts (in what is called juvenile transfer) and serve time in adult prisons. A report released by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) this February uncovers how this takes place in New Orleans' criminal justice system.

Louisiana's juvenile transfer laws are broad and permissive, requiring very little evidence to transfer a child to adult court. (Once a child is transferred to an adult court, they cannot be transferred back.) The prevalence of juvenile transfers dates back to the 1990s, when media-stoked fears of "juvenile superpredators"—a concept that's since been debunked—led to harsher crime laws, including laws related to juvenile transfers. A quarter-century later, Louisiana's transfer laws still reflect the political

climate of the '90s.

In New Orleans, where the use of juvenile transfers has become the default mode of many prosecutions, this is even more visible. At the time Parish District Attorney Leon Cannizaro was elected in 2009, juvenile transfers were relatively rare. But in Cannizaro's

seven years in the position, he has prosecuted 200 children in adult court. Cannizaro's approach ignores the systemic issues that inform juvenile crime—such as the fact that 39 percent of children in New Orleans live in poverty—and he has gone so far as to argue that “children arrested for serious offenses in New Orleans have been given every chance to succeed.”

Once children are transferred to the adult criminal justice system, they are ineligible for rehabilitative services that might help them turn their lives around, even though research has shown that youthful offenders—more prone to short-sighted impulsiveness and peer influence—have a higher capacity for rehabilitation. Youth convicted as adults further lose opportunities to develop vocational skills, job experience, family connections and to secure public housing or certain licenses. And once they're incarcerated in adult correctional facilities, youth face five times greater risk of sexual assault than they would face in juvenile lock-ups.

Juvenile defendants face more challenges in the trial process. Developmental immaturity prevents many from making rational decisions regarding their defense, and youth are more likely than adults to be influenced by a desire for peer approval when determining trial strategy or who should take more criminal responsibility. Additionally, mistrust of the legal system lead many youth to omit information or be dishonest with lawyers and judges. Lastly, youth may unadvisedly take plea deals because of the appeal of short-term benefits (avoiding trial, getting out of pretrial detention, avoiding a maximum sentence regardless of the strength of the evidence) rather than the focusing on long-term consequences.

Among those long-term consequences is recidivism, which has increased 20 percent since Louisiana began using juvenile transfers. There has also been an economic cost, as taxpayers are funding the incarceration of many youth who had no or minimal delinquency history, although criminologists estimate that preventing one adolescent from becoming a serial offender could save \$2-5 million dollars over the course of their lifetime.

The SPLC report provides several recommendations that the New Orleans Parish can use to ensure reasonable and effective prosecution policies for youth, including proper evaluation of a child's prior delinquency, age, and mental/physical maturity; proper collection of outcome data that be made easily accessible to the public; and accountability from the district attorney's office for juvenile transfers. Effective juvenile justice systems use evidence-based practices to encourage positivity, prevent recidivism, and provide outreach for impacted youth, communities, and families. The misguided and expensive practices employed in New Orleans at present are creating further casualties of the adult criminal justice system.

-Cassandra Osei

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## Forthcoming Report on Oregon's Patriot Movement

At the beginning of this year, Patriot movement paramilitaries stormed onto the national stage when they seized the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon and occupied it for 41 days. While the camera crews have gone home, Oregon remains a hotbed of Patriot movement activity. Across the state, heavily armed paramilitaries and self-proclaimed judges and courts vie for public support, while county sheriffs and other elected officials collude with these more radical groups and organizers.



*PRA research fellow and lead author, Spencer Sunshine, in Harney County, Oregon, January 2016.*

PRA research fellow Spencer Sunshine's investigation, *Up in Arms: A Guide to Oregon's Patriot Movement*, will be a groundbreaking new report issued jointly by Political Research Associates and the Rural Organizing Project. Through extensive research on right-wing movements, as well as local knowledge by rural progressive community activists and economists, the report exposes, explains, and offers alternatives to this movement.

Look for its release this September, as well as a fall 2016 article by Spencer Sunshine on how the movement relates to more mainstream conservative politics.

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