

Making Sense of President Trump and LGBT Issues and People

Donald Trump has been called the most anti-LGBT president in our history. Yet he just became the first Republican president to celebrate LGBT pride month, also calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality worldwide. Does this indicate a shift in perspectives? Not according to gay journalist Michelangelo Signorile

In an article for the *Daily Beast*, he claimed that, "President Trump's Anti-LGBT Agenda Is Louder Than His Pride Message."

Signorile wrote that, "On Friday, President Trump tweeted a message in support of Pride month, which was breathtakingly disingenuous given his administration's systematic assault on LGBT rights."

Indeed, he claimed, "Trump's celebration of Pride is as fraudulent and calculated as his claim to be fighting to decriminalize homosexuality. This is in fact an attempt to portray himself as supportive of LGBTQ people as he gears up for the 2020 re-election campaign.

"The goal," he wrote, "is less about getting much of the community's backing—which will be near impossible—but more about keeping or getting the support of many others who might be turned off by blatant anti-LGBTQ bigotry."

But would Trump really do this to win the votes of centrists while alienating his most important voting base, namely, conservative evangelical Christians? And is Trump naïve enough to think that a couple of tweets would change the minds of alienated voters?

Signorile actually spends most of his article detailing the many things Trump has done to oppose LGBT activism, right through the month of May. Surely Trump does not think that he can so easily change public perceptions.

On May 14, Tim Fitzsimons reported for NBC News that, "President Donald Trump opposes the passage of the Equality Act, a proposed bill that would add sexual orientation and gender identity to federal civil rights law to prevent discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people."

As explained by a White House official, "The Trump administration absolutely opposes discrimination of any kind and supports the equal treatment of all. However, this bill in its current form is filled with poison pills that threaten to undermine parental and conscience rights."

This speaks louder than any celebratory tweet.

Fitzsimons also cited Sarah Kate Ellis, the president and CEO of the national LGBTQ advocacy group GLAAD, who said that, "Trump's opposition to the Equality Act 'further cements his administration's legacy of being the most anti-LGBTQ government in recent memory.'"

Indeed, Ellis continued, "LGBTQ Americans will not forget the president's politically craven flip-flop on this fair and just legislation."

Yet Trump now tweets, "As we celebrate LGBT Pride Month and recognize the outstanding contributions LGBT people have made to our great Nation, let us also stand in solidarity with the many LGBT people who live in dozens of countries worldwide that punish, imprison, or even execute individuals...."

How do we explain this?

Let's also remember that, during a recent interview on Fox

News, Trump was asked, "Don't you think it's just great to see the fact that you've got a guy there on the stage with his husband and it's normal?"

He replied, "I think it's absolutely fine, I do."

As CNN noted, "He agreed with Hilton's assessment that Buttigieg's candidacy is a 'sign of great progress,' adding, 'Yeah, I think it's great. I think that's something that perhaps some people will have a problem with, I have no problem with it whatsoever.'"

Yet, during his tenure as president, Trump has reinstated the ban on transgenders serving in the military and worked against the Obama administration's redefinition of sex (as if sex included gender perception), just to cite two examples of his opposition to LGBT activism.

Is he trying to play both ends against the middle? Or is there no rhyme or reason to his actions?

Actually, the more I think about it, the more I find a consistency to his words and actions.

On the one hand, as a man who spent many years as a New York liberal and Hollywood insider, he must have had plenty of good relationships with LGBT people.

So, on a personal level, he likes people like Peter Thiel, PayPal's openly gay co-founder, who also spoke at the Republican National Convention. And on a professional level, he's glad to have a man like Richard Grenell on his team. (Grenell is the openly gay ambassador to Germany.)

In the same way, Trump said in 2016 he would have no problem with Bruce "Caitlyn" Jenner using the bathroom of his choice at Trump Tower. And there's little doubt that Jared and Ivanka would have been very much at home with many of President Obama's LGBT sympathies.

As Ivanka tweeted in 2017, “Logging back on after Shavuot, wishing everyone a joyful #Pride2017. This month we celebrate and honor the #LGBTQ community.”

She added, “I am proud to support my LGBTQ friends and the LGBTQ Americans who have made immense contributions to our society and economy.” (Compare this to the president’s tweet, recognizing “the outstanding contributions LGBT people have made to our great Nation.”)

My impression, then, is that Donald Trump wants gays to be treated fairly and, as stated in the Fox interview, he has no personal issue with gay “marriage.”

But when he feels that LGBT activism infringes on the rights of others, especially conservative Christians, he will stand against that activism. Moreover, many of those he has appointed to serve in his administration have deeper, faith-based convictions that influence their worldview, and they are often on the front lines of pushing back against LGBT activism.

Put another way, Trump’s opposition to LGBT activism does not appear to spring from a biblical worldview as much as from a desire to support evangelical causes and protect religious liberties. And his policies certainly do not spring from personal animosity towards LGBT individuals.

Consequently, Trump has no problem celebrating LGBT pride in a tweet while at the same time opposing the so-called Equality Bill.

As an evangelical supporter of Trump, I would much rather that he did not muddy the waters with what appears to be a mixed message. But it’s who he has been since he announced his run for president. And overall, when the dust settles, he has done far more to oppose LGBT activism than to support it, as Signorile and his colleagues know all too well.