

The GOP and Gays: Confusion or Compromise?

What message is the Republican party sending out to America?

Republican leaders proudly announced that they had drafted “the most conservative platform in modern history,” yet Peter Thiel, an out and proud gay billionaire, who was a featured speaker on the last night of the RNC, denigrated the “fake culture wars” and made clear he did not affirm all of his party’s platform. And he was warmly received by the crowd.

What are we to make of this? (Note also that Thiel spoke the same night as evangelical leader Tony Perkins, who helped craft the party’s conservative platform.)

The gay activist Human Rights Campaign (better known as the HRC, which, appropriately mirrors the initials of Hillary Rodham Clinton), has launched a Dump Trump website because of his “dangerous positions on issues of LGBTQ equality,” stating that Trump “doubled down on his anti-LGBTQ agenda by putting Indiana Gov. Mike Pence on the ticket.”

In contrast, controversial gay conservative Milo Yiannapoulos has called Trump “the most pro-gay candidate possibly in American electoral history,” noting that his “gays for Trump” event at the RNC sold out within 24 hours.

How can both be right?

On June 14th, Trump tweeted, “Thank you to the LGBT community! I will fight for you while Hillary brings in more people that will threaten your freedoms and beliefs,” with obvious reference to radical Muslims, something that he reiterated in his acceptance speech.

Yet Trump has repeatedly affirmed to evangelical leaders that

he is in their corner, that he will champion their right to freedom of speech, and that he will appoint justices in the mold of Scalia who would differ with the Court's Obergefell decision last year. (The Dump Trump website scathingly documents all this.)

How can Trump stand in full solidarity with both LGBT activists and conservative Christian leaders? And aren't most LGBT leaders in America more concerned with conservative Christians than radical Muslims, at least for the moment?

I conducted a Twitter poll asking, "Whose perceived rights does @realDonaldTrump most support?" Not surprisingly, the responses were: 18% LGBT; 15% Conservative Christian; 13% Both; 54% Unclear.

After Peter Thiel spoke on Thursday night, Tony Perkins was flooded with reporters asking him if he was "outraged" that Thiel spoke after him.

He answered "no," explaining that, "While I may disagree with someone's choices, this is a political party (unlike the Democrats') that allows people with differing views to take part."

But, he added, "That said, the stated principles of the Republican Party clearly reflect the view of the majority of Republican voters, which is that natural marriage and sexuality are sacred."

I certainly hope that is true, but do "the majority of Republican voters" really understand these issues, let alone understand why the party platform is so conservative? And given the fact that voters have rallied around Trump's nationalism rather than his conservatism, how much do they care where he stands on the (anything but "fake") culture wars?

My own take is that Trump truly wants to stand for religious

liberty, truly wants to be a champion of conservative Christians, and truly wants to appoint conservative justices. At the same time, I assume he has had many LGBT friends over the years and that he truly wants to protect them (and others) from radical Islam and that he wants to be perceived as their champion too.

How can he do both?

Obviously, he cannot accomplish all of those goals at the same time (although unequivocally, we all stand together against the oppressive goals of radical Islam as well as for the physical protection of those who identify as LGBT).

It's my personal opinion that Trump has not thought through the ramifications of standing as a champion of both conservative Christians and LGBT's, which raises the obvious question, "So where do we go from here?"

It is as simple as Matt Barber's proposal: "If Mr. Trump will make a very public guarantee that, if elected, he will work tirelessly to implement the 2016 GOP platform, such pledge, followed by subsequent overt acts, would go a long way toward winning over his many remaining conservative naysayers."

Here we can learn from the Democratic Party, which, as Perkins noted, is unlikely to have a speaker rostrum at their DNC as diverse as the speakers at the RNC this past week. But that is also why they have done such a good job of advancing their agenda: The party unites around its radical, liberal platform without apology, and when Democrats have the White House, they unashamedly advance that platform, especially when picking new justices to the Court.

If the Republicans are equally serious about their platform, they should warmly embrace the Peter Thiels and Milos of this world while saying to them, "Just be sure you know what you're signing up for!"

Hopefully, Donald Trump will make that easier by unreservedly affirming the platform as it stands, telling America, "If you elect me, this is what you get."