

**SPEAK OUT AGAINST
INTOLERANCE.**

That's the American Way



POINT MAN FOR THE WEDGE STRATEGY

Harry Jackson is the face of the
Religious Right's outreach to African American Christians



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Introduction

In recent years, Religious Right leaders have made a major push to elevate the visibility and voices of politically conservative African American pastors. The star of that effort has been Bishop Harry Jackson. Jackson, the pastor of a congregation in Maryland, has been ushered into the Religious Right's inner circle since he announced in 2004 that God had told him to work for the reelection of George W. Bush. Since then, Jackson has become somewhat of an all-purpose activist and pundit for right-wing causes – everything from judicial nominations to immigration and oil drilling -- but his top priorities mirror those of the Religious Right: he's fervently anti-abortion and dead-set against gay equality. And he has enthusiastically adopted the Right's favorite propaganda tactic: he routinely portrays liberals, especially gay-rights activists, as enemies of faith, family, and religious liberty.

Jackson has big ambitions. He sees himself as a game changer in the culture war, someone who can help conservative Christians “take the land” by bringing about a political alliance between white and black evangelicals. Religious Right leaders see him that way, too, which is why they've helped Jackson build his public profile.

At Justice Sunday II, an August 2005 event organized by the Family Research Council to mobilize support for Bush administration judicial nominees, Jackson said that God was calling for the Black Church to team with white evangelicals and Catholics and tell both parties, “it's our way or the highway.” Said Jackson, “We're not going to sit back...you and I can bring the rule and reign of the cross to America and we can change America on our watch together.”

Jackson has become popular with the media, not only because he is a smooth performer, but also because a black pastor and self-described “registered Democrat”¹ is viewed as a desirably atypical right-wing spokesperson. Jackson understands this dynamic, telling an interviewer on Daystar Christian television that it “takes Blacks like

1 Anytime Jackson stands at a podium, appears before a camera, or shows up in a news article, he's likely to identify himself as a “registered Democrat.” But he's admitted that's basically a ploy to give him credibility when attacking Obama or pushing Republicans:

I voted for President Bush, but here in Maryland—a primarily Democratic state—in order to vote in the primaries that affect the election, you need to be a Democrat. That's where I started. Over time, however, I've found that I have very little in common with the Democratic Party in terms of national moral values issues. Still, being able to say I'm a registered Democrat disarms many of the people who want to write me off as an “Oreo” or an “Uncle Tom.”

myself to speak up.” Jackson bragged that when he got a group of African American pastors to hold a press conference (falsely) attacking a federal hate crimes bill as a threat to religious liberty, he got media coverage that traditional Religious Right groups had been unable to generate.

His media profile, and his embrace by Religious Right leaders and right-wing politicians have led to his being anointed a “conservative Christian A-lister” by *Beliefnet's* Dan Gilgoff and “one of the 50 most influential Christians in America” by the *Church Report*. In 2005, then-President of the National Association of Evangelicals Ted Haggard said of Jackson, “He's building a bridge between white evangelicalism and African American evangelicalism that we haven't had in 20 years.”

Jackson strongly opposed Barack Obama's presidential bid, saying that an ongoing “march of darkness” would overtake the country if “we don't do the right thing in this campaign.” While Jackson failed miserably in his efforts to convince African American Christians to vote against Obama last year, he played an active role in organizing religious coalitions that helped pass anti-gay initiatives in California, Florida, and Arizona. Those efforts reflected Jackson's primary strategy for building a multi-racial Religious Right: using attacks on gay rights and abortion as a wedge between African American Churchgoers and their political allies in the civil rights and progressive communities.

Jackson pushes that wedge hard, denouncing abortion as “black genocide” and decrying what he calls the “hijacking” of the civil rights movement by Satan-inspired gay-rights activists who he says have declared war on the church and religious liberty. Jackson has little patience for Christians who don't recognize that the nation is in the midst of a culture war, with the church under ferocious attack.

Jackson works hard to come across as polite and reasonable on mainstream media, but takes a different tone in his column, on conservative Christian media, and when speaking to Religious Right audiences. When he's on friendly turf, he is fond of the rhetoric of warfare. He told a Values Voter Summit crowd that they were “the Navy Seals of the Christian movement” and the conference they were attending was “boot camp.” At a Pentecostal conference in Virginia in 2007, Jackson railed against hate crimes legislation, shouting that “God's looking for a SWAT team He's looking for a team of Holy Ghost terrorists!”

Jackson, who gets a laugh at conservative gatherings reassuring white attendees that he's the “other Jackson,” i.e. not Jesse, is blunt in his attacks on African American

leaders he disagrees with. Just before the 2006 elections, in a piece titled “Raped or Represented: An Open Letter to Black Americans,” he wrote, “For the last few years, I have had a mental image of many of our popular black leaders shuffling into smoke-filled back rooms and receiving ‘twenty pieces of silver’ in exchange for the black community’s vote.” He wrote that “Some of the most well-known black civil rights organizations have sold out the black community” by supporting laws to protect gays from discrimination on the job. In his 2008 book with Tony Perkins, he accused the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights coalition of being “co-opted by the radical gay movement.” (p 165) And just last fall, he charged that the NAACP had abandoned the black family by supporting marriage equality. He also slammed the NAACP on Inspiration TV, saying it is “crazy” to say gay marriage is a civil right.

Jackson says that the “threat to marriage” and the broader assault on Judeo Christian values “have prompted a powerful new conversation between white and black evangelicals” and forged relationships that “are in part fueling the transformation of the conservative evangelical movement.” Indeed, he celebrates the passage of anti-gay amendments in 2008 as the hope for the future of the Religious Right:

“The black and Hispanic vote for marriage amendments around the country, despite their overwhelming support for Barack Obama, demonstrates that there is hope for conservatives to make huge inroads into minority communities. A new breed of minority voter is emerging that can be reached with the right message.”

Jackson and Friends

Religious Right leaders have long dreamed of forging lasting political alliances with socially conservative African American Christians. More than a decade ago, then-Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed launched the Samaritan Project, an effort to build working relationships with African American Churches around issues like school vouchers. Many clergy looked askance at Religious Right leaders’ record on civil rights and economic issues, and the Samaritan Project fizzled.

More recently, Religious Right leaders have turned to conservative African American clergy to help lead attacks on gay rights, especially on marriage equality but also on hate crimes legislation and laws to protect against anti-gay discrimination on the job. Jackson has been willing and eager to play that role, denouncing those efforts as threats to the church and the black family.

It’s useful to the Religious Right to have African American pastors at the forefront of their anti-gay campaigns. It puts equality activists in the position of challenging black pastors who are accusing them of “hijacking” the civil rights movement. And it gives people opposed to equality for gay Americans assurance that their prejudice is acceptable, not something akin to racism. And it is particularly useful to the Right to elevate someone who so readily denounces traditional civil rights leaders and organizations as well as gay-rights groups.

Jackson’s profile has been boosted significantly by his alliance with Religious Right leaders James Dobson, Tony Perkins, and Lou Sheldon. They’ve invited him into insider leadership circles like the Arlington Group. They’ve made him a regular speaker at Religious Right events, where he builds his public profile and raises money from white evangelicals. At a Values Voter Summit he told white evangelicals something they don’t hear very often – the notion that racism is a continuing reality in America and it’s their responsibility to do something about it. He told the whites in the room that the olive branch of peace has to be put forward by white churches: “If you don’t do it, the blacks aren’t coming.”

Jackson is also on the board of The Call, an organization that mobilizes evangelical youth and which waded deeply into politics last year with a national rally on the National Mall and a pro-Prop. 8 stadium rally in California. He told journalist Michelangelo Signorile last fall that he serves on the board of the National Association of Evangelicals. He was among the participants at a three-day conference “commemorating the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown as evidence of America’s heritage as a ‘Christian nation.’”

Gays as the Enemy

Jackson was an active supporter of anti-gay ballot initiatives in 2008. He took part in conference calls designed to rally conservative pastors to support Proposition 8 in California. And he spent time on the ground in Florida, mobilizing support for Amendment 2. “There is a national agenda by the homosexual lobby to break down and redefine the family,” he said in an Amendment 2 press release. “If we do not protect marriage now, then their agenda will advance and we will face a threat to our religious freedom to preach the full truth of God’s word on issues like this.” On a Larry King Live discussion after the passage of Proposition 8, he said that “There’s been a hijacking of the civil rights movement by the radical gay movement,” and said to a gay activist on the show, “you can’t equate your sin with my skin.”

According to journalist Sarah Posner, Jackson was

ordained not by one of the nation's traditional African American denominations, but by Wellington Boone's Fellowship of International Churches. Boone is among the most extreme of the anti-gay African Americans that Religious Right groups have embraced for their anti-gay positions. During the Family Research Council's "Liberty Sunday" event in Massachusetts in 2006, Boone charged gay rights activists with the "rape" of the civil rights movement and spoke approvingly of colonial era laws making homosexual behavior a crime punishable by death.

Jackson insists that he's not anti-gay, and often works hard to sound reasonable. He repeatedly told reporters last year that his effort to pass anti-marriage initiatives last year was not an attack on gays but based on his concern that "redefining" marriage could make it extinct in the African American community. But it's awfully hard to square Jackson's assertions that he's not anti-gay with his repeated accusations that gays are Satan-inspired enemies of religious freedom who have "hijacked" the civil rights movement and are out to shut down the church in America.

Gays as satanic: Shortly before the 2004 election, Jackson outlined a strategy for defeating the "gay agenda," writing, "Gays have been at the helm of a fourfold strategy for years, but the wisdom behind their spiritual, cultural, political, and generational tactics is clearly satanic." In 2007, he blamed the advance of hate crimes legislation on the fact that "the authority of the evil one in the nation has continued to ascend and get stronger and bolder." And at the Jamestown celebration that year, he said, "And so what we are dealing with is an insidious intrusion of the Devil to try to cut off the voice of the church, and I for one am not going to let that happen."

Gays as enemies of religious liberty: Jackson is a tireless proponent of the falsehood that gay-rights advocates are eager to shut down churches' and pastors' freedom to preach against homosexuality. He argues that most items on gay rights supporters' policy agenda – including anti-discrimination legislation, hate crimes laws, and marriage equality – are all dire threats to that freedom. One of his columns, in fact, was titled, "Why Do Gays Hate Religious Freedom?"

In 2007, Jackson also organized a group of African American pastors to sign a false and misleading newspaper ad that called the hate crimes bill a threat to free speech, freedom of conscience, and freedom of religion, and urged Senators, "Don't Muzzle our Pulpits!"

Jackson told Christian Daystar television in 2007 that a "radical" gay element is trying to "overthrow the nation"

and "close down every church in America." That same year, he told the Washington Post that hate crimes legislation threatened to "muzzle the black church" and insisted, despite explicit First Amendment protections written into the bill, that "This law can be applied in the way that can keep the church from preaching the Gospel." He told Christian TV viewers that the legislation represented a "huge danger" to the church and its freedom to speak, and falsely claimed that Christians witnessing to gays in California was already considered a hate crime. "You're not going to be able to speak against gays."

And more recently, on the April 21, 2009 broadcast of Janet Porter's radio show, Jackson portrayed federal hate crimes legislation and marriage equality as "an assault on the gospel" and "one unified battle that is being brought to us by the radical gays." It started, he said, with the repeal of sodomy laws, and "ultimately they want the ability, at the end of the day, is to stop the preaching of the gospel."

Resisting public acceptance of gays

In 2006, Jackson wrote that the battle against "widespread acceptance of homosexuality" is a cause that can unite "all American families, black or white" and blamed the lack of activism on Capitol Hill on gay propaganda:

"The gay community, with the help of the liberal media, has worked strategically on a P.R. campaign to make Americans comfortable with homosexuality. From the slightly effeminate male assistant to the first gay marriage ceremony on television, American audiences have watched homosexual themes creep into their lives."

In 2007, he wrote that "the battle concerning same-sex marriage and gay rights is just warming up in America. I am not willing just to give into the current cultural idiom which says 'Gay is OK!' There is just too much at stake."

Meeting and Maligning

Jackson has demonstrated a willingness to talk with gay-rights supporters, but has a record of publicly trashing the meetings after the fact. He met in May 2008 with a group of people organized by the religious group Soulforce, which had organized gay families to attend a number of prominent conservative churches. In a video of his address to the group, Jackson says he believes everyone should be treated humanely and decries gay bloggers who call him a bigot. Jackson's tone, however, was much different talking about the meeting in his Townhall column and on the Christian Broadcasting Network.

He wrote that deciding whether to meet with the Soulforce activists gave his church “a feeling akin to those of U.S. leaders who have to decide whether or not to negotiate with terrorists.” He told CBN that the gay community “has targeted the church as its ultimate arch-enemy” and claimed that he had gotten death threats from gay groups. He said there was nothing to fear from meeting with gay rights backers. “We need to believe that God will give us the heathen as our inheritance,” he said. “Jesus can win... those aggressive people to Christ.”

Jackson also participated in an event sponsored by the National Black Justice Coalition, but in a subsequent column about the event seemingly called for churches to conduct anti-gay purges:

“Many of our churches have had a “don’t-ask-don’t-tell” approach to gay members of congregations, choirs, and clergy. This means that openly gay behavior has not been condoned, but leaders in churches and denominations have not probed to identify or remove gay people. Often, rumors of gay activity outside of the church are overlooked as long as there are no incidents of solicitation or liaisons at church sponsored events.... In my view, the “don’t-ask-don’t-tell” approach to this problem is the height of hypocrisy. Politics may be the place for compromise and consensus. The Church, on the other hand, should be a place of conviction and truth.”

Open to civil unions?

Last year, Jackson indicated at least twice that he would be open to considering some legal recognition and protection (though not marriage equality) for same-sex couples, which would put him at odds with his Religious Right allies. In the meeting with Soulforce activists, he said he would be willing to be part of a meeting to address some needs of gay couples, but not marriage itself. And in an October 2008 interview with gay journalist and radio host Michelangelo Signorile, Jackson said he would be open to “separating out” civil rights issues from marriage, and expressed a willingness to support domestic partnerships or civil unions. He wasn’t happy about it, but called it a “realistic” position given the gay rights movement’s advances. “I want to get away from attacking people,” he told Signorile. “I’m not trying to beat up on a group of people.” But in that same interview, Jackson said he was on the board of the National Association of Evangelicals, which just two months later purged longtime lobbyist and spokesman Richard Cizik when he expressed similar pro-civil union sentiments.

Back in Fighting Form on Marriage

Jackson was central to the Religious Right’s multi-racial outreach in last year’s anti-marriage equality ballot initiatives, and, as noted above, saw those victories as a roadmap for political conservative outreach into minority communities. This March, momentum suddenly shifted with a unanimous ruling by the Iowa Supreme Court that same-sex couples could not be denied the right to marry in that state, the legislature from Vermont overriding the governor’s veto of marriage equality legislation, and an initial move by the Council of the District of Columbia to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. Jackson responded by announcing that his High Impact Leadership Coalition would set up a D.C. office and begin organizing among African American and Hispanic pastors.

“In November, we had three simultaneous, major victories. We saw that the church uniting around racial boundaries is what makes the difference. ... When people who know the Lord know the issues, then we find people voting the right way.”

Picking a President

Attacking Obama

Jackson, who opposed the election of Barack Obama, began bad-mouthing Barack Obama and questioning the sincerity of his religious faith long before the Democratic nomination was settled. Like other Religious Right leaders, Jackson was no fan of John McCain. But he saw McCain as a much better choice than Barack Obama, especially after McCain chose Sarah Palin as his running mate.

In 2006, then-Senator Obama urged Democrats to “acknowledge the power of faith in Americans’ lives” and “compete for the support of Evangelicals and other churchgoers.” Jackson was unimpressed, calling Obama’s remarks “political” and disingenuous” and saying “I think this is politics as usual – that there’s not really sincerity behind this.” Jackson was angry that Sen. Obama would not support his efforts to pass a federal constitutional amendment banning marriage for same-sex couples.

And in October 2007, Jackson again questioned the sincerity of Obama’s faith and challenged his decision not to attend the Family Research Council’s “Washington Briefing” conference:

“Since you claim to be a born-again believer, Scripture clearly states we are considered to be

a part of the same spiritual family. Obviously, we may not agree on everything, yet your sincerity now is suspect for many in light of your recent social stances and the disrespect you have shown to many conservative clergy members, myself included.

Senator Obama, this begs me to ask the question: Are you fearful of being rejected by fellow, Bible-believing Christians?"

In early 2008, Jackson weighed in on the Jeremiah Wright controversy, saying it was reasonable that Obama should "be judged because of the acts of his pastor" because

"Pastor Wright's worldview and his understanding of race, culture, and religion of the Bible will in some measure affect how Barack Obama views the world. Only time will tell whether Obama's life and message have been helped or handicapped by the ministry of Jeremiah Wright. If Obama says nothing else, many people will simply label him as a hypocrite who says one thing in public but acts differently behind closed doors. During the next few months it will be important for Obama to set the record straight concerning his faith."

Jackson's appeal to Christians not to vote for Obama extended to an ad produced by the right-wing group Let Freedom Ring. Jackson appeared along with Alveda King, niece of Martin Luther King, Jr., an anti-abortion and anti-marriage equality activist. Jackson didn't mention Obama, but the message of the ad was clear:

"If we choose a candidate based on race we may choose people whose values are at odds with our own deeply held beliefs...This is the hour in which we need to trust the Bible and vote consistently with what the Bible says. We need to vote to change our culture based on the Word, not based on a party."

Just before the election, God TV produced a pre-election special, which brought together "mainstream" Religious Right political leaders with fringier televangelists lesser known outside evangelical circles. Jackson argued that if Obama was elected, the nation would not have "chosen God's best." He also predicted that if Obama lost, there would be riots in Washington, DC.

A week after the 2008 election, an Associated Press article quoted some African American clergy who thought that right-wing attacks "on Obama's religious beliefs and support for abortion rights crossed the line, hurting longtime efforts to reconcile their communities."

Jackson, however, "said questions about Obama's more liberal reading of scripture was fair game....Many, many people question whether Barack Obama had been under a legitimate Christian leadership figure. I personally never ascribed any vitriolic character assassination to it."

After the election, Jackson seemed to hope that some might not have noticed how aggressively he opposed Obama's candidacy. He praised Obama's selection of Pastor Rick Warren to give the inaugural invocation, saying, "What I like about his reaching out is even though the evangelical community characterized him in some ways as the anti-Christ and all kinds of things, he is going to try to find common ground."

Reluctant McCain booster

Jackson was slow to warm up to John McCain. During the primaries, Jackson even suggested, a la Dobson, that if the Republicans ended up nominating someone not to evangelicals' liking they might hold their nose and vote for him, but that a third-party option "is not out of the question as a long-term solution."

In a May 2008 column, he was showing some hope, writing, "Although many Christians don't want to acknowledge that we are in a cultural war, millions will gather to support a leader who champions our cause. Let's ask McCain if he will rise to a challenge." Later that month, though, when McCain distanced himself from right-wing televangelists John Hagee and Rod Parsley after media attention focused on their extremism, Jackson decried McCain's "credibility gap" with evangelicals. "He sought them out in a pandering sort of way, and then he publicly ridiculed them." Jackson touted Huckabee as a vice presidential pick, encouraging Bobby Jindal to "stay out of this."

Later he mellowed, after viewing an interview initially broadcast on Trinity Broadcasting Network in which McCain talked about the role of religion in his life. In August 2008, Jackson was among those who watched a screening of the interview with McCain and some staff. "It was very clear in the TBN interview that he was saying he was one of us, one of the evangelical fold," Jackson enthused. "This guy is not avoiding a discussion about his faith because he doesn't have faith. It's because he doesn't want to merchandize his faith." It was also in August that Jackson threatened that McCain's potential selection of a pro-choice running mate would cost him the election.

Jackson joined other Religious Right leaders in rallying around McCain after the presidential forum at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, in which McCain answered Warren's series of social-conservative softballs with short

answers that were exactly what the Religious Right wanted to hear. “I think that Senator McCain closed the deal,” Jackson said. “Many evangelicals will vote for him.”

Even though he had touted Huckabee, Jackson was pleased with the selection of Sarah Palin, which he told *Charisma* magazine “marks the fact that Charismatics have become mainstream” and whose candidacy he called “a watershed moment for our movement.”

Abortion as Genocide

Like other Religious Right leaders, Jackson says that legal abortion will bring the wrath of God on the nation. Jackson frequently refers to abortion as genocide directed against the African American community, and to Religious Right audiences he sometimes offers a mea culpa for not always having been as outspoken on the issue as he should have. At “The Call” on the National Mall in August 2008, Jackson argued that if American Christians don’t rise up to end abortion, the nation and the Black Church could come under the judgment of God, which would come in the form of dirty nuclear bombs, anthrax attacks, and an economy that goes into the toilet.

Jackson slammed the Black Church for saying abortion and marriage are Republican issues:

“You’ve let people murder the babies in your own homes...you’ve let womb hunters go into your community and rip out the unborn from the wombs of your people....God is about to bring judgment and justice to the pulpits of America. God is about to start with the black church.” He added, “we have got to, on our watch, defund Planned Parenthood in America...there’s got to be a concerted effort that we take Planned Parenthood out. They’ve put out a hit on all children, but they’ve set up themselves to put out a hit on black and Hispanic babies especially. It’s time that we take them out.”

At an August 2008 press conference with other Religious Right leaders, he denounced abortion as “black genocide” and “pandemic extermination” and warned that if McCain chose a pro-choice vice president it would be “tantamount to political suicide.” Last summer, Jackson was part of a contingent that protested the NAACP’s national convention over abortion.

Two weeks before the 2006 elections, Jackson minimized concerns about the thousands of people being killed in the war in Iraq by contrasting those deaths to the “genocidal murder” of millions of black babies.”

Energy and the Environment and the Heresy of Saving the Earth

In 2007, Jackson was among a group of Religious Right leaders who urged the National Association of Evangelicals to dump its then-VP Governmental Affairs Richard Cizik based on his efforts to elevate environmental protection as an issue for politically active evangelicals. Jackson was taking the side of traditional Religious Right leaders like James Dobson, who thought that the emergence of environmentalism as a priority for evangelicals would detract from the goals of criminalizing abortion and defeating gay rights. Jackson saw the debate itself as part of a conspiracy by the media and liberal Christians to undermine “the historic passion that the ‘moral majority’ has had for the issues of protection of life and guarding the traditional family.” Jackson complained that “a host of enemies are attempting to prevent an evangelical resurrection. A sophisticated, pincer strategy is being waged against them by two groups---liberal Christians and the liberal press. Both groups fear that the sleeping giant will awaken with an attitude.”

In *Private Faith, Public Policy*, the book Jackson co-authored with Tony Perkins, the authors suggest that Christians can “lead the way in caring for the earth” by, for example, not littering. But they attack the credibility of scientists and activists concerned about global warming and say that environmentalists’ efforts to “save the planet” reflect a spiritual deception that God is not in charge. Jackson and Perkins include a handy chart -- “God’s Warning vs. Global Warming” -- highlighting that what scientists see as negative repercussions of global warming (extreme weather, famine, increasing civil disturbances, etc.) closely parallel with the Bible’s description of the end times.

In the New Testament, Jesus Himself actually has something to say about the changes in the weather and our environment. Although He does not mention global warming directly, He does help us perhaps understand the role disruptions in our weather patterns may play in the days leading up to his return....It’s possible that the End-Times signs that Jesus referred to were part of God’s warning the world of His imminent return. This declaration is not meant to be fatalistic; it is meant to alert us to the fact that we are entering into “crunch time” or the last phase of the game....Did you notice that what Jesus warned would occur in the last days is almost identical to what some global warming theorists are saying is going to happen?

In 2008, Jackson became a public face, along with Niger Innis of the Council of Racial Equality, for a pro-oil-drilling Astroturf campaign that denounced environmentalists as “elitists” waging a “War on the Poor.” The gist of the campaign, funded by Americans for American Energy, was to pressure members of Congress to support expanded drilling because not doing so contributed to high energy prices. Participants in a Jackson-Innis press conference chanted, “Stop the War on the Poor.” Sen. Orrin Hatch even plugged the campaign, reading part of Jackson’s statement into the Congressional Record:

“I am a registered Democrat, but this has nothing to do with partisan politics. Unless the public understands that there are specific people and organizations that are fueling this war against the poor, nothing will change and the poor will continue to suffer. We will unmask those behind this war regardless of their political party or ideology. Party labels and partisan ideologies are meaningless when it comes to protecting the lives of America’s most vulnerable citizens.”

Abstinence and AIDS

Journalist Max Blumenthal reported in January that Jackson joined conservative leaders, including Chuck Colson and Rick Warren, and members of Congress in February 2008 to successfully shut down an effort led by Congressman Tom Lantos to lift the abstinence-only earmark imposed on the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) by Republicans in 2002.

Immigration

In 2006, Jackson argued that immigrants take jobs from African Americans. And in January 2007, he complained that immigration enforcement was too lenient on Hispanics relative to African immigrants and said “I personally plan to help mobilize the evangelical Christian movement, including the black church, to take an anti-amnesty stand while vigorously protecting our borders.” His book with Perkins encourages compassion for illegal immigrants but also calls for the government to embrace a new constitutional interpretation that would deny citizenship to children born here to parents who are undocumented immigrants.

Health Care

Jackson talks about his experience receiving an experimental cancer treatment and says that under a “nationalized” health plan he would be dead. In his 2008 book with Perkins, Jackson slams the health care proposal

of John Edwards, favoring Republican “free-market” approaches, though they recognize the need for some plan to help low-income people have access to care.

What’s Next?

Jackson entered the national political scene in 2004 and has steadily increased his profile since then. (See the appendix for a selected timeline of his political activities.) What’s next for Jackson? In October of last year, Jackson told radio host Michelangelo Signorile that he was going to pull back from politics after this election and focus on his church. But it sure doesn’t look that way.

In December, Jackson joined a group of Religious Right leaders who had worked for Obama’s defeat, and who despite having no discernable expertise in terrorism, asked to meet with him “on a unified agenda to produce an enduring national consensus in support of policies designed to defeat Islamist terrorism.”

January found Jackson in Salt Lake City for the latest salvo in the bogus war on “The War on the Poor” – this time he was bashing Robert Redford on the eve of the Sundance Film Festival as an enemy of poor people for opposing expanded oil drilling.

Also in January, Jackson warned that Obama’s election meant better odds for passage of hate crimes legislation that would be “grounds for a kind of harassment that, I believe, will bring about a cooling of our biblically based messages.” He issued a challenge to Christians: “Now is not the time to be silent. Now is the time to lift our voice.”

In February, Jackson took to the airwaves to let the nation know he was “outraged” by the comments of Attorney General Eric Holder about Americans being a “nation of cowards” when it comes to talking about race. He told The 700 Club’s audience that Holder was demonstrating his attention to expand affirmative action and “push the homosexual agenda.”

On March 9, Jackson addressed the 30th Annual Maryland March for Life, which was protesting against pro-choice legislation and the nomination of Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius as Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Jackson organized and promoted an April 28 rally outside the D.C. Council to protest the Council’s recent moves toward recognizing same-sex marriages performed in other states.

He’s a scheduled speaker at the Family Research Council’s May 20-22 “Watchmen on the Wall” briefing for pastors.

All this doesn't seem to add up to someone who's pulling back from politics. In fact, in a recent column, on March 30, Jackson seems to be offering himself to the movement:

During the last few weeks, there has been much discussion about the future of the evangelical movement and its impact on the American culture. For years, prophets of doom have been busy telling the world that the evangelical movement is dead or dying. This year as President Obama's administration has shifted the nation's stance on embryonic stem cell research and abortion, many in the faith community have justifiably become concerned. Further, RNC Chairman Steele's decision to lower his personal and his party's vocalization of socially conservative issues, such as protecting the life of the unborn and preservation of traditional marriage, has left many evangelicals feeling abandoned by both parties.

What's next for evangelicals? It seems to me that evangelicals are on the verge of finding their collective voice in a very new way. In the future evangelicals will seek to be more of a swing vote, placing pressure on both parties to advance a theologically conservative and fiscally conservative agenda. They will base these stances on a combination of biblical orthodoxy and common sense. The conservative movement would do well to attempt to re-build bridges behind the scenes with mature and developing evangelical leadership - especially in minority communities.

Wonder if he has anyone in mind.



Appendix: A Brief Tour of Harry Jackson’s Five Years in National Politics

2004

Jackson kicked off his entry into national politics with a bang, declaring that God had told him to help George W. Bush get reelected. On an Elijah Ministries video, Jackson told an interviewer that “the Lord has spoken to me to go around the country and trumpet that fact that, because of these issues of righteousness and justice, we must vote for George Bush.” According to journalist Bill Berkowitz, Jackson traced his support for Bush to a January 2004 meeting with members of the Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders (ACPE), a group of Pentecostal church leaders.

After that election, according to journalist Sarah Posner, Jackson was among about a dozen ministers invited by James Dobson to an exclusive December 2004 meeting to discuss the divide between white and black evangelical churches; also included was Ohio-based televangelist Rod Parsley, Jackson has said Bush would not have been reelected without Parsley’s efforts to mobilize anti-gay voters.

Also in 2004, Jackson co-authored *High Impact African American Churches* with Christian marketer George Barna.

2005

In early 2005, with the Traditional Values Coalition’s Lou Sheldon and then-RNC Chair Ken Mehlman by his side, Jackson launched his High Impact Leadership Coalition and released the “Black Contract with America on Moral Values.”² In a video pitch for the Contract, Jackson says it was intended to bring the black and white church together to “change the way America does business politically.” In other words, says Jackson, “The Kingdom of God has come. And Jesus has not come to take sides. He has come to take over.”

In July, Jackson was part of a group of African American religious leaders invited to the White House to meet with Bush. Jackson told the *Washington Post* afterward that he was impressed with the president’s efforts to “increase Black homeownership, to extend more funding to faith-based social service agencies and to increase funding to slow the spread of AIDS in Africa.” Said Jackson, “People who are skeptical about the Republicans don’t realize the sincerity of their outreach effort,” Jackson said.

Jackson was a featured speaker at Religious Right events promoting George Bush’s judicial nominees and claiming that opposition to their confirmation was an effort by liberal senators to keep conservative Christians out of public life. At “Justice Sunday” he complained that “Black churches are too concerned with justice” and he participated in “Justice Sunday II” – designed to push for the confirmation of right-wing Bush administration judges. He joined Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist at a rally supporting the use of the “nuclear option” to do away with the filibuster in order to confirm Judge Janice Rogers Brown.

2006

In 2006, Jackson was busy working to elect Republicans to office, saying:

As a black evangelical, I’ve had to think about the unpleasant prospect of a Democratically-controlled House and Senate. If the Democrats are in power, the following problems will occur: 1) There will be no protection of traditional marriage, 2) Abortion-on-demand will be encouraged, 3) Religious freedoms will be attacked.

His efforts were not very successful. As part of “Clergy for Blackwell,” he backed the doomed gubernatorial campaign of former Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell. Blackwell had won the lasting gratitude of the GOP and Religious Right for backing a 2004 anti-gay initiative and hindering minority voter registration, but was clobbered at the polls.

2 Items in Jackson’s contract include marriage, wealth creation, education, prison reform, intervention in Sudan, and healthcare reform. Jackson addresses some of these issues in the 2008 book he co-authored with Tony Perkins, and is part of an evangelical group calling for action in Darfur, but his public advocacy has focused most intensely on prohibiting same-sex couples from getting married.

Jackson's biggest political project was on behalf of Michael Steele's run for the U.S. Senate from Maryland, where Jackson lives. Jackson organized gatherings around the state where Steele could meet African American pastors. According to a news report, "the High Impact Leadership Coalition had joined with the Maryland Catholic Conference, Maryland Right to Life and the Association of Maryland Families to spend about \$70,000 for [pro-Steele] ads -- mostly on the radio in Baltimore and Prince George's County until the Nov. 7 general election."

Before the election, Jackson asserted boldly that "The Maryland race for the U.S. Senate will once and for all answer the question: Can a black man really be a successful Republican?" He gushed that "Steele's credentials, credibility, and charisma speak of greatness" and predicted that the Senate could be a stepping stone to the vice presidency.

Jackson was undaunted by the loss, saying that Steele's campaign was "proof positive" that black mega-church pastors were reachable. "His candidacy also showed that key black pastors have no problem standing against Democratic Party norms on clearly articulated moral policy issues," Jackson wrote. "At the height of the campaign, pastors of 19,000, 11,000, and 5,000 member churches personally endorsed Michael Steele. In addition, these same leaders took to the air waves in a get-out-the-vote campaign that put their faces and voices on TV and radio in our region."

He tried to put the best spin on the overall results of the 2006 election, which brought Democrats into the majority in both Houses of Congress.

My first thought about the election was very simplistic: American's [sic] have abandoned God's agenda. In my mind, both parties were to blame to some extent. I felt taken for granted by the Republicans and ignored by the Democrats. On the other hand, the scriptures declared that God puts governmental leaders in power ... Therefore, I eventually concluded that God intends to use the current political "dream team," even if it feels like a hellish nightmare.

Like other Religious Right leaders who saw their own credibility challenged by their close relationship with the tanking GOP during the second Bush administration, Jackson sought to regain credibility with attacks on George W. Bush for, among other things, not pushing passage of an amendment to write a ban on same-sex couples marrying into the U.S. Constitution. He complained that the Republican Party had control of the White House and Congress and dropped the ball. "They wanted to pimp us."

2007

In 2007, Jackson made a major splash with his full-page newspaper ads featuring African American pastors claiming that the Mathew Shepard Act – the federal hate crimes bill – would muzzle pastors and undermine religious freedom.

Later that year, he complained in "An Open Letter to the Christian Community" that people weren't taking seriously his sky-is-falling claims about religious liberty being threatened in America:

This past year I have spent countless hours writing about [the] problem of the government encroaching upon our religious liberties. I have been shocked that many Christians just don't seem to grasp the fact that we are in [a] very sophisticated power struggle. We don't seem to want [to] accept that there is an all-out assault against Christians being waged in the legislature, teamed with the mainstream media.

Two of the four threats Jackson cited were gay-related: federal hate crimes legislation and the Employment Non Discrimination Act. Also on his list was the Fairness Doctrine, a favorite pseudo-threat of right-wing and Religious Right broadcasters, and Sen. Grassley's request for financial records from six prominent televangelists.

2008

In March, Jackson and the Family Research Council's Tony Perkins released a co-authored book, "Personal Faith, Public Policy." They pitched the book as evidence that evangelical Christians care about more than gays and abortion

– and talk about what they say is a Biblically grounded approach to a range of policy questions, but they also say it is important for the movement to keep as its top priorities “the sanctity of human life, the preservation of marriage, and the defense of our Christian faith.” In the book, they say “the mortar that has kept the religious Right together and strong is the agreement that, come what may, the Word of God is infallible and inerrant, making it the final word on all matters of life *and policy*.” [emphasis added]

Jackson’s efforts to mobilize support for anti-gay ballot measures were successful. His effort to convince a large number of African American Christians to vote against Barack Obama was not.

2009

As the final section of the report makes clear, Jackson shows no sign of slowing down. He continues his media appearances, his column, his participation in major Religious Right events, and his anti-gay organizing.