



March/April 2004

Through Rainbow-Colored Glasses

By Christine Dinsmore

Dick Cheney and the rest of the Republican Party will do almost anything to ensure that Mary Cheney and Heather Poe dance together (more likely remain hidden in the background) at his reelection inaugural ball. To clinch a victory, Cheney will even work to change the Constitution to guarantee that a legal marriage between his daughter and her life partner will never see the light of day.

He has abandoned his previous position that gay marriage is a state's rights issue and says that he would support a Constitutional amendment to ban same-sex unions.

The recent court decisions making gay marriage a possibility come at the most opportune time for the Bush-Cheney re-election team. The courts' weighing in on this issue should cause nightmares for Democrats.

The Republican Party banks on gay marriage to be the political torpedo that will sink the Democratic presidential nominee. If Massachusetts' John Kerry heads the ticket, expect Ms. and Ms. Joan Doe to become the next hot button issue. After all, Massachusetts set the bar for legalizing marriage for same-sex couples. Republican strategists salivate about this. George W. panders to the religious right, proposing to spend \$1.5 billion to promote marriage—heterosexual marriage—among low-income couples. This, at a time when the national deficit skyrockets.

For Republicans, gay marriage will serve a two-pronged purpose: Energize right-wingers to work for a Bush-Cheney re-election and push the LGBT community and its progressive friends to abandon the Democratic candidate to either apathy or an alternative, *a la* Ralph Nader.

James Carville, the brains behind the Clinton-Gore victories, warns us not to fall prey to this scheme. He likens gay marriage to a "Transgender Amendment"—a noble idea in its own right but a surefire way of tanking efforts to rid the White House of Bush and Company.

The progressive LGBT community can be so uncompromising. It casts its precious vote to the ideal candidate or to no one. I, a dyed-in-the-wool liberal, have been guilty as charged.

Despite our commitment to noble causes—equal rights, environmental integrity, universal healthcare, fair labor practices—we smash ourselves on the collective head with a hammer, helping the enemy of our principles to victory rather than compromising one iota.

The Democratic Party, priding itself as the party for the average Joe, attempts to be all things to all people. It's like the child of an alcoholic, calibrating the emotional wind so everyone in the family will be pleased, ultimately pleasing no one.

It would be better for Democrats to skirt this controversy than to be virtuous but defeated. The LGBT community must let them know that it's OK to be noncommittal about gay marriage. We will even forgive them if they declare marriage to be reserved exclusively for heterosexuals, as long as gay families have all the same rights.

To keep Mary and Heather from the victory party, we must be willing to compromise. Pragmatism is our only hope if we want to see Melissa Etheridge and Tammy Lynn Michaels rocking at the Democratic inaugural ball on January 20, 2005. Then we'll have our chance to shape government policy.