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church. They're part of a movement that believes that places and people can be possessed by demons. And that those places and people need to be anointed and purged of demonic possession. One of the followers of this movement, Ted Haggard, was seen in his city — Colorado Springs — anointing intersections with a bottle of Crisco and a garden sprayer to purge the demonic influence from the intersection; or hanging out outside gay bars, praying that the demons would be lifted. He called gay bars "covens." Of course, he wound up in the arms of a gay male escort, snorting meth. But back to Palin.

I went to her church and saw a pastor by the name of Bishop Thomas Muthee preach. He is a self-identified witch hunter, who said he battled a witch in his hometown of Kiambu, Kenya. And in 2005, when he first came to Wasilla, he anointed Sarah Palin against the spirit of witchcraft. He laid hands on her and basically consecrated her run for governor. When she was elected, she credited him with propelling her into power. So she believes in this stuff. It's all in a video I did called "In the land of Queen Esther," so, anyone who doubts this — because I know it sounds like I'm the lunatic and I'm the one who's making this all up — can see it, including the anointing ceremony of Sarah Palin.

The reason John McCain selected Sarah Palin — someone who, I think, badly damaged the Republican Party and continues to damage it by driving it so far out of the mainstream — is because McCain was loathed by the Christian Right. It was the only way to bring the movement that controls the Republican Party around for McCain. But at the same time, it marginalized McCain, and Obama was able to capture a lot of moderate Republican votes.

And Palin's still out there, claiming Barack Obama wants to institute death panels in his health care plan, to pull the plug on grandma. Which is suggesting that he has a euthanasia program like Hitler did for the elderly and mentally retarded. She said, "This plan could kill my son, who has Down Syndrome." It's an absurd thing to say.

So Sarah Palin, while we might look at her as an extremist, is a folk hero to the Republican base. And that shows you where the Republicans are with respect to the rest of America.

R. R.: How about Dick Cheney?

M. B.: He's not from the Christian Right. Couldn't appear less to care about the so-called "homosexual agenda" or abortion. In fact, his daughter's a lesbian. And his wife, Lynne Cheney — who's a culture warrior on some levels, very conservative — wrote a book called "Sisters," which is just brimming with homoerotic lesbianism and scenes of lesbians. Anyone who finds

lesbians erotic should read that book.

But Cheney is a typical Western conservative: Get the government out of my life and let us exploit the land and let us fulfill the manifest destiny of the settlers. He's an imminent domain conservative, and that extends to Iraq. He's a sadist, but he's not a sadomasochist. In other words: He enjoys kicking down evildoers, those who are perceived to be weaker than him. He enjoys torturing terrorists. But he's not masochistic, because he follows no higher power. Unlike Bush, who says he has a higher Father than his own father. And he's also totally Machiavellian and cynical, and requires someone like Bush — who's beloved by this movement — to puppeteer.

R. R.: This is not even a person, but: What about Proposition 8 in California?

"People who have a personal crisis and use this extreme rightwing religion as a way of medicating their anxiety. When they try to cleanse the land of sin, what they really want is to cleanse their own soul."

M. B.: There's so much to say about it. I write about one of the figures who funded Prop. 8: Howard F. Ahmanson Jr. He is the son of the founder of Washington Mutual, Howard F. Ahmanson Sr., who was a mainstream Republican philanthropist. When Ahmanson, Jr., turned 18, his father left him with \$300 million. And his mother died, too: So he's alone in a mansion with \$300 million, an 18-year-old kid. And he goes crazy: winds up in a mental institution for two years. When he comes out, he meets an extreme rightwing theologian named R.J. Rushdoony, who advocates for replacing the Constitution with biblical law, and executing all evildoers, from homosexuals to disobedient children, to witches and blasphemers. And Rushdoony helps Ahmanson reorder his life through this Calvinistic, ultra-right-wing religion, becomes his surrogate father. And Ahmanson becomes Rushdoony's financial angel, the sugar daddy of the Christian Right. And then in 1985, Ahmanson declared, "My goal is the total integration of biblical law into our everyday lives." It was part of biblical law, and Leviticus case law, (that) homosexuals are imprisoned or they're killed. So of course he's going to fund anti-gay initiatives.

First he funded Prop. 22 in California in 1996. But it was overturned by a court. So Prop. 8, it just repackaged Prop. 22 in a way that could pass muster with the courts. And it did. It succeeded in banning same-sex marriage (in California). And he put up a million or a million-five for it. But it has to be seen as an effort beyond the anti-gay agenda to establish at least a soft theocracy or influence secular law.

He shows the sensibility of the

movement: People who have had a personal crisis and use this extreme right-wing religion as a way of medicating their anxiety: When they try to cleanse the land of sin, what they really want is to cleanse their own soul.

Another figure I talk about in relation to Prop. 8 is Rick Warren, who is a mega-church pastor from California —

R. R.: And was at the Inauguration.

M. B.: — despite telling his followers to back Prop. 8. So where does Barack Obama stand on this? Where does he draw the line? Where do the Democrats draw the line on the anti-gay crusade? You know, if Rick Warren had told his followers to back an initiative that banned interracial marriage or interracial relationships, would Barack Obama have let him speak at the

inauguration? He's wavering on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," he's wavering on getting rid of the Defense of Marriage Amendment, which is totally unconstitutional, because it allows one state to reject another state's rulings, which violates a clear provision of the Constitution. So I think it's all really troubling what happened around Prop. 8, especially in a state like California, which has always led the country in progressive legislation.

R. R.: So, the assessment of the left: Will that happen?

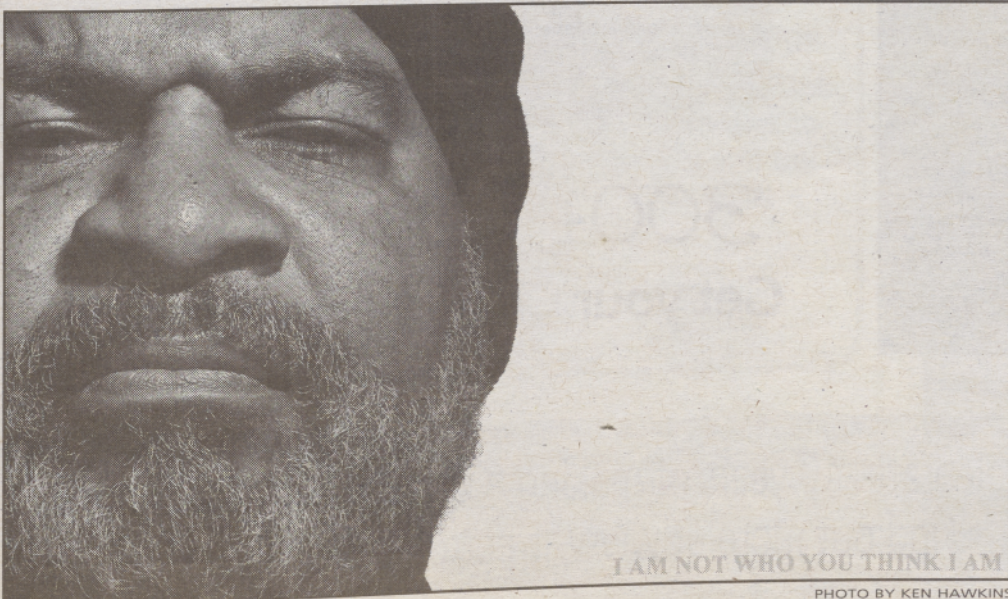
M. B.: Well, you can see what the stakes are. What I do in my book is offer a critique of a radical movement that took over a major political party that was once a big-tent party and is now a one-ring circus. So I think there's a lot of lessons that people on the left can learn. And there are lessons that Republicans can learn from it, too.

But all I tried to do is provide a really entertaining and informative critique, with a unique analysis of the psychological sensibility of people in this movement. Martin Luther King said the arc of history is leading to justice. And I think that's true. My book hints that this is a movement that sees itself dying in a culture that's increasingly diverse and increasingly progressive.

So really, I think there should be a sense of confidence on the left. People should see that the initiative is theirs to seize. But at the same time, they need to understand their own limitations and be self-reflective. The movement in my book never understood its own limitations and still can't reflect on its own failures.

Republican Gomorrah: Inside the Movement That Shattered the Party (Nation Books, \$25) is available at Powell's Books.

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You are invited throughout the month of Nov. to visit the exhibit at Albina Community Bank at 430 NW 10th Ave. in the Pearl during normal business hours.

The exhibit features the work of photographers Leah Nash, Ken Hawkins, John Ryan Brubaker, and Elizabeth Schwartz, shot exclusively for Street Roots.