

Conservative Media Unleash Anti-Gay Rhetoric in Attacks on Jennings

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The latest target in the Glenn Beck-driven conservative media witch hunt for Obama administration "czars" is Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools director Kevin Jennings. In their attacks on Jennings, numerous conservative media figures have resorted to thinly veiled homophobic appeals to paint Jennings, who is gay, as a "radical" "gay activist" with an "agenda" of "promoting homosexuality in schools," and have misrepresented or distorted Jennings' previous comments about religion and tolerance.

In 1995, Jennings noted right wing's use of code words to fearmonger about school safety programs for LGBT students. WorldNetDaily's [Bob Unruh](#) quoted the following from a 1995 speech delivered by Jennings at a Human Rights Campaign Fund Leadership Conference:

"If the radical right can succeed in portraying us as preying on children, we will lose. Their language -- 'promoting homosexuality' is one example -- is laced with subtle and not-so-subtle innuendo that we are 'after their kids.' "

"We must learn from the abortion struggle, where the clever claiming of the term 'pro-life' allowed those who opposed abortion on demand to frame the issue to their advantage, to make sure that we do not allow ourselves to be painted into a corner before the debate even begins." – WorldNetDaily, [9/17/09](#)

Media conservatives attack Jennings with extreme, fearmongering rhetoric...

Erik Rush: Jennings is a "radical homosexual druggie." Rush wrote in a WorldNetDaily commentary that Jennings is "a radical homosexual who ... has advocated promoting homosexuality in schools, and written unapologetically about his own drug use." Rush added, "One has to ask oneself why it is that Obama repeatedly chooses some of the most wildly inappropriate individuals one could conceive of to serve in high-level positions. A radical homosexual druggie for his 'safe schools czar'? It's practically inconceivable." Rush continued, "Obama, being a creature of the farthest left, has no qualms whatever about allowing activist homosexuals -- or people who are soft on drugs -- to set the moral agenda for this country; the more dysfunctional and enslaved to sensualism we are, the more easily manipulated we will be. And going after the children, as we have learned, is nothing new." – WorldNetDaily, [10/1/09](#)

Washington Times: "Jennings has made extremely radical statements promoting homosexuality in schools." The Washington Times editorial board wrote, "Mr. Jennings has made extremely radical statements promoting homosexuality in schools and about his utter contempt for religion that render him unsuitable for a prestigious White House appointment." – The Washington Times, [9/28/09](#)

Limbaugh: Jennings "is a guy promoting homosexuality in the schools." Rush Limbaugh stated: "[I]f you wonder why the libs are really ticked off that [director] Roman Polanski might be [extradited](#) to face the music on that long-ago act with the 13-year-old girl, Quaaludes and rape, understand that Obama's safe school czar is a guy promoting homosexuality in the schools and

encouraged a 15-year-old kid to have a homosexual relationship with an older man, and even facilitated it. As I say, Snerdley, I wasn't even going to get to this today, but you asked me about Polanski, and that's that." – Premiere Radio Networks' *The Rush Limbaugh Show*, [9/28/09](#)

Hannity: "[T]his is a guy that's advocated promoting homosexuality in schools." Fox News' Sean Hannity stated that "this is a guy that's advocated promoting homosexuality in schools. This is a guy we have talked about his past. He's had contempt for religion, et cetera, et cetera. ... Isn't the issue here that what they're teaching oftentimes, value-wise, contradicts what parents are teaching? And isn't that morally wrong?" He later added, "I don't know what it is about liberals. I think they think they have the right to raise our kids. I mean, you know, the idea that you would promote whatever your agenda, on sexuality, any controversial issue." – Fox News' *Hannity*, [9/25/09](#)

Malkin: "[C]ontroversial homosexual rights' advocate" Jennings founded "controversial" organization which "aggressively pushes sexually explicit" books. As an example of the Obama administration's "radicalism," Michelle Malkin wrote that "the White House has embraced controversial homosexual rights' advocate Kevin Jennings as 'Safe Schools czar.' Jennings founded the controversial GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network), which aggressively pushes sexually explicit, age-inappropriate books and lesson plans on alternative lifestyles." – MichelleMalkin.com, [9/25/09](#)

Dobbs guest Tony Perkins says "bizarre" Jennings seeks "to mainstream homosexuality in schools." On his radio show, Lou Dobbs stated, "There's suddenly a major political storm around him, charges that he has promoted homosexuality in schools, acknowledged past drug abuse, at one time demonstrating contempt for religion itself. Can any of that be true?" Perkins replied: "Well, unfortunately it is. I mean, this guy is bizarre, and it shows just how radical this administration is in pushing forward policies. ... This guy -- he established GLSEN ... to mainstream homosexuality in the schools." Perkins added, "This is an agenda that is being targeted all the way down to kindergarten. So this is -- the idea that this guy is heading up a safe and drug-free school program, and that he is advocating the expansion of homosexuality in the school and the curriculum" and that "people send their kids to school to get an education, and not to be recruited into a network of sexual behavior, whether it's homosexual behavior or heterosexual behavior." – United Stations Radio Networks' *The Lou Dobbs Show*, [9/24/09](#)

Fox News' Kilmeade claims Jennings "promoted homosexuality in schools" and "expressed contempt for religion." During a *Fox & Friends* segment, co-host Brian Kilmeade stated, "[T]he safe school czar position was actually from George Bush's administration in 2002. President Bush said we need something like this. But maybe this wasn't the job -- this wasn't the resume he thought he'd get: Former schoolteacher who has promoted homosexuality in schools. Also, he has a -- he details a report on how he did not report an incident with an underage student who had sex with an older man, and also has expressed contempt for religion. So, as you expand the resume, it might not be the perfect candidate." – Fox News' *Fox & Friends*, [9/24/09](#)

FoxNews.com: Jennings "has advocated promoting homosexuality in schools." FoxNews.com reported that Jennings "is a former schoolteacher who has advocated promoting homosexuality in schools, written about his past drug abuse, expressed his contempt for religion and detailed an incident in which he did not report an underage student who told him he was having sex with

older men." The article also stated that GLSEN "has also been accused of promoting homosexuality in schools." – FoxNews.com, [9/23/09](#)

On *Hannity*, Noelle Nikpour said "gay activist" Jennings is Obama's most dangerous czar. On his Fox News show, *Hannity* asked Republican strategist Noelle Nikpour, "Who do you think is the most dangerous?" Nikpour answered: "Well, I think it's Kevin Jennings. Not only that, that he's a gay activist, but he was part of the GLISTEN. He was the former director for GLISTEN. They held a conference in which techniques for, I think it was, homosexuality, how to perform different techniques. That's insane." *The Wall Street Journal's* Stephen Moore then added, "Remember, we -- used to be that sex education was putting condoms on bananas. Lord knows what they're going to do now." – [Hannity, 9/18/09 \(from Nexis\)](#)

WorldNetDaily: Jennings boasted about "us[ing] the concept of 'safety' in schools to promote homosexual advocacy in public schools." In a WorldNetDaily "exclusive," Unruh wrote that GLSEN "promotes homosexuality in schools" and that Jennings "once boasted that he introduced homosexual advocacy into the school system in Massachusetts by manipulating the message presented to lawmakers. ... [H]e gave a speech in which he described how he has used the concept of 'safety' in schools to promote homosexual advocacy in public schools in Massachusetts." – WorldNetDaily, [9/17/09](#)

New American: Jennings is "devious," "career homosexual activist" with "subversive agenda." Calling on Jennings "to be expelled from the nation's classrooms," William Jasper wrote that Jennings "admits to using deception when pushing a subversive agenda that would be rigorously opposed by the vast majority of Americans if honestly promoted under its true colors." Jasper added, "What is Jennings agenda? Promoting homosexuality (in all its various permutations) under the guise of promoting 'safe schools.'" Jasper wrote that Jennings intends to use his position in the administration "to greatly expand the GLSEN program of subverting and perverting their captive public-school audience." Jasper wrote of Jennings' 1995 speech, "It is this deviousness of Jennings and GLSEN & Co. that is most alarming, especially now that they have captured citadels of power inside the massive federal bureaucracy of the U.S. Department of Education and appear to have the full blessings of the Obama White House to work their way with our children." – *New American*, [9/11/09](#)

Conservative media distort Jennings' remark about "promoting homosexuality"
Conservative media echo FRC's "Stop Jennings" campaign. Media conservatives' baseless claim that Jennings "promoted homosexuality in schools" echoes the Family Research Council's "Stop Jennings" campaign, which [quoted](#) Jennings saying during October 25, 1997, remarks at GLSEN's mid-Atlantic conference, "I can envision a day when straight people say, 'So what if you're promoting homosexuality?' ... That is our mission from this day forward" [ellipsis in original].

But Jennings actually expressed hope that someday "most straight people ... wouldn't necessarily equate homosexuality with something bad." FRC distorted Jennings' remarks, as the blog Good As You [noted](#). In his remarks, Jennings was actually calling for tolerance; he talked about countering "stereotypes and misinformation" in order to change peoples' views about homosexuality over time and stated that GLSEN's "mission from this day forward" was "[t]o not lose our faith, to not lose our belief that the world can, indeed, be a different place." Jennings also spoke in reference to a day when "most straight people, when they would hear that someone

was promoting homosexuality ... wouldn't necessarily equate homosexuality with something bad that you would not want to promote" and "a day when straight people say, 'So what if you're promoting homosexuality?' Or straight kids say, 'Hey, why don't you and your boyfriend come over before you go to the prom and try on your tuxes on at my house?' "

Peter LaBarbera, president of a group that seeks to "expos[e] and counter the homosexual activist agenda," published a [transcript](#) of Jennings' 1997 remarks that LaBarbera said were reprinted from the Lambda Report.

From LaBarbera's transcript of Jennings' remarks, with the portions FRC quoted in bold:

JENNINGS: Two years ago, one of our board members, one named Ann Simon, was called to testify before Congress when they had hearings on the promotion of homosexuality in schools. And we were busy putting out press releases, and saying, 'We're not promoting homosexuality, that's not what our program's about. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.' And my best friend, who's a straight women [sic] who lives in London, e-mailed me ... and she said, 'So what if you are?' And I thought of how I can get so wrapped up in my own defensiveness, and ... the day-to-day struggle, and stuff, that being finished might someday mean that most straight people, when they would hear that someone was promoting homosexuality, would say 'Yeah, who cares?' because they wouldn't necessarily equate homosexuality with something bad that you would not want to promote. And when we were talking there, and Mike said, 'You know, and I'd like five years from now -- right now let's face it, for large swells of people they think of GLSEN and kids, and they think, 'GLSEN is bad for kids.' They do because of their stereotypes and misinformation -- I'd like five years from now for most Americans when they hear the word GLSEN to think, 'Ooh, that's good for kids.'

[...]

JENNINGS: All of us who are thinking this way are crazy, because you know what? Sane people keep the world the same [sh*tty] old way it is now. It's the people who think, 'No, I can envision a day when straight people say, 'So what if you're promoting homosexuality?' Or straight kids say, 'Hey, why don't you and your boyfriend come over before you go to the prom and try on your tuxes on at my house?' That if we believe that can happen, we can make it happen. The only thing that will stop us is our lack of faith that we can make it happen. That is our mission from this day forward. To not lose our faith, to not lose our belief that the world can, indeed, be a different place.

Conservative media misrepresent Jennings' remarks about religion...

Think Progress: Jennings indicated that "he later returned to religion," and he went on to join a Protestant seminary. Many media figures have claimed that Jennings, in [Kilmeade's](#) words, "has expressed contempt for religion" -- which is based on a statement Jennings made in his memoir, *Mama's Boy, Preacher's Son*, and has also been a component of FRC's campaign against Jennings. FRC quoted a passage from Jennings' memoir, in which Jennings writes: "God ... had done nothing but cause me pain and anguish through His inaction and malevolence throughout my childhood. ... What *had* he done for me, other than make me feel shame and guilt? Squat. Screw you, buddy -- I don't need you around anymore, I decided. " However, as the blog Think Progress [noted](#), FRC ignored "what Jennings writes a few sentences later: that he later returned to religion." Think Progress also noted that Jennings "went on to [serve as an active member on the board of the Union Theological Seminary](#) (UTS) in New York, the nation's most prestigious Protestant seminary."

Well now, for some of you take that to your homophobic closet and think about it! – Chris *the Abducted Alien*