

After the Ball - Why the Homosexual Movement Has Won

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The spectacular success of the homosexual movement stands as one of the most fascinating phenomena of our time. In less than two decades, homosexuality has moved from "the love that dares not speak its name," to the center of America's public life. The homosexual agenda has advanced even more quickly than its most ardent proponents had expected, and social change of this magnitude demands some explanation.

A partial explanation of the homosexual movement's success can be traced to the 1989 publication of *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s*. Published with little fanfare, this book became the authoritative public relations manual for the homosexual agenda, and its authors presented the book as a distillation of public relations advice for the homosexual community. A look back at its pages is an occasion for understanding just how successful their plan was.

Authors Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen combined psychiatric and public relations expertise in devising their strategy. Kirk, a researcher in neuropsychiatry, and Madsen, a public relations consultant, argued that homosexuals must change their presentation to the heterosexual community if real success was to be made.

Conceiving their book as a "gay manifesto for the 1990s," the authors called for homosexuals to repackage themselves as mainstream citizens demanding equal treatment, rather than as a promiscuous sexual minority seeking greater opportunity and influence.

Writing just as the AIDS crisis hit its greatest momentum, the authors saw the disease as an opportunity to change the public mind. "As cynical as it may seem, AIDS gives us a chance, however brief, to establish ourselves as a victimized minority legitimately deserving of America's special protection and care," they wrote.

Give them credit: they really did understand the operation of the public mind. Kirk and Madsen called for homosexuals to talk incessantly about homosexuality in public. "Open, frank talk makes gayness seem less furtive, alien, and sinful; more above board," they asserted. "Constant talk builds the impression that public opinion is at least divided on the subject, and that a sizeable bloc--the most modern, up-to-date citizens--accept or even practice homosexuality."

Nevertheless, not all talk about homosexuality is helpful. "And when we say *talk* about homosexuality, we mean just that. In the early stages of the campaign, the public should not be shocked and repelled by premature exposure to homosexual behavior itself. Instead, the imagery of sex per se should be downplayed, and the issue of gay rights reduced, as far as possible, to an abstract social question."

Portraying homosexuals as victims was essential to their strategy. Offering several principles for tactical advance in their cause, the authors called upon homosexuals to "portray gays as victims of circumstance and depression, not as aggressive challengers." This would be necessary, they argued, because "gays must be portrayed as victims in need of protection so that straights will be inclined by reflex to adopt the role of protector."

Such a strategy could, they asserted, lead to something like a "conversion" of the public mind on the question of homosexuality. "The purpose of victim imagery is to make straights feel very uncomfortable; that is, to jam with shame the self-righteous pride that would ordinarily accompany and reward their antigay belligerence, and to lay groundwork for the process of conversion by helping straights identify with gays and sympathize with their underdog status."

Obviously, this would mean marginalizing some members of the homosexual community. Kirk and Madsen were bold to advise a mainstreaming of the homosexual image. "In practical terms, this means that cocky mustachioed leather-men, drag queens, and bull dykes would not appear in gay commercials and other public presentations. Conventional young people, middle-age women, and older folks of all races would be featured, not to mention the parents and straight friends of gays." Furthermore, "It cannot go without saying, incidentally, that groups on the farthest margins of acceptability, such as NAMBLA [North American Man-Boy Love Association], must play no part at all in such a campaign. Suspected child molesters will never look like victims."

What about the origin of sexual orientation? The success of the homosexual movement can be largely traced to the very idea of "orientation" itself. More precisely, homosexuals advanced their cause by arguing that they were *born* that way. Madsen and Kirk offer this as candid public relations advice. "We argue that, for all practical purposes, gays should be considered to have been *born* gay--even though sexual orientation, for most humans, seems to be the product of a complex interaction between innate predispositions and environmental factors during childhood and early adolescence." Alas, "To suggest in public that homosexuality might be *chosen* is to open the can of worms labeled 'moral choices and sin' and give the religious intransigents a stick to beat us with. Straights must be taught that it is as natural for some persons to be homosexual as it is for others to be heterosexual: wickedness and seduction have nothing to do with it."

There can be no doubt that Christianity represents the greatest obstacle to the normalization of homosexual behavior. It cannot be otherwise, because of the clear biblical teachings concerning the inherent sinfulness of homosexuality in all forms, and the normativity of heterosexual marriage. In order to counter this obstacle, Kirk and Madsen advised gays to "use talk to muddy the moral waters, that is, to undercut the rationalizations that 'justify' religious bigotry and to jam some of its psychic rewards." How can this be done? "This entails publicizing support by moderate churches and raising serious theological objections to conservative biblical teachings. It also means exposing the inconsistency and hatred underlying antigay doctrines."

Conservative churches, defined by the authors as "homohating" are portrayed as "antiquated backwaters, badly out of step with the times and with the latest findings of psychology."

A quick review of the last 15 years demonstrates the incredible effectiveness of this public relations advice. The agenda set out by Kirk and Madsen led to nothing less than social transformation. By portraying themselves as mainstream Americans seeking nothing but liberty and self-fulfillment, homosexuals redefined the moral equation. Issues of right and wrong were isolated as outdated, repressive, and culturally embarrassing. Instead, the assertion of "rights" became the hallmark of the public relations strategy.

Other principles offered by the authors included making gays look good by identifying strategic historical figures as being hidden homosexuals, and, on the other hand, making "victimizers" look bad in the public eye. Kirk and Madsen suggested isolating conservative Christians by presenting them as "hysterical backwoods preachers, drooling with hate to a degree that looks both comical and deranged." They offered a concrete example of how this strategy could be used on television and in print. "For example, for several seconds an unctuous beady-eyed Southern preacher is shown pounding the pulpit in rage against 'those perverted, abominable creatures.'" While his tirade continues over the soundtrack, the picture switches to heart-rending photos of badly beaten persons, or of gays who look decent, harmless, and likeable; and then we cut back to the poisonous face of the preacher. The contrast speaks for itself. The effect is devastating."

Public relations is now a major part of the American economy, with hundreds of millions of dollars poured into advertising strategies and image enhancement programs. Observers of the public relations world must look back with slack-jawed amazement at the phenomenal success of the approach undertaken by homosexuals over the last two decades. The advice offered by Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen is nothing less than a manifesto for moral revolution. A look back at this strategy indicates just how self-consciously the homosexual movement advanced its cause by following this plan.

Those who oppose the normalization of homosexuality have indeed been presented as backwoods, antiquated, and dangerous people, while those advancing the cause are presented as forces for light, progress, and acceptance. Conservative Christians have indeed been presented as proponents of hatred rather than as individuals driven by biblical conviction. The unprecedented success of this public relations strategy helps to explain why America has accepted everything from homosexual characters and plotlines in prime-time entertainment to the lack of outrage in response to same-sex marriage in Massachusetts.

At least we know what we are up against. Biblical Christians must continue to talk about right and wrong even when the larger world dismisses morality as an outdated concept. We must maintain marriage as a non-negotiable norm--a union of a man and a woman--even when the courts redefine marriage by fiat. At the same time, we must take into account the transformation of the American mind that is now so devastatingly evident to all who have eyes to see.

The real tragedy of *After the Ball* is that the great result of this is not a party, but the complete rejection of the very moral foundations which made this society possible. In order to address the most fundamental problems, we must understand the shape of the American mind. Looking back at *After the Ball* after fifteen years, it all comes into frightening focus.