

CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

"TAKE BACK AMERICA"

SPEAKER:

KIM GRANDY, PRESIDENT, NOW

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ROGER HICKEY: Thank you, Reverend Jim. All right, get ready for another treat. Kim Gandy has been the president of the National Organization for Women since 2001. She's a fighter and the fight in her is inspired by profound moral values. Kim formed her feminist values – here we go now, hey – (applause) – Kim formed her feminist values and became a leader of NOW in her native Louisiana, which is a purple state if there ever was one. In 1991, she ran a NOW PAC project that tripled the number of women in the Louisiana legislature and it helped defeat former Klan leader David Duke for governor. (Applause, cheers.)

As a president of NOW, she has made it clear that good jobs, health care, economic opportunity, and the fight to protect Social Security are all women's issues. She just told me that she'll join us after the lunch out there on the streets to go down to the White House to tell George Bush to keep his hands off of our Social Security. (Applause.) Please welcome Kim Gandy. (Cheers.)

KIM GANDY: Thank you. That's great. What a great conference. I think I've never been the filling in a minister sandwich before. (Laughter.) Not sure whether I'm the sweet, gooey stuff, maybe I'm the meat or the cheese. I don't know, one of those. You know, Congress has been out on the Memorial Day recess this week, so it's been a good week. (Laughter, applause.)

But I think last week, they fit in at least two weeks worth. Think back to last Monday. Remember what that was? The nuclear option averted by a compromise. Some compromise, huh? It was a lot like a mugging, where the mugger says, okay, I'll compromise with you. You give me everything I want and I won't shoot you. Or at least, I won't shoot you right now. That's a compromise, right? (Applause.) And of course, the victim does indeed feel relieved for the moment, but has been victimized nonetheless and may yet be shot.

The very next day, I was on Hardball with Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council. (Boos.) Now, you know him from the Family Research Council and you may recognize him as the architect of Justice Sunday, but I remember him from our home state of Louisiana and from the era of the David Duke campaign, where he was fined \$300 by the Federal Elections Commission for paying \$90,000 for the few thousand names on David Duke's campaign list – a thinly-veiled contribution – and hiding it from the election authorities. This fine, upstanding moral example of family values Tony Perkins was asked who he thought George Bush ought to name to the Supreme Court. Guess what he said? Priscilla Owen and Janice Rogers Brown were the two names that he specifically named as stellar candidates – two of the clearest judicial activists and two of the most intemperate nominees of the many George Bush has sent us.

Now the very next day – this is all last week – the very next day, doggone it if the Senate didn't go and confirm Priscilla Owen, as if to just line her up at Tony Perkins' request. Something to look forward to – Priscilla Owen, another notch in Karl Rove's belt. How many of you knew that he plucked her out of relative obscurity as a Houston lawyer and ran her for the Texas Supreme Court? Ran her campaign personally, Karl

Rove did, raised nearly a million dollars for her campaign and has guided her career ever since. What do you think he has in mind? I think maybe Tony Perkins knows something that we don't.

You know what else happened that day – Wednesday? Three crosses were burned in Durham, North Carolina. I'm sure it wasn't related. Also last week, Wal-Mart topped another list. They top a lot of lists. This time it was in Wisconsin. They topped the list of companies that have the largest number of their employees enrolled in the state health insurance program for people who are too poor to have insurance. And also last week in Indiana, a judge allowed the state attorney general to subpoena the private medical records – including psychological profiles and sexual history – of all the women who had had abortions at the Planned Parenthood clinic there. From the nuclear option to private medical records, abuse of power has been a hallmark – has been a defining element – of the party that says it wants to keep government out of people's lives – except when it suits them. (Applause.)

And when we complain about it, what do they do? They call us special interests. Have you noticed that this crowd can't tell the difference between constituents and special interests? (Applause.) Maybe I can help. Women are 51 percent of the population. Women are constituents. People of color are constituents. Workers – working people – are constituents. Halliburton is a special interest. (Applause, cheers.) Companies that want tax breaks for shipping jobs overseas.

AUDIENCE: Special interest.

MS. GANDY: Companies that don't want to pay their employees overtime.

AUDIENCE: Special interest.

MS. GANDY: Companies that outsource their health care to the taxpayers.

AUDIENCE: Special interest.

MS. GANDY: Wal-Mart.

AUDIENCE: Special interest.

MS. GANDY: The Republican Party.

AUDIENCE: Special interest.

MS. GANDY: All right, now that we've got the difference down, let's make it a point to correct them every time they call a corporation a constituent and call a constituent a special interest. Don't let them get away with it. (Applause.)

Now, the good news is that people are getting the message. In a recent Democracy Corps Poll, only 37 percent of people said the country was on the right track. 55 percent of the people said the country was on the wrong track. And when they were asked – those 55 percent – now why is it you say the country is on the wrong track? Guess what the top two issues were by a mile? Top two issues – George Bush’s leadership and the war in Iraq. (Applause.) This was not a survey of progressives, but it could have been. George Bush’s leadership and the war in Iraq are the two primary reasons they gave that the country is going in the wrong direction. Not moral values, not abortion, not gay marriage, but the failure of Bush’s leadership and his war, and Democratic leaders need to be saying that every day – (cheers) – every day, every day, every opportunity.

Our leaders need to be calling George Bush out on the very decisions that got this country into the kind of trouble that we’re in, not this namby-pamby whiny well we’re already there so we have to see it through hog feathers. (Cheers.) Call them on it. There are too many so-called political leaders who call themselves moderate or even progressive, but who are really trying to be “Republican light.” (Applause.) Just from the sound of it, don’t you know that’s headed for a train wreck? And a lot of them – I’m sorry to say – are being encouraged by the Democratic party, which can’t seem to decide whether it wants to be “Republican light.” Somebody tell them please, we don’t need two Republican parties. (Cheers.) We don’t need two Republican parties and we don’t need another moral majority. With all due respect to Jim Wallis and his very good work to end poverty, I don’t want a progressive evangelical movement anymore than I want the conservative one that we have now.

I want a legal recognition of and preservation of my human and civil rights without regard to someone else’s religious beliefs. (Cheers.) I don’t want a woman’s moral decisions to be determined by someone else’s religion, because while the Bible does have 3,000 passages about poor people, it says not one word about abortion. (Applause.) And where are we headed with this? Just one example – St. Louis, Missouri, Congressman Lacy Clay – longtime progressive just changed his vote on a bill that endangers the lives of young women and would jail a grandmother, an aunt, or a sister, who crossed the state line with her to help her with an abortion that she sought. He voted against the bill, but he voted for the bill. He changed his vote saying, quote “I’m going to follow my church leadership and vote in favor of this bill,” close quote. Lacy Clay – he went on to say, quote, “We have to start being flexible on issues like abortion and gay rights.”

Now, where might this idea have come from? Do you think it might have come from John Kerry, who said we need to recruit and elect more pro-life Democrats? Do you think it might have come from Howard Dean praising anti-abortion Democrats in Alabama? Do you think it might have come from Chuck Schumer recruiting an anti-abortion Democrat in a blue state to run against a pro-choice woman with a better chance to win? If that’s what it means to have a big tent, if it means abandoning the core principles of our party, if it means throwing women’s rights overboard like so much

ballast, if it means picking and choosing which of us have moral values and which of us don't, then I say let's keep the skunk out of the tent. (Applause.)

There was talk about faith-based initiatives and we've had faith-based initiatives for decades and decades. When I was in New Orleans 20 years ago, Catholic charities got a lot of federal government money to do a lot of good work that they do. But there was one string on that – they weren't allowed to discriminate; they weren't allowed to use that money to discriminate. And one place where Jim Wallis and I disagree vehemently is that he believes that the churches getting this faith-based money ought to be allowed to discriminate if it fits in with their religion, that it would be perfectly fine for churches using federal funds to hang up a sign that says, "No Jews Need Apply" or "No Christians Need Apply" or maybe, "Help Wanted: Aryan Nation Church Members Only." Refusing to hire someone or even refusing to allow them to volunteer in a program that is federally funded social services is an affront to every civil rights principle that we have fought for for the last 40 years and it has no place in federal-funded programs. (Applause.)

And then there's the issue of who gets the money and who doesn't – like a half a million dollars to Pat Robertson's Operation: Blessing out of your pocket. This is the same guy who said that Presbyterians are representatives of the anti-Christ on Earth. (Laughter.) It sounds like a joke doesn't it, but he got half a million dollars of your money as part of the faith-based initiative. And the global gag rule has been applied to women and AIDS funding. AIDS funding now has a global gag rule, contributing to the deaths of women and young girls all around the world – why – to get support from the evangelical movement. It's even being supported by groups like Bono's because he's crossing the lines to work with faith-based groups and basically said, sure, put the gag rule on the AIDS funding. It's okay with us. That's where we're headed with this and it's the wrong direction. The Taliban used religion to suppress the basic rights of women. The Southern Baptists and the Promise Keepers preach submission of women as part of their religion. And the idea that policy ought to be fueled by religion and religious beliefs may sound good when it's your religion or your religious beliefs, but it gets downright sticky when someone else is in a position to impose his or her religious beliefs on you in a way that it will change your life forever – like being forced to bear an unwanted child. (Applause.)

We have a long fight ahead and we need to be pulling together. We need to be pulling together for all of us because these battles have to be fought on many levels. While we are opposing the war, we are also standing up for military women to be treated fairly and to be free of rape and sexual assault. (Applause.) While we're fighting privatization of Social Security, we're also pressing for changes that will recognize the contributions of caregivers and the time out of the workforce for that important job. (Applause.) While we're protecting the basics, like overtime pay for millions of workers, we're also pushing for more – like paid sick days, like expanded family and medical leave.

We're organizing non-stop for a Supreme Court nominee that will come any day, but while we're doing that, we're also fighting to save the lower courts because those are the courts of last resort for the people in this room and most people in the country. And while we're working for local and state living wage bills that would really guarantee an income that would support a family, we continue to work at every level to expand the minimum wage, to expand worker protections, and to remove the punitive provisions from Bill Clinton's welfare law. (Applause.) And while we're fighting for the right of committed same-sex couples to be able to marry – (applause) – we're also pushing for basic protections from hate crimes and for a recognition that many of those are based on gender as well. (Applause.)

While we push for universal single-payer health care, we're also exposing companies like Wal-Mart that outsource their healthcare to the taxpayer. (Applause.) And while we fight to stop state restrictions on abortion, we're also pushing to make contraception more available – (applause) – like requiring employers that pay for Viagra to also pay for birth control pills – (applause) – and stopping laws that let pharmacists rely on their moral values to refuse to fill your pill prescription – (applause) – and even refuse to fill a prescription for a morning-after pill for a rape victim. State legislation that says this is okay – we know better. We know it's wrong and we're right and we're going to stop it because while we fight for progressive ideals and for a vision of the possible, we are also fighting for the heart and soul of our party. We're fighting to take back America and you're leading that fight. Thank you. (Applause, cheers.)