

ARIZONA'S NEW WHITE PANTHER PARTY: MONEY & (ANCHOR) BABY HATE

✘ Three weeks ago I woke up and started organizing my thoughts to write this post. I had no more than written the title when news started coming in hot, first on Twitter and then local news channels, that Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords had been shot in Tucson. In a strange dichotomy, it was both an event which brought the ugly underbelly of hate in my state into even better focus than it had been before, which is the subject of this post, as well as an event which put the desire to write it, and the moment for it, on the back burner. With the filing in the Arizona legislature of twin bills at the end of this week attacking the automatic citizenship granted to U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants under the 14th Amendment, it seemed like time to return to the matter.

Specifically, we are talking about the following Arizona Legislative measures:

– House Bill 2561 and Senate Bill 1309 would define children as citizens of Arizona and the U.S. if at least one of their parents was either a U.S. citizen or a legal permanent U.S. resident and therefore subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

– House Bill 2562 and Senate Bill 1308 would seek permission from Congress to set up a system so states can create separate birth certificates for children who meet the new definition of a citizen and those who do not.

These are the provisions engendered by the hateful right wing “anti-anchor baby” effort. Arizona is, as it was with the previous

“immigration papers please” law enacted in SB 1070, on the cutting edge of the national anti-immigrant and hatred of brown movement. While Arizona may be the test lab, it is certainly not necessarily the originator for these discriminatory and bigoted efforts. The “father” of the measures, leader and vocal mouthpiece for them in the Arizona legislature is State Senator Russell Pearce, newly crowned President of the state senate. Pearce worked off the template written by national movement conservative Kris Kobach for SB 1070, and the attempt to blow up the 14th Amendment birth citizenship guarantee is also being pushed by national extreme right wing movement conservatives such as Rand Paul and David Vitter.

But the point man and patron saint of anti-immigration hate in Arizona is indeed President of the Arizona Senate Russell Pearce, a former top deputy and confidant of the pernicious Maricopa County Sheriff, Joe Arpaio. When Pearce first arrived in the Arizona state legislature in 2001, it was as a state representative from the heavily Mormon (Pearce’s religion) area of Mesa, and he was known for little more than being a

...loudmouthed backbencher, unhealthily obsessed with illegal immigration.

So how did this two bit back bencher, who only came to the legislature because he was terminated as the state director of the Motor Vehicle Department for malfeasance in tampering with department records, come to be the most powerful man in the Arizona legislature? The old fashioned way, money, lobbyists and a push from the movement conservative national political machine. In short, the craziness of the ever more extreme and immigrant fear mongering national Republican party caught up to Russell Pearce’s local innate bigotry. And the big money and high powered lobbyists now backing and fueling Pearce is the story of this post.

On Friday night, January 7, a high dollar

fundraiser was held for this front man for divisive hate and bigotry in Arizona, Russell Pearce. But the fundraiser was not in the middle and lower class neighborhood Pearce represents, but instead in the tony Camelback Mountain/Biltmore area of East Phoenix (picture of the estate above). As fundraising is prohibited during the legislative session that was set to start the following Monday, it was a last chance for big business and the moneyed elite to pump up Pearce and give a push to the “anti-anchor baby” legislation he had stated would be a priority as he began his new position as President of the State Senate three days later. The money for hate fest for Pearce ended less than twelve hours before Gabby Giffords, Chief Judge John Roll and approximately twenty other souls were shot down by Jared Loughner, in an act that would instantly come to symbolize the divisive brand of hatred sown by Russell Pearce and his right wing supporters.

Who were these people bankrolling and gleefully toasting Pearce and his in your face brand of bigotry? It is all too easy to pin this movement on the supposedly grass roots “Tea Party” movement. Except the truth is the “Tea Party” is not particularly grass roots in the first place and instead is an outgrowth of mainstream GOP lobbyists, and this group of luminaries comprise the monied elite of the traditional Republican party in Arizona, not to mention more than a few national interests. The hate is quite mainstream and is the work product of big money and big political lobbying operations.

Stephen Lemons, who pens the excellent and biting Phoenix New Times political blog and column *Feathered Bastard* clues us in on the names behind Russell Pearce:

There are some familiar ones:
Corrections Corporation of America
and Governor Jan Brewer’s Svengali Chuck Coughlin; Mark Spencer, President of the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association; Bas Aja of the Arizona Cattlemen’s

Association; Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu; and former Arizona Congressman Matt Salmon, of the Washington, D.C.-based Upstream Consulting.

But Lemons did not stop there; working off of an official invitation to the uptown fundraiser soiree obtained by Tucson political blogger extraordinaire Three Sonorans (pictured above; [click for larger size](#)), Lemons provided a true service to one and all and did the research to provide the affiliations for all the power players hosting the Pearce event. As it is such a roster of the who's who of mainstream Republican political elite in Arizona, I am going to include the entire stunning list:

Barbara Meaney, Triadvocates LLC

Barry Aarons, Aarons Company

Bas Aja, Arizona Cattleman's Association

Brian Livingston, Arizona Police Association

Brian Tassinari, Upstream Consulting

Charles Bassett, Blue Cross Blue Shield

Chris Herstam, Lewis & Roca

Chuck Coughlin, HighGround Public Affairs (clients include Corrections Corporation of America)

Courtney LeVinus, Capitol Consulting LLC

Dave Childers, (lawyer)

Dave Kopp, President, Arizona Citizens Defense League

David Landrith, Arizona Medical Association

Richard Foreman, Southwest Gas

Donald Hughes, Kutak Rock LLP

Donald Isaacson, Isaacson & Moore

Doug Cole, HighGround

Ellen Poole, United Services Auto
Association

Farrell Quinlan, National Federation of
Independent Business – Arizona

Genevra Richardson, Ziemba Waid Public
Affairs (clients include Democratic
candidates)

Gretchen Jacobs, AZ Governmental Affairs

Gretchen Kitchel, Pinnacle West Capital
Corp.

Gibson McKay, Veridus, LLC

Jaime Molera, Molera Alvarez Group

Jake Logan, former aide to Jake Flake,
not sure who he works for

Janna Day, Fennemore Craig

Jason Bezozo, Banner Health

Jason Isaak, Policy Development Group
(clients include CCA)

Jay Kaprosy, Veridius, LLC (clients
include ATT, American Express)

Jeffery Hill, Hill and Hill Accounting

Jeff Sandquist, Veridius LLC

Jim Norton, R&R Partners

Joseph Abate, of counsel, Curtis Goodwin
Sullivan Udall

John Kaites, Public Policy Partners
(clients include EDS)

John MacDonald, Husk Partners, Inc
(clients include CCA, Hopi Tribe)

John Mangum, Law Offices of John Mangum

John Wentling, VP, Arizona Citizens
Defense League

Joseph Sigg, Arizona Farm Bureau

Ken Quartermain, Public Policy Partners

Kevin DeMenna, DeMenna & Associates
(clients include City of Phoenix,
Pickens Fuel Corp)

Kristen Boilini, KRB Consulting,

Kurt Davis, FirstStrategic
Communications and Public Affairs
(clients include AZ Cardinals, American
Traffic Solutions)

Laura Knaperek, former legislator

Lee Miller, Mario E. Diaz and Associates

Lyn Harry White,
FreeportMcMoranCopperandGold

Marc Osborn, R&R Partners

Marcus Dell'Artino, FirstStrategic
Communications and Public Affairs

Mark Barnes, Barnes and Associates

Mark Spencer, PLEA

Matt Salmon, Upstream Consulting

Michael Racy, Racy and Associates

Michelle Ahlmer, Arizona Retailers
Association

Mike Gardner, Triadvocates, LLC

Mike Williams, Williams and Associates
Public Relations

Nick Simonetta, KRB Consulting

Norm Moore, Isaacson & Moore

Penny Allee Taylor, Southwest Gas

Rip Wilson, SRW Consulting

Rob Dalager, Galagher and Kennedy

Robert Shuler, The Shuler Law Firm

Russell Smoldon, SRP

Sheriff Paul Babeu

Stan Barnes, Copper State Consulting
Group (clients include Covance, Blue
Cross)

Spencer Kamps, Home Builders Association
of Southern Arizona

Stuart Goodman, GoodmanSchwartz

Susan Anable, Cox Communications

Susie Stevens, Stevens and Stevens Law

Sydney Hay, Southwest Policy Group

Thomas Dorn, Dorn Policy Group

Suzanne Gilstrap, Capitol Consulting,
LLC

Tim Lawless, NAIOP-AZ, trade association
representing the commercial real estate
industry in Arizona

Tom Farley, Arizona Association of
Realtors

Wendy Briggs, Veridius LLC

These names may not all ring a bell with the national readership of this blog, but it is pretty easy to see their status and positions of power from Stephen Lemons' fine work in ferreting out the affiliations and, as a native Arizonan, I can assure you these are the highest levels of movers and shakers in the business and legal world here. They are NOT the "grass roots", and do NOT represent the "power of the people". No, they are, quite instead, the people with the power. They would surely not want it, but should be known far and wide for the bigotry, hate and disrepute they have encouraged and bankrolled for the state of Arizona. It is their handiwork Russell Pearce fronts for.

And nothing brought the ugly face of Arizona painted by Russell Pearce and his merry band of

backers to light more than the horrendous carnage of the Giffords shooting less than twelve hours after their party concluded. The picture painted of Arizona in the aftermath was a hideous one of bigotry, hate and guns run amok. Nothing, at least for me, captured this picture quite as well as an article by Will Bunch in the Huffington Post entitled "Arizona, Where the American Dream Went to Die":

Welcome to paradise. Indeed, it doesn't take much time in the Arizona desert, or a lot of shoe-leather reporting, to see how the nation's 48th state had become the undisputed No. 1 in vitriol and bile. Just in the remarkably short time I was in the greater Phoenix area last March, the newspaper was full of stories about a bill in the Arizona legislature – that turned out to be SB 1070 – that would be so harsh toward undocumented immigrants that its sponsors openly admitted to making the streets so hostile to Mexicans that they would leave. On Saturday, I saw campaign volunteers swoon to get Sheriff Joe Arpaio to autograph a pair of the pink underwear that he makes his immigrant prisoners wear in the brutal desert heat to humiliate them. On Sunday morning, I rode past fathers and sons cheerfully walking to a spring-training game in Tempe so I could meet a Baptist minister named Steven Anderson who told me that Obama "deserves to die" because the president supports abortion rights, and over lunch a Tea Party leader calmly told me that Mexicans want to reconquest Arizona up to 16th Street in Phoenix and "kill all the white people." While I was on my way home to Philadelphia, there was the death threats against Mitchell, and when a militia leader called for Tea Party activists to break the windows of House members who voted for health care, some responded. In Tucson, at 2 a.m. someone shattered the window of a

congressional office, possibly by firing a pellet gun, belonging to Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.

It is any wonder that they call Arizona the Grand Canyon State? When news bulletins first flashed on Saturday that a congresswoman had been shot at a public event, it didn't take too much imagination to correctly surmise that it was Arizona, and that the victim was Gabrielle Giffords. Nor were you shocked, as some clearly were, when Pima County sheriff Clarence Dupnik declared his home state to have become "a mecca for prejudice and bigotry." The grim, blood-soaked crossover from death threats and broken windows to actual murder and mayhem seemed inevitable. But why here, in such a naturally blessed, sun-soaked corner of God's earth?

Why Arizona?

I have long read and respected Will Bunch, and his entire piece is well done and worth a read. His words hurt deeply, and I contacted him to tell him so. But, in fact, there was more truth to his biting article about my home state than I, and probably anybody else who lives here, would like to admit. When Bunch asks "why Arizona" the Republican lily white monied elite and politically powerful described above are exactly why. Loudmouthed ignorant bigots like Russell Pearce have always been around here and there, but nobody paid much attention to them until the mainstream GOP gravitated to the extreme right and merged with the crazy. Now they are one, as clearly evidenced by the willing and celebratory backers of Russell Pearce at the fundraiser prelude to the massacre at Congress on the Corner the following morning.

❌ Far from being limited to the random wingnuts like Pearce, Rand Paul and David Vitter, the New White Panthers of hate are led by mainstream GOP voices like John McCain, Jon

Kyl, the current power center in the GOP Senate caucus Jim DeMint, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Speaker of the House John Boehner and Majority leader Eric Cantor.

Republicans have made a cottage industry of whining about, and ginning fear of, the New Black Panther Party; all stemming from a harmless and uneventful episode where two well behaved men were present at a polling place in Philadelphia during the 2008 presidential election. As Adam Serwer recently pointed out, the entire story is a manufactured fraud. But while the New Black Panthers scare is a hoax perpetrated *by the* Republicans, the New White Panthers constituted *of the* Republicans, their money men, lobbyists and front men like Russell Pearce are certainly no hoax and far, far from harmless.

When Pearce and his elite backers held their fundraising sunset soiree, only a dedicated but somewhat rag tag group of about 40 protesters (photo of the remnants thereof above) in the street outside stood up to object. Without a larger and stronger voice of opposition from national Democratic leaders, including Barack Obama, this pernicious brand of hatred and bigotry that has turned Arizona into a laughingstock will take hold and grow in other states. Like the security state and loss of privacy, it will become the unacceptable, yet ratified, norm.

[Editor's Note: I apologize about the too dim pictures of the event. I live rather close to where it took place and rode my bike over to check it out, and take pictures, after my wife and daughter saw it while walking the dog and reminded me about it. I had forgotten, was blithely home watching the Cotton Bowl and, by the time I got there, the fundraiser was ending and it was nearly past sunset (although a quite beautiful one)]