

Robertson and Falwell: "You Helped This Happen"

BY PAT ROBINSON

On Sept. 13, 2001, 2 days after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, Jerry Falwell was a guest on Pat Robertson's The 700 Club. Rev. Jerry Falwell lay blame for the action at "the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point a finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen.'"

Rev. Falwell is Pastor of the 22,000 member Thomas Rd. Baptist Church, in Baton Rouge, La. Pat Robertson is the host of The 700 Club broadcast on the Christian Broadcasting Network.

Reaction to Rev. Falwell's remarks were immediate.

Shortly after Rev. Falwell's statement, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Executive Director Lorri L. Jean had these words. "The terrible tragedy that has befallen our nation, and indeed the entire global community, is the sad byproduct of fanaticism. It has its roots in the same fanaticism that enables people like Jerry Falwell to preach hate against those who do not think, live, or love in the exact same way he does. The tragedies that have occurred this week did not occur because someone made God mad, as Mr. Falwell asserts. They occurred because of hate, pure and simple. It is time to move beyond a place of hate and to a place of healing. We hope that Mr. Falwell will apologize to the US and world communities."

Elizabeth Birch, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign released this statement: "The words of these men are similar to the acts of equally contemptible retribution that are being waged against people of Middle Eastern origin or appearance in some areas of our country. This is not a time for scapegoating, it is a time for unity. To blame blindly, based on prejudice and rage, represents an ominous part of our world and we must work to overcome it wherever we find it. It should be soundly condemned by all of us as we struggle to focus our attentions on healing the

pain of our nation."

On September 18, Rev. Jerry Falwell apologized on the Liberty University Web site: "Last Thursday during an appearance on The 700 Club, in the midst of the shock and mourning of a dark week for America, I made a statement that I should not have made and which I sincerely regret. I apologize that, during a week when everyone appropriately dropped all labels and no one was seen as liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican, religious or secular, I singled out for blame certain groups of Americans. This was insensitive, uncalled for at the time, and unnecessary as part of the commentary on this destruction. The only label any of us needs in such a terrible time of crisis is that of 'American.'

I obviously did not state my theological convictions very well and I stated them at a bad time. During the difficult weeks ahead there will be much discussion about the judgment of God. It is a worthy discussion for all of us at a time when we are reminded of the fleeting nature of life itself, but it is a complicated discussion.

I do not know if the horrific events of September 11 are the judgment of God, but if they are, that judgment is on all of America - including me and all fellow sinners - and not on any particular group.

My statements were understandably called divisive by some, including those whom I mentioned by name in the interview. This grieves me, as I had no intention of being divisive.

In conclusion, I blame no one but the hijackers and terrorists for the barbaric happenings of September 11. We know, as Abraham Lincoln anguished in his second inaugural address, that "The Almighty has his own purposes," but as he said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

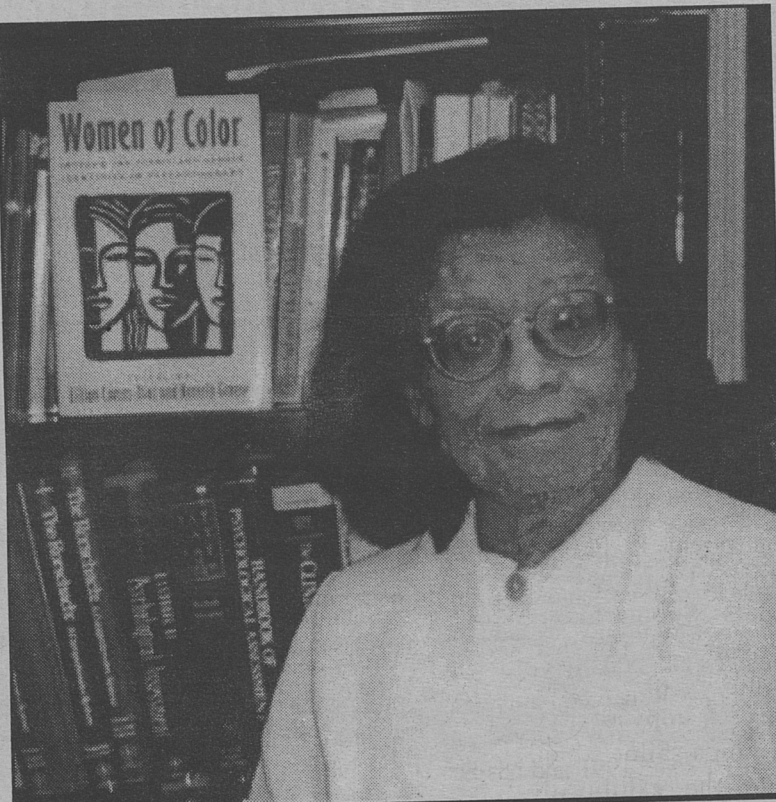
GLAAD Executive Director Joan M. Garry made this suggestion. "We hope that media outlets will not offer Falwell, Robertson, or others like them additional platforms to spread these divisive messages of intolerance. We can ill-afford any further loss of unity as we come together to heal our nation.

Fall Institute on Racism, Heterosexism, Bias, and Oppression at UVM

The Department of Psychology at the University of Vermont is about to hold the "Fall Institute on Racism, Heterosexism, Bias and Oppression." Events take place October 22 through 26 and are free and open to the public. This year there will be three events specifically focused on gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered issues.

The workshop "Challenging Heterosexism and Homophobia—Difficult Dialogues/Strengthening our Strategies" will be held on Wednesday, October 23 from 4 to 5:30 pm in the John Dewey Lounge, 3rd Floor of Old Mill at UVM. Facilitators are Phyllis Bronstein, Ph.D., Vanitha Nair, B.A., and Jelica Todosijevic, M.S. Pre-registration for this workshop is strongly recommended—contact Diana St. Louis at 656-2670.

Two films on Wednesday, October 24th will focus on lesbian, gay and transgendered concerns. In *Out in Suburbia*, eleven women discuss their lives, including marriage, motherhood, discrimination, stereotypes, and feminine roles. The film *Adventures in the Gender Trade* presents Kate Bornstein's personal journey from unhappy boy



Dr. Sondra Solomon is head of the Fall Institute of Racism, Heterosexism, Bias, and Oppression.

into liberated transsexual lesbian. Using scenes from her play *Hidden: A Gender* as a backdrop, it includes a wide range of people who refused to have their identity defined by whether they were born male or female. Films will be shown from 6:30 to 8:30 pm in Lafayette 108 at UVM, followed by discussion.

"Transgendered Identities: Emerging Research and Human Stories" will be the

focus of the lunch hour lecture on Thursday, October 25, presented by Rhonda Factor and Clark Sheldon. The lecture will take place from noon to 1:30 pm in 427-A Waterman Building, UVM.

For further information about these events, and for a complete schedule of events concerning challenging racism, violence, and other forms of prejudice, call 656-3034.

Workshop – Challenging Heterosexism and Homophobia – Difficult Dialogues / Strengthening Our Strategies

Facilitators: Phyllis Bronstein, Ph.D., Vanitha Nair, BA and Jelica Todosijevic, MS

Date: Wednesday, October 23rd

Time: 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Place: John Dewey Lounge (Old Mill, 3rd Floor)

Pre-Registration for this Workshop Is Strongly Recommended

Contact Diana St. Louis at 656-2670

Film – Lesbian, Gay and Transgendered Concerns

Facilitator: Cynthia Grossman, B.A.

Date: Wednesday, October 24th

Time: 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Place: Lafayette 108

Film Titles:

Out in Suburbia: Eleven women discuss their lives, including marriage, motherhood, discrimination, stereotypes, and feminine roles.

Adventures in the Gender Trade: Presents Kate Bornstein's personal journey from unhappy boy into liberated transsexual lesbian. Using Kate's one person show, "Hidden, A Gender", the author presents the stories of people who refused to have their identity defined by whether they were born male or female.

Lunch Hour Lecture: Transgendered Identities: Emerging Research and Human Stories

Facilitator: Rhonda Factor, BA & Clark Sheldon

Date: Thursday, October 25th

Time: 12:00 – 1:30

Place: Waterman, 427-A