



I'M GAY...CONSERVATIVE... SO WHAT? GUY BENSON

I'm a Christian, a patriotic American, and a free-market, shrink-the-government conservative—who also happens to be gay.

What I mean by that is *my values* define me, while my sexual orientation sometimes feels more like—well, a footnote. Literally, in fact. I “came out” as gay in a footnote in my book, *End of Discussion*.

When it comes to my political beliefs, my orientation is only one part of the story. It's not the totality of who I am.

Some unimaginative leftists like to claim that this qualifies me as a “self-hating” gay person. This is so boring. That intellectual laziness only underscores my point. Far too often, people are sorted by their gender, or their skin color, or their sexual orientation, or any other immutable characteristic that has *nothing* to do with ideas or values.

To be candid, in my day-to-day life and work, I spend a lot more time thinking and writing about the failures of Obamacare, for example, than I do about “LGBT issues,” whatever that term might mean on any given day.

Just like any conservative, I want taxes low, the military strong, and don't even get me started on single payer health care or late-term abortion. I'm a conservative because when I think about these issues critically, I usually end up on the right end of the spectrum. It's that simple.

Here's the thing: I fully recognize how fortunate I am to live in a time and a country where I can be openly gay and live a normal life. And that's in large part thanks to the hard work of gay rights activists who've paved the way for people like me—people who had it much harder than I do, and people who likely wouldn't share my politics. I am genuinely grateful to them.

But it's a new era now. Why ostracize members of our community who don't toe the left-wing political line? Exit polling shows that in the last four general elections, between 14 and 29 percent of LGBT voters pulled the lever for the GOP. That's *a lot* of us. Now, does that mean that we all support every element of the party's platform? Absolutely not.

In fact, I know that many conservatives, including some here at PragerU, don't see eye-to-eye with me on all of these questions. And yet, here I am—making a PragerU video. Which perfectly illustrates another really important point: Conservatives are often much more tolerant of dissenting views than those who fancy themselves the torch-carriers of open-mindedness.

Nope. Cross the left on a hot-button social issue, and you're out.

You see, some on the left believe that they're entitled to control the thoughts or votes of certain groups of people—namely minorities and so-called “victim groups.” For some, it comes down to a cynical calculation: Without the overwhelming support of those groups, the Democrats would win very few elections.

That's why the left lashes out so viciously at anyone who wanders off their assigned reservation. I suspect conservative women and Hispanics and African Americans know exactly what I'm talking about.

The truth is, the left isn't entitled to a damn thing.

To paraphrase my coauthor and friend, Mary Katharine Ham: “We didn't get liberated in order to be told by liberal activists precisely what we're allowed to think, or how we must vote.”

A free-thinking, free citizen of a free country is not obliged to believe anything because someone else believes he or she “ought” to think or “ought” to vote or “ought” to rank his (or her) priorities a certain way. Look, I get it: Many other gay people approach these issues and their voting criteria differently—and I respect that. That's their call, even if it's not how I choose to operate. What's the phrase again? “Live and let live?” Why has that been turned on its head, into “agree—or else”?

Let's debate issues and stop trying to punish “wrong” thinking.

Like I said, I'm a Christian, a patriotic American, and a free-market, shrink-the-government conservative—who *happens* to be gay.

That's how I choose to rank my priorities. You know what that's called?

It's called progress.

I'm Guy Benson for Prager University.