

# Sex Scandals Rock Republicans, Washington Elites

Money, sex and power have a moral toxicity when mixed and misused.

All three components have contaminated the ethos at the [World Bank](#), the institution intended to help the poor, reduce global poverty and raise the standard of living.

The World Bank president, who came to office with an anti-corruption agenda, has his own corrupt agenda. [Paul Wolfowitz](#) used his power to orchestrate a large pay raise for his girlfriend, arranging her transfer to the State Department but keeping her on the bank's payroll.

According to newspaper reports, Wolfowitz, 63 and divorced, arranged a job for his 53-year old girlfriend, Shaha Ali Riza, at the State Department office of Elizabeth Cheney, daughter of Vice President Cheney.

Riza's salary before leaving the World Bank was \$132,660. At the State Department, she began at \$180,000. Receiving a raise in the current fiscal year, she earns [\\$193,590](#), more than the Secretary of State.

Wolfowitz had the power within the Bush administration to fix employment opportunities. Responsible use of taxpayer money was not an issue when one of power had romantic interests to protect.

A chief architect of misleading the world into the Iraq war, Wolfowitz is only one of what appear to be many men with money and power in Washington caught in sex scandals.

Unlike Wolfowitz, another man at the State Department resigned when his dishonor surfaced.

Deputy Secretary Randall L. [Tobias](#), the Bush administration's "AIDS czar," resigned last week and admitted to having used the service of a "high-end sexual fantasy business" that charged \$300 per hour.

Claiming the "gals" only came to his condo to give massages, Tobias' private

activities skirted the line with his administrative responsibilities of overseeing global AIDS funding that required recipient organizations to oppose prostitution and sex trafficking.

A former CEO of Eli Lilly Co. and AT&T Communications, Tobias had been chair of the board of trustees at Duke University. He and his wife had given more than \$100,000 to Republican candidates and organizations.

Tobias' provider of "gals" was Deborah Jeane [Palfrey](#), known as "the D.C. Madam," who is charged with running a prostitution ring.

In her legal defense, Palfrey gave 46 pounds of phone records to ABC News, which is seeking to identify her clients. ABC's "20/20" will air a program about Palfrey this Friday evening.

"It's a long list, we've been going through the phone records for the last four years provided for us by Jean Palfrey," reported ABC News' Brian Ross earlier in the week. "There are some very prominent people, lobbyists, lawyers, members of the military, other people in the Bush administration."

The intertwinement of money, sex and power is, albeit regrettably, not new.

In *Money, Sex & Power: The Challenge of the Disciplined Life* (1985), Richard Foster wrote, "These issues seem inseparably intertwined. Money manifests itself in power. Sex is used to acquire both money and power. And power is often called 'the best aphrodisiac.'"

Foster wrote that the monastic movement responded to the problems of money, sex and power with the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience expressed in service. The Puritans put these monastic vows into practice through the common life with emphases on honorable work, faithfulness and responsible order. Christians today face "new situations [that] demand new responses," said Foster.

The Washington scandals disclose the dark sides of money, sex and power—greed, lust and pride—three destructive vices.

As Christians read news stories, watch TV reports and listen to talk shows about these injurious behaviors, we need to arm ourselves against those who excuse such harmful behavior based on the bad behavior of others, call it the myth that everybody is doing it and that makes it all right.

Republicans will defend Republicans caught in the sex scandals by pointing a finger at Bill Clinton, as if two wrongs make a right.

If recent history is a guide, Christian Right leaders will remain silent as long as possible, hoping their constituency doesn't see the moral failure of the political party upon whom they have placed the mantle of God.

Some Christians will dismiss the scandals as something isolated to Washington, a matter of the politics of self-destruction.

A better approach, however, is for all Christians to consider how Foster framed these three matters. He wrote that money, sex and power have both their dark and light sides from a biblical perspective.

A cultivated awareness of the power of these forces helps to protect us from destructive temptations. Accompanying such awareness are practices-of simplicity, fidelity and service.

Rather than accept the predictable ways that these scandals will be discussed, let's place moral leaven in our culture with the insight that Foster offers us. Let's talk about the money, sex and power scandals in terms of simplicity, fidelity and service. Surely, such an approach will enrich the public debate, and that will advance the common good.

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