

UPDATE

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY REFLECTS ON HIS LIFE, CONDEMNNS RACISM

IN HIS FIRST GENERAL CONFERENCE FOLLOWING surgery to remove a cancerous growth in his colon, LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke candidly about his life and years of service in the Church, in addition to delivering a strong condemnation of racism.

"I now face the sunset of my life," said the nonagenarian leader as he closed the Sunday morning session. "As many of you know, I recently underwent major surgery. It is the first time in my ninety-five years that I have been a patient in a hospital." He then quipped, "I do not recommend it to anyone."

In his remarks, Hinckley shared entries from his 1953 journal which highlighted joys in his association with Church leaders of that era. He also reviewed his extensive traveling around the world: "I have lifted my voice on every continent, in cities large and small, all up and down from north to south and east to west across this broad world—from Cape Town to Stockholm, from Moscow to Tokyo to Montreal, in every great capital of the world. It is all a miracle." According to the 2006 *Church Almanac*, since 1995, Hinckley has spoken to hundreds of thousands of members in more than sixty countries.

In what some have speculated is a reference to lingering cancerous cells in his body, President Hinckley referred to "residual problems" but refused to characterize his talk as a farewell speech. "I trust that you will not regard what I have said as an obituary," he said with a smile. "Rather, I look forward to the opportunity of speaking to you again in October."

During the Saturday priesthood session on 1 April, President Hinckley delivered a vigorous condemnation of racism and hatred—perhaps the strongest ever heard during a general conference. According to an Associated Press story, Hinckley was originally scheduled to open the Saturday morning session but decided instead to save his energy for later. Prefacing his remarks by referring to the 1978 revelation that lifted the ban on blacks holding the priesthood, Hinckley said that "no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ."

"Throughout my service as a member of the First Presidency, I have recognized and spoken a number of times on the diversity we see in our society," he added. "[Diversity] is all about us, and we must make an effort to accommodate that diversity. . . . There is no basis for racial hatred among the priesthood of this Church."

Observers have speculated about the timing of President Hinckley's remarks. In an 15 April story, *Salt Lake Tribune* columnist Paul Rolly suggested that the current immigration debate might have served as a catalyst for his choosing to speak about racism at this time. Rolly recalled a 2004 controversy in which a Utah anti-immigration group suggested that since the Articles of Faith require Mormons to uphold the law, undocumented LDS immigrants should be banned from



In his first general conference address since his surgery for colon cancer, 95-year-old President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke movingly about his life and health and issued a strong condemnation of lingering racism in the Church.

Mormon temples (SUNSTONE, March 2004, 75–76). Rolly also mentioned a recent attempt in Utah to repeal the state law that allows children of undocumented workers to pay in-state tuition at colleges or universities.

"There has been a sense of racism, not only in that repeal attempt, but in recently passed legislation to replace driver licenses with restrictive I.D. cards for undocumented workers and in the numerous attempts to pass hate-crime legislation aimed at protecting various minority groups from targeted violence and harassment," wrote Rolly. "That's why Hinckley's remarks, at this time, have political significance."

CHURCH BACKS CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ON MARRIAGE

AFTER YEARS OF REFRAINING FROM EXPLICITLY endorsing a constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriage, the LDS Church has joined a coalition of conservative religious leaders to call for an amendment that would define marriage as "the exclusive union of one man and one woman."

The statement was signed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve. Nelson's signature appears along with those of fourteen Catholic archbishops; four Episcopal bishops; and Baptist, Jewish, Lutheran, and Presbyterian leaders. A press release posted at LDS.org confirms the move and urges those who participate in public debate "to be respectful of each other" and to foster "an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect." (A copy of the statement is available at religiouscoalitionformarriage.org).

President George W. Bush first proposed a constitutional amendment in February 2004 when some judges and city mayors began to allow gay and lesbian couples to be legally married. BYU professor and World Family Policy Center manager Richard Wilkins enthusiastically supported the amendment, which he deemed "the only sure way to restore order to this venerable and surpassingly important social institution." LDS leaders, however, refrained at that time from officially endorsing the proposal (SUNSTONE, March 2004, 72–73).

Days after the Church announced support for the amendment, the executive committee of Affirmation: Gay & Lesbian Mormons issued a statement opposing the amendment. "Affirmation . . . believes that the United States Constitution should remain a testament to civil liberty and equality for all people, and that discrimination has no place in it," they wrote. "Encouraging committed relationships, not fighting against them, will bring about a stronger and more just society. Understanding and love have never been achieved by isolating one group of citizens for attack." Affirmation leaders have often pointed to the irony that the LDS Church would endorse the constitutional amendment after its staunch efforts in the nineteenth century to resist the federal government's attempts to regulate marriage in Utah.

The same irony was observed two decades ago by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve: "There is an irony inherent in the Church's taking a public position opposing homosexual marriages," wrote Oaks in 1984. "In [Reynolds v. United States], in which the United States Supreme Court sustained the validity of the anti-polygamy laws, the Court defined marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman. The court's stress in that case was on *one*. The modern relevance of the Reynolds opinion is in its reference to marriage as being between a man and a woman. The irony would arise if the Church used as an argument for the illegality of homosexual marriages the precedent formerly used against the Church to establish the illegality of polygamous marriages." (The complete text of Oaks's statement is available at www.ldspapers.faithweb.com)

FIRST PRESIDENCY WEIGHS IN ON NUCLEAR WASTE PLAN

ON 4 MAY, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY STEPPED INTO THE public policy arena once more, this time in an "official comment" about a U.S. Bureau of Land Management's proposal to have high-level nuclear waste pass through Utah, and more specifically for developing a train-to-truck transfer site in Utah's Tooele County.

The full statement reads: "The transportation and storage of high-level nuclear waste create substantial and legitimate public health, safety, and environmental concerns. It is not reasonable to suggest that any one area bear a disproportionate burden of the transportation and concentration of nuclear waste. We ask the federal government to harness the technological and creative power of the country to develop options for the disposal of nuclear waste."

Though the statement can be read as simply a plea of "not in our backyard," the First Presidency's encouragement for new technologies and options for disposing of nuclear waste perhaps represents something broader.

A *Salt Lake Tribune* story about the statement noted that this is only the fourth time in the past half century that the LDS Church has spoken out on something not typically deemed to be a "moral issue." The other instances cited by the *Tribune* are

the Church's 1981 statements about the MX Missile and comments made in the 1960s about communism, reapportionment, and the John Birch Society.

CLAREMONT CHAIR IN MORMON STUDIES MOVES TO NEXT LEVEL



John Hunter (left), son of President Howard W. Hunter, with Claremont Graduate University president Robert Klitgaard presenting the endowment document establishing a Mormon studies chair at the California school.

A 28 APRIL SIGNING CEREMONY AT THE HOME OF Claremont Graduate University president Robert Klitgaard officially launched the fundraising campaign for the Howard W. Hunter Chair in Mormon Studies. More than \$1 million dollars has already been pledged toward a total fundraising goal of \$6 million, which would provide funding for the post into perpetuity, as well as provide for the creation of a facility to house a center for Mormon studies and the chair.

Organizers expect to announce within the next six months a search to fill the position and expect to have completed the hire in time for the Fall 2007 semester. When the post is filled, Claremont will be the first secular university in the United States to have a dedicated faculty position in Mormon studies.

In an interview with the *Deseret Morning News*, Armand Mauss, a member of the Claremont Council for the Study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who has also been teaching courses on Mormonism at the southern California school for the past two semesters, said that the documents outlining the chair's creation are designed to "make sure the teaching and research done is legitimate academic research and not something in support of the LDS Church's mission."

The chair is named after the only LDS Church president to have lived in California. President Hunter's widow, Ines Hunter, still lives there, in San Clemente, Orange County. One son, John Hunter, will serve as president of the Howard W. Hunter Foundation, the non-profit entity that will administer the funding for the chair and other Mormon studies programs and conferences at Claremont. Another son, Richard Hunter, is also a member of the Foundation's board of trustees.

*BYU News***HUNDREDS PROTEST BYU
POLICIES TOWARDS GAYS**

SPEECHES, A RALLY, A MARCH, AND A DRAMATIC “die-in” marked pro-gay demonstrations held at Brigham Young University 10–12 April. With the participation of some gay and straight BYU students, the events were sponsored by Soulforce, a national gay and lesbian organization that describes itself as fighting religious and political oppression through nonviolent resistance.

The protest at BYU was one stop on a tour by thirty-three Soulforce members to protest the anti-gay climate prevalent in several religious and military colleges across the U.S. After conducting a survey of some 110,000 students in 2005, the *Princeton Review* ranked BYU among the ten colleges with the lowest acceptance of gay people.

On 10 April, some two hundred demonstrators held a rally in Kiwanis Park, adjacent to the BYU campus. One of the speakers was Matt Kulisch, a 23-year-old BYU student and returned missionary who identifies himself as gay.

“My church has always taught me the principle of standing for something true,” said Kulisch. “My integrity demanded this message of God’s love for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people be told in its entirety. Others have died because they did not receive this message. If I can’t put my life on the line in their memory, then I’m not being who I should be.”

On 11 April, Kulisch and other BYU students joined a march that ended on university property. The marchers were arrested, beginning with Kulisch. Before being arrested, the demonstrators staged an hour-long “die-in” in memory of twenty-four gay Mormons who had committed suicide in part because of conflicts between their homosexuality and Church teachings. Each participant waited while the biography of the person he or she represented was read, then, carrying a lily, walked to a field and collapsed on the grass.

Lauren Jackson, who is straight, was one of the BYU students arrested during the “die-in” event. “I’m not advocating a gay lifestyle,” said Jackson. “I’ve known people who have come out to me and who have struggled within the Church. An anti-Christlike attitude exists among many Church members.” Jackson was joined by her boyfriend Alex Liberato, who recently returned from serving an LDS mission in Chile.

BYU student Emil Pohling did not participate in the march but told the press he will leave BYU because he constantly worries he will be disciplined under BYU’s Honor Code.

“I’m constantly in fear of doing something that would have some repercussions,” said Pohling. “The counselor I



Soulforce member Jake Reitan was one of more than twenty pro-gay demonstrators arrested at BYU.

spoke to said any implicit or explicit act or show of homosexuality is subject to investigation or review by the Honor Code Office. I’m worried that anything I do, including this interview, may be considered implicit or explicit behavior.”

Pohling says he knows at least fifty gay or lesbian BYU students.

BYU spokesperson Carri Jenkins told the *Deseret Morning News* that BYU has been preparing for the demonstrations since January. Preparations included a rare mass email to faculty, staff, and students, communication with the police forces of other colleges on Soulforce’s itinerary, and advice from LDS Public Affairs and Church security.

Some of the decisions BYU made in order to minimize the chance for negative pictures included dressing its police force in suits and ties rather than uniforms and not using handcuffs to arrest trespassers.

Early on, Soulforce had contacted BYU with a list of activities they wanted to carry out on campus. “We told them we could not accommodate them,” said Jenkins.

Termination protest. Some two hundred BYU students participated in a rally to protest the termination of Todd Hendricks, an adviser to the student association who called for “greater transparency” in student elections. Hendricks says that during the past three years, student candidates were disqualified by a committee of administrators and ten anonymous students in a process that plays favorites.

Ashley Sanders, one of the rally organizers, says the protesters see Hendricks’s termination as part of a larger problem with academic freedom and administrative transparency on campus.

Institute renamed. BYU announced the renaming of the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (ISPART) to the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. According to BYU president Cecil O. Samuelson, “This change firmly sets the future direction of the institute, which is to promote profound scholarship supporting the restored gospel of Jesus Christ—something Elder Maxwell cared about deeply.”

CHURCH STATEMENT ENCOURAGES LDS DEMOCRATS

CAN YOU BE A DEMOCRAT AND A GOOD MORMON? A recent official statement by the LDS Church suggests you can. “Principles compatible with the gospel may be found in the platforms of all major political parties,” said the letter, read from LDS pulpits across Utah on 19 March. “While the Church does not endorse political candidates, platforms or parties, members are urged to be full participants in political, governmental and community affairs.”

The letter, similar in language to others Church leaders have sent in the past, came only days before political caucuses were to meet in Utah neighborhoods, and some believe the letter had an encouraging effect on Mormon Democrats who otherwise would not have participated in their caucuses.

“I don’t think I would have been here if [Church leaders] hadn’t said that,” said Byron Adams, from Woodland Hills, during what is believed to be that Utah town’s first-ever Democratic caucus. “It is a great hope of mine that people realize [being a Democrat] is not akin to being a Mormon who

owns a liquor store.”

Veteran Utah political pollster Dan Jones believes the statement is very important. “There are those who truly believe you cannot be a good Mormon and a Democrat, and I think this really dispels that notion,” said Jones. “I think there are many Democrats in the Legislature and in public office at all levels that have encouraged the Church to put out a statement.”

For an encouraging word prior to this latest statement, Mormon Democrats could look to a January 1998 *Salt Lake Tribune* interview given by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the First Quorum of the Seventy in which he stated that the Church needs members to be in both political parties and that the lopsided Mormon Republican dominance in Utah hurts both public policy and the Church (*SUNSTONE*, August 1998, 82–87).

In a 2004 survey, 61 percent of Utahns claimed Republican affiliation while 24 percent said they were Democrats.



Marlin K. Jensen during his 1998 interview about the Church and politics.

PAUL FRAUGHTEN, SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Solar Flare

THEATER WARNS MOVIEGOERS THAT LDS FILM IS “NOT CHRISTIAN”

A SAN DIEGO MOVIE THEATER SPARKED OUTRAGE AMONG MORMONS WHEN THEY LEARNED ITS STAFF WAS issuing a warning to moviegoers that Richard Dutcher’s film *States of Grace* is a “Mormon,” not a “Christian,” film. The staff of the Horton Plaza 14 Theaters said that they began giving the warning because people had complained that they were induced to see the film on false pretenses.

More than thirty supporters of the film gathered in San Diego to protest the theater and reaffirm that Mormons are Christian. With signs that read, “Grace is for Mormons, too” and “Mormons (heart) Jesus, too,” a small group protested by the theater while a larger group gathered in a nearby hotel.

Dutcher attempted to minimize the incident, urging supporters not to let things get out of hand. “I asked them to see if they could counter the accusations about not being Christian by doing something that is Christian—by turning the other cheek,” Dutcher told a *Deseret Morning News* reporter. “It was just an ill-informed, ill-advised effort on the part of a few overzealous employees. And the theaters, for the most part, have been very supportive of the film.”

States of Grace explores themes of faith and redemption in the lives of a group of people whom Mormon missionaries encounter as they preach in the streets of Los Angeles. To hear a podcast interview in which Dutcher talks about his new film, visit SunstoneBlog.com.



“I feel I need to warn you that *States of Grace* is NOT a Christian movie”

JEANNETTE ATWOOD, BASED ON CONCEPT BY HUGO OLAIZ AND JOHN CHARLES DUFFY

People



Deceased. CAROL JEAN CLARK OTTESEN, 76, on 19 March, in Mapleton, Utah. Ottesen taught English and Native American Studies at BYU and English at Cal State Dominguez Hills, and Shandong Medical School and Beijing University in China. She was the author of three books and several times won SUNSTONE writing prizes, most recently for her Eugene England Memorial Personal Essay Contest memoir, "Murky Ponds and Lighted Places" (SUNSTONE, July 2003).

Married. ELDER RUSSELL M. NELSON, 82, of the Quorum of the Twelve, to WENDY LEE WATSON, 56, in the Salt Lake Temple. "Open your eyes, man!" said Nelson in a dramatic speech delivered during the April 2006 General Conference. "Can't you see? Pay attention! Your wife loves you! She needs you!" Five days later, he took his own advice to heart as he married Watson, a popular LDS author and BYU professor with degrees in nursing, psychology, marriage and family therapy, and gerontology. Nelson's first wife, Dantzel White Nelson, died 12 February 2005. By marrying Watson, Russell joins fellow apostles L. Tom Perry and Dallin H. Oaks, who also have two wives sealed to them for eternity.



LDS.ORG



Placed. On the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list, WARREN JEFFS, 50. Jeffs, the leader of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is wanted in connection with charges of sexual misconduct with a minor and other crimes. He has not been seen by anyone outside the FLDS community for two years. With Jeffs's elevation to the Top Ten list, the reward for information leading to his arrest jumps from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Jeffs's brother, SETH STEED JEFFS, 33, pled guilty on 28 April to a federal charge of harboring a fugitive. Jeffs was arrested last October following a traffic stop near Pueblo, Colorado. He was in possession of a large amount of cash, as well as numerous cell phones, letters, and other items intended for his older brother. Jeffs told police he didn't know his brother's whereabouts and wouldn't tell them if he did. Sentencing for Jeffs is set for 14 July.



Defensive. Mormon U.S. Representative JOHN DOOLITTLE (R-Roseville, California), after the indictment of close friend and disgraced Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Doolittle recently sent an email to Sacramento-area Mormons blasting news coverage about his association with Abramoff and reaffirming his innocence. "I have done nothing to bring shame to myself, my family, or my church," he wrote. According to a story in the *Sacramento Bee*, Doolittle may have received as much as \$140,000 in perks and gifts from Abramoff.

Running. For Utah Senate, transgender activist and former LDS high councilor JENNIFER LEE JACKSON, 54. Born Ken Prince, Jackson served a mission in New York state, married twice, fathered six children, and served as a Sandy councilman. Three years ago, Jackson began to transition into a woman, legally changing her name and undergoing sex-reassignment surgery. In recent months, Jackson has received wide media attention, appearing in stories by the *Deseret Morning News*, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and National Public Radio.



Awarded. Olympic silver medal, to former BYU student and bobsled driver SHAUNA ROHBOCK, 27, in the 2006 Torino Winter Olympic Games. Rohbock and teammate Valerie Fleming completed their four runs down the 19-curve track just .71 seconds behind the gold-medal-winning German team. Other Mormon Olympians who competed in Torino include TORAH BRIGHT (snowboarding, Australia), MICHELLE DESPAIN (luge, Argentina), WERNER HOEGER (luge, Venezuela), and STEVE NYMAN (Alpine skiing, USA).

Threatened. With excommunication, BUCKLEY JEPSON, 57, after marrying his partner MICHAEL KESSLER in Canada, where same-sex marriage is now legal. Jeppson, a lifetime Church member, said that for several months, his stake president in the Washington D.C. area has been encouraging him to voluntarily resign his membership. Jeppson had been quietly attending LDS meetings as an openly gay man for years, having been welcomed to worship by his branch president. But when the



branch was combined with other units to form a ward, Jeppson's new bishop felt the need to consult with the stake president, who determined to act.

In a podcast interview for MormonStories.org in March, Jeppson claims he does not dispute the Church's right to excommunicate him if it so determines, but he believes that since it isn't his choice, the leaders should act rather than ask him to resign. "It's not going to be my choice to deny my heritage and my faith." Jeppson's story became national news when it was picked up by the Associated Press. The story was judged newsworthy because it is the first time a Latter-day Saint in a legal same-sex marriage has been threatened with Church discipline.

The Safe Space Coalition, a grassroots group of Mormons who support Jeppson, has launched a website at www.ldssafespace.org. The coalition is raising funds to send flowers to Jeppson's stake president and promote the message that "many are ready for a more inclusive paradigm that has safe space for all within the LDS Church."



Madeover. KATHRYN KNUDSEN, on the 28 April episode of the popular TLC fashion program, *What Not to Wear*. Knudsen, an artist and active Mormon from Provo, Utah, was flown to New York City, where she consulted with the show's two hosts and was given \$5000 to makeover her wardrobe. "In my religion, I need to be covered, and there are certain sorts of guidelines for that,"

Knudsen said. But by show's end, she decided the multiple-layered look she'd previously favored was too extreme. Of some tighter-fitting clothes she'd chosen, Knudsen mused: "It does make you feel a little more connected to your soul . . . to see your body and your brain at the same time." (Knudsen's artwork can viewed at kathrynnnudsen.com.)

Reported. To his stake president. MATT LIVINGSTON, a 17-year-old intern with the *Southern Utah News*, after criticizing Kanab, Utah, mayor KIM LAWSON for passing a resolution that calls marriage between a man and a woman "ordained by God." Unhappy with Livingston's remarks, Lawson sent a letter to the teen's stake president expressing "concern" for him. Days later, the Utah Press Association awarded Matt Livingston a \$500 Super Journalist Scholarship at its annual meeting in St. George.



This story really began with the Kanab city council's unanimous 10 January 2006 adoption of the "natural-family resolution," a nonbinding statement which touts marriage between men and women as "ordained of God" and conceives of homes as "open to a full quiver of children." It also pro-

motes young women becoming "wives, homemakers, and mothers" and young men growing into "husbands, home builders, and fathers." The resolution is sponsored by the Sutherland Institute, an independent, Utah-based non-profit public policy group, which had sent the resolution to small cities throughout the state. Kanab was the only city that chose to adopt it.

Unshaken. Filmmaker RICHARD DUTCHER, after a blaze destroyed his new offices in Mapleton, Utah. Although the flames burned valuable prints of Dutcher's *God's Army* and *States of Grace*, the negatives are safely locked in California. The fire was deemed accidental. "I don't like to see people walking around like some horrible tragedy just happened," Dutcher told the *Deseret Morning News*. "It's a setback for sure, but that's it. Nobody was inside, none of the firefighters got hurt, so it's just stuff [we lost]. I'll just have to build a better office somewhere else."



SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



Featured. Mormon historian D. MICHAEL QUINN, 62, in an 6 April story on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*. The article was about the influence of religious believers on hiring for university positions where the scholar's subject touches upon that faith tradition. Quinn was used by reporter Daniel Golden as an example of someone who, though eminently qualified as a historian and teacher, is effectively unhirable because of his research on controversial aspects of the Mormon past. Though the article addressed the phenomenon of undue donor influence on university hiring within the wider academy, the majority of the piece focused on Quinn and Mormon studies.

In telling Quinn's story, the article shared information about the scholar's personal finances which prompted a group of friends to start a support fund. For more information, visit www.helpmikequinn.net.

Stumped. All the contestants on the 16 December episode of *Jeopardy!* by the \$1200 clue in the category, "Mr. & Mrs. Smith." The "answer" read: "A book called *In Sacred Loneliness* documents thirty-three of the Mrs. Smiths in his life." In giving the answer, host Alex Trebeck said, "That would be Joseph Smith—Mormon." *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* was written by LDS historian TODD COMPTON.

