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## **Moving beyond the divisiveness**

**By Peggy Drexler**

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It's not just that Ann Coulter used the word "faggot." This, after all, is the person who continues to defend her argument that the women whose husbands were burned alive on 9/11 are enjoying the men's deaths.

What struck me were the depth and breadth of reaction to a gay slur in a country that is not all that far removed from swapping AIDS jokes.

So far, nine out of the 100 some papers that regularly or occasionally carry her column have dropped it. Republican candidates have run away from her. Big-name sponsors have pulled out of her Web site.

The New York Post got so many letters to the editor, it combined them in a separate story -- with most sentiment along the lines of this one: "She has mortified honorable Republicans and has assisted in pushing many of us away from the party." She found herself on Fox TV's *Hannity and Colmes* offering the tortured explanation that "faggot" wasn't really hateful at all. Hey, it was just a "schoolyard taunt."

When it comes to hate-speech, she is a repeat offender. It was not quite 12 months ago that she called former Vice President Al Gore a "total fag." The response then: hardly a peep.

The overwhelming national disgust triggered by Coulter's latest outburst indicates Americans may be having a change of heart -- and mind -- on such matters. If so, why?

I think there are multiple answers.

One, it may simply be a matter of visibility. Dozens of entertainers are stepping out of the closet or refusing to be pushed in -- Ellen DeGeneres, Nathan Lane, Lance Bass, Neil Patrick Harris and TR Knight among them.

They're here, they're gay, and we like them. All in all, something of a nightmare for those who see such visibility as part of the encirclement strategy of the homosexual agenda.

But it is more than that.

As the Bush administration dissolves in career remediation and sacrificial offerings, more people are willing to stand up and say: ``No, it's not OK to use the word `faggot.' "

It's not OK for the right to cynically trot out an in-house cheerleader for a pep rally on the politics of division. The real question is: How long will the media play a game the public has grown tired of -- even if the star player is tall, blond and photogenic?

It may even be something more fundamental. Rather than a tipping point in awareness and acceptance of another minority, maybe the Coulter attack reminds us we have become a whole nation of minorities.

To win in 2000 and 2004, Karl Rove cobbled together a confederation of believers: that you should be allowed to bring your gun to work, the right to marry is selective, women don't have dominion over their own bodies and Adam and Eve rode the dinosaurs to church. But last November, the coalition's seams proved no match for the epic incompetence of the people it put in office.

With demographers saying the terms majority and minority will no longer have meaning by 2050, it will be increasingly tough to consolidate by dividing. We're all going to be smaller pieces of a more complex puzzle. The more diverse we become, the harder it is to find someone to pick on.

I see such diversity in studying men and women. Two years ago, I wrote a book, *Raising Boys Without Men*, based on my studies of one of America's newer demographic pulse points: single-by-choice moms and two-mom families.

The protectors of legitimate family structure were not amused at my findings that these households -- with no man on site -- could produce strong, happy and caring young men. I never heard from Ann Coulter directly -- I still feel slighted by that. But others stepped into the void -- calling me a dunce, zealot, misguided liberal and, of course, a ``dyke" (I've been married 37 years and have two kids.

Two years later, I imagine such a book would still set the conservative punditry's hair afire. But as for the base to which they had monolithic appeal -- I wonder.

It's possible that more of us are open to the idea that happy, productive lives can grow from experiences different from our own. Or perhaps we have become so damn busy getting on with our own lives in a time of war and myriad uncertainties that we're too preoccupied to pass judgment on how others live theirs.

Maybe -- just maybe -- the Ann Coulters of the world are talking to people who have simply moved on.