

# Partisans Without Principles

What do evangelicals and other social conservatives have in common with liberal feminists and the secular left? More than either side would like to admit.

Once upon a time, the religious right thought sexual misconduct – certainly involving someone holding public office – was immoral; something they simply could not tolerate. How could anyone defend a man like Bill Clinton, they asked – a man who was credibly accused of sexual misconduct by more than a few women? That, in and of itself, made him unfit for office.

That was then.

Enter Judge Roy Moore, who is running as a Republican for the U.S. Senate in Alabama.

Today, evangelicals – not all, of course, but a lot – want proof that Moore was really involved with teenage girls when he was in his 30s. How do we know, they ask, that the women aren't just making it all up?

Funny, but they didn't need video evidence that Bill Clinton was guilty of exposing himself in front of Paula Jones or that he groped Kathleen Willey in the White House or that when he was Arkansas Attorney General he raped a businesswoman named Juanita Broaddrick in a Little Rock hotel room.

Back then, the allegations seemed credible and that was enough for social conservatives. Today, they demand verifiable evidence that Roy Moore did all those things to so many women who were young girls at the time.

And what about liberal feminists and the secular left? Back in the 90s, to their everlasting shame, they rallied around Bill Clinton. After all, he was a Democrat who supported abortion

rights – and that’s all that needed to know. And now, the same people who defended a man accused of rape denounce a man accused of fondling a 14-year old girl several decades ago.

It’s called tribal politics. And it’s not something partisans should be proud of.

But hang on, it gets worse.

Liberal Democrats have recently turned on the former president who they, or their ideological elders, once defended. Michelle Goldberg, one of the many liberal columnists at the New York Times, has written that she now believes Juanita Broaddrick, and that “Democrats are guilty of apologizing for Clinton when they shouldn’t have.”

I don’t recall reading stuff like that from liberal columnists in the New York Times back when it might have made a difference.

And Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a liberal Democrat from New York who holds Hillary Clinton’s former seat, recently said Bill Clinton should have resigned the presidency because of his relationship with Monica Lewinsky.

And you didn’t hear stuff like that from liberal Democrats who were busy rescuing Bill Clinton way back when.

But before we give them too much credit – “better late than never” and all that – let’s state the obvious: It’s not exactly courageous to speak up 25 years after the fact, when it’s safe; when Bill Clinton is of no use to Democrats; when his wife didn’t win the presidency; and when he’s the elephant sitting on the couch in the living room.

How can they go after Roy Moore, or any man accused of sexually abusing women, as long as they remain silent about the former president who was accused of sexually abusing women?

There's just so much hypocrisy anyone can take before gagging – or laughing out loud at the double standard.

But there's another reason some on the left are no longer covering for the former president. Their newfound *valor* makes it a lot easier to go after the current president.

When Democrats thought they could get rid of Mr. Trump because of “collusion” with the Russians, sex was on the back burner. But a year has gone by since he was elected and an uncomfortable possibility is starting to emerge: that maybe he won't be thrown out of the Oval Office because he and Vladimir Putin were up to no good.

What then? What could Democrats dredge up to bring him down? How about sex?

Which brings us back to Senator Gillibrand who said we have a different standard on sexual misconduct today than we did when Bill Clinton was president. “Things have changed today, and I think under those circumstances there should be a very different reaction [to how liberals defended Clinton],” she said. “And I think in light of this conversation, we should have a very different conversation about President Trump.”

Get it? Take down Bill Clinton – when he's no longer a force in Democratic politics – in order to make it easier to go after the man who currently resides in the White House, a man who once bragged on a hot mic that he could grab women by the you-know-what and get away with it – because he's a star.

So what should we take away from all of this? Well, until something changes, the partisans will tend to protect their own: A 32-year old man who decades ago allegedly undressed a 14-year old girl is better than a liberal Democrat who supports abortion with no restrictions. And a president accused of rape was better in office than out because he supported “a woman's right to choose.” And if going after Bill Clinton paves the way to unseat Donald Trump – hey, no one

really believes politics is about principles, right?

There are exceptions, of course – Democrats who take on Democrats accused of misconduct and Republicans who condemn their own – but too many of us have chosen up sides, and our partisan passions allow us to accept bad behavior, but only if the accused miscreant is on our team. We've become partisans without principles – and as I say, it's not anything to be proud of.