



Written by [Beverly K. Eakman](#) on February 16, 2010

Lesson Behind the John Edwards Scandal

Most people are probably aware by now that Senator and former presidential contender John Edwards (D-N.C.) is the latest in a long line of morally challenged politicians to be caught up in an extramarital affair — in this case one so breathtakingly depraved as to defy imagination. Of course, since he is a Democrat, there has been no talk of censure or other official rebukes from Congress, even if his political career is over — maybe.



Edwards engaged not just in an affair, but in a sordid entanglement involving paternity, for which he harassed his longtime, close aide into shouldering the blame. Edwards engaged in an elaborate series of subterfuges and lies to the American people, including a coverup with “hush money” supplied by two wealthy campaign donors.

The truth came to light when [longtime aide Andrew Young](#) decided he couldn’t take it anymore and wrote a surprise, tell-all book on his boss, entitled [*The Politician: An Insider’s Account of John Edwards’s Pursuit of the Presidency and the Scandal That Brought Him Down*](#). In it, Young tells us:

- Edwards not only lied not about his extramarital dalliance, but during his 2008 presidential campaign, he intimidated Young and his wife into publicly announcing that it was Young, not his boss, who had fathered the out-of-wedlock child with Edwards’ mistress, Rielle Hunter.
- A sex tape was made of one of Edwards’ trysts (apparently now worth millions of dollars).
- Edwards unsuccessfully encouraged Hunter to abort their out-of-wedlock child and was furious when she refused.
- Two wealthy billionaires, “Bunny” Mellon and Fred Baron, not only bankrolled Edwards’ failed presidential bid but also hid the pregnant Hunter away in luxury so as not to “taint” the Edwards campaign.
- Edwards lied blatantly to the American people during his ill-fated campaign bid concerning his “stand” on moral issues.

Predictably, Andrew Young’s bombshell book release caused a furor. He was interviewed on *20/20* and the *Today Show*, among others. He has been accused by colleagues and others on the liberal side of the fence of penning the book solely for financial gain, the rationale being that inasmuch as his boss lost two election bids, he would have no further need for Young’s services, leaving the couple in the lurch with a mansion and other luxuries to pay for.

Or, could it be that Andrew Young and his wife, in “fessing up” to their role in John Edwards’ vast deceptions (at the risk of incurring unwanted humiliation and scrutiny), were in reality engaging in a



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desperate attempt to stave off retribution from Edwards and his powerful backers, and not merely trying to rescue their finances?

It's hardly an academic question. Psychologists, theologians, and philosophers seem to agree on one point regarding public figures and others who lie brazenly, easily, and often about life's most important issues, fully expecting their families and subordinates to perform likewise on their behalf; who go to the trouble of creating recordings of their scandalous behavior for future entertainment; who secure financial backing from the extremely rich and powerful to aid, abet, and hide their lies and manipulate the masses for political aims; who casually disregard their own families, including children and ill relatives; and who live one life while pretending to live a vastly different life: They are fully capable of vengeance.

Would [Clinton volunteer aide Kathleen Willey](#) have endured months of harassment, including a dead pet placed on her doorstep (as a warning?) if she been more proactive in asserting that she was unwillingly groped in the Oval Office? Would the parents of [Mary Jo Kopechne](#) have pursued a more vigorous investigation into the death of their daughter if someone with less fame and power than the late Senator Ted Kennedy had drunkenly driven the car in which Mary Jo was riding into the water and then abandoned her?

Mere days before the release of *The Politician*, John Edwards (by then aware of what was coming) admitted his illicit affair and paternity. Upon actual release of the book, his already troubled marriage to Elizabeth, which had been previously obscured with copious PR, ended. When Elizabeth was battling cancer during her husband's trysts and political campaign, John Edwards' public-relations team swung into action, propping up his image as a "family-man," even though it was far from true. Edwards' "handlers" even had Elizabeth taking the podium to advocate enthusiastically for her husband. When the cancer returned with a vengeance (or maybe it was never in remission in the first place), John Edwards expressed the hope that his wife's death would occur sooner rather than later so that he could continue playing around, according to Andrew Young in his interview with *20/20*.

Eventually, the Youngs had little choice but to "[come clean](#)," what with paternity tests looming. Rielle Hunter was not about to lose out on a life of luxury (thus the refusal to abort) — an excellent source of blackmail. She embarked on a game she was more than adept at playing if [you read her history](#).

A child of privilege and wealth, [Rielle Hunter](#) (who had changed her first name from "Lisa" earlier on) was an opportunistic, sexually loose college drop-out and actress-turned-film producer of mediocre talent who already had a history of living on the edge. Her ethically challenged adult life followed in the footsteps of her father's; he was implicated in a horse-insurance scam that involved poisoning horses, though it was never clear whether he actually performed the deeds himself and he was never officially charged with a crime.

Turns out, not only had Andrew Young *not* fathered Hunter's "love child," as previously announced (much to the humiliation of his wife, Cherie), but the couple was intimidated into providing temporary housing *inside their own home* for Rielle Hunter until "other arrangements" could be made. Those "other arrangements" materialized via funding from longtime Democrat supporters "Bunny" Melon (see [here](#) and [here](#)) and Fred Baron (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

No wonder the Youngs were under enormous pressure to construct an elaborate series of ruses to deflect attention away from the whole mess!

Meanwhile, on the campaign trail, John Edwards was expounding about there being "two Americas" —



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one of “haves” and one of “have-nots” — which an Edwards administration would supposedly work to equalize. Never mind that Edwards, the Youngs, and the major campaign funders were all living in exorbitant luxury, the likes of which many “rich” people could scarcely imagine. Even millionaires might swallow hard at such opulence and comfort.

What candidate Edwards professed to believe versus his actual beliefs could not have been farther apart. For openers, Edwards clearly believed (a) that bourgeoisie rules about marriage and responsibility did not apply to him; (b) that \$400 haircuts, multimillion-dollar homes and hosts of “gofers” to deal with the irritating details of daily living were actually expected of successful, smart people like himself; and (c) that elites (i.e., the obscenely rich and successful) should be calling the shots in government, not “average” folks.

Perhaps it is unavoidable — as Benjamin Franklin and others must have suspected when they were thrashing out the U.S. Constitution, which in essence constructed our Republic — that seats of power are typically filled not with “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” types, but mostly with individuals whose backers are hidden and extraordinarily wealthy, often pushing private agendas that wouldn’t “sit well in Peoria.” It’s something that happens in all societies — some well-endowed, many in grinding poverty. The phenomenon is common to all styles of government: democratic, socialistic, and totalitarian.

The United States, however, is on the cusp of a particularly toxic sort of politics, however, because ours is the nation that started out pointedly exalting the interests of the common individual, as per founding documents like the Declaration of Independence. Though Karl Marx may have preached the supremacy of the beleaguered laborer (proletariat), and scores of socialist nations have preached egalitarianism, this is not what our Founders preached. Our nation’s Founders put a new twist on things: They said, in effect, that the rich had a right to be rich, that everyone had a right to pursue their own dreams, and that the wealthy had every right to pass along their largesse to their progeny if they so desired. But, all people stood equal before the law; wealth, inherited or earned, did not entitle one to privilege when it came to deciding what is best for the country — i.e., formulating a political or legislative agenda.

We are departing precipitously from these ideals.

Prior to the revelations of Andrew Young about candidate John Edwards, practically nobody knew who “Bunny” Mellon and Fred Baron were, just as most didn’t know about [George Soros](#), the late Armand Hammer (with his [close ties to the Soviet Union](#)), and a virtual laundry list of exorbitantly wealthy folks who, it turns out, have, with their money, been instrumental in guiding government policy. We all know about the attempts made toward campaign-finance reform, but the exorbitantly wealthy inevitably find dozens of loopholes, and office-seekers don’t really want those holes plugged for fear of losing supporters and media opportunities. Consequently, only household names, such as movie stars and Bill Gates, of Microsoft renown, are sometimes held to campaign-finance rules. The problem is that is only too easy to create a foundation, association, or other interest group to circumvent the inconvenient rules. The result is that the votes of individuals are diluted, as the prominent backers of covert agendas become, for all intents and purposes, purveyors of a clandestine agenda.

Today elitism masquerades as leveling-the-playing-field. It sounds good to those unschooled in the Constitution and world history, but it is not at all what the Founding Fathers advocated.

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