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Stand By Your Man! But Why?

Wronged Wives Seek To Salvage Spouses' Careers, Protect Family's Future

By SUSAN CAMPBELL And WILLIAM WEIR | Courant Staff Writers

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Why, oh why, do so many political wives stand behind their fallen husbands when they make public pronouncements of infidelity? Take Silda Wall Spitzer, Harvard Law-educated wife of a New York governor who was a client of a high-end prostitution ring.

Dina McGreevey, ex-wife of a former New Jersey governor who resigned after his gay affair with a man he had hired was made public, told CNN that political wives stand pat for "very personal reasons."

According to public-relations experts, psychotherapists and educators, those reasons can include:

1. A desire for damage control. Paul Quinlan, psychology professor at American International College in Springfield, said wives' concerns may extend first to "protecting the children from the acid fallout of a spouse's infidelity."
2. An acknowledgment that the family's financial future is tied to the politician. California-based author and psychotherapist Tina B. Tessina says "a political spouse, if she's a serious person, knows she has a responsibility to stand by her husband, at least in public. She's protecting her financial status and her family by supporting him."
3. A political wife also has an image to protect, says Debbie Mandel, author and radio host. "By supporting him, she demonstrates to the world that she is not an object of pity because he loves her," said Mandel.
4. Ultimately, the wife is trying to set the standard of behavior. If she can forgive, perhaps so should we. "They ultimately do this to save their spouse's career," said Alex Kortiz of Utah-based Sprout Marketing. "If they're standing behind their spouse and have forgiven them, then so can his/her constituents."

**Antonio Villaraigosa**

Democratic Mayor of Los Angeles

Scandal: Had an affair with Mirthala Salinas, a television news reporter on a local Spanish-language TV station. Salinas was covering the mayor's office at the time of the affair.

Did wife stand by him?: No. Corina Villaraigosa (above) filed for divorce last year.

Political fallout: He's still in office but considered politically more vulnerable.

Quote: "Know that when you keep commitments to yourself, it's easier to keep commitments to others," Corina Villaraigosa said at a fundraiser in her first public remarks since news of her husband's affair broke.

**Larry Craig**

Republican Idaho Senator

Scandal: Pleaded guilty to lewd conduct after police officers said he tapped out a code for sexual liaisons in the stall of a men's bathroom. Last month, the Senate Ethics Committee sent Craig a letter admonishing him for his conduct.

Did wife stand by him?: Yes, Suzanne Craig and her husband are still together. She also defended her husband in a much publicized interview with Matt Lauer.

Political fallout: He was going to resign (a poll showed 55 percent of voters wanted him to) but changed his mind. He says he won't seek re-election this year.

Quote: "I don't listen to other people's rumors. I know what's right," Suzanne Craig said.

Jim McGreevey

Former Democratic Governor of New Jersey

Scandal: He announced he was a "gay American," and resigned after acknowledging he had had an affair with a male employee.

Did wife stand by him?: Dina Matos stood by him at his announcement, but they separated shortly after, followed by a contentious divorce. She wrote a book and appeared on "Oprah."

Political fallout: He left politics and went on to teach ethics at Kean University in New Jersey.

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Quote: "I thought I had it all, I thought it was the American dream, and it turned out to be a nightmare," said Dina Matos.

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Rudy Giuliani
 Former Republican mayor of New York
Scandal: Began appearing in public with Judith Nathan (above) in 2000 while still married to his wife, Donna Hanover. Later that year, he publicly acknowledged that he and Nathan were in a romantic relationship.
Did wife stand by him?: Donna Hanover and Giuliani went through a rather ugly and public falling out. Giuliani's son has also harshly criticized him.
Political fallout: His presidential campaign sputtered. His personal life, though, didn't seem as much of a factor during the campaign as some had predicted.
Quote: "Today's turn of events brings me great sadness. I had hoped to keep this marriage together," -- Hanover told reporters in 2000.

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Bill Clinton
 Democratic President
Scandal: Monica Lewinsky
Did wife stand by him?: Yes. Hillary Clinton also defended her husband in 1992 on "60 Minutes," in which Bill Clinton denied having an affair with Gennifer Flowers. He did, however, acknowledge "causing pain in my marriage." Years later, he admitted to having an affair with Flowers.
Political fallout: He left office with one of the highest approval ratings of any president. He was first considered an asset in his wife's presidential campaign but was deemed more of a liability the more he talked.
Quote: "I'm not some Tammy Wynette, standing by my man," Hillary Clinton said.

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Gary Hart
 Former Democratic Colorado senator
Scandal: Photographed with Donna Rice on his lap on a yacht called Monkey Business in 1987. Days before, he dared reporters to follow him during his presidential primary campaign of 1987.
Did wife stand by him?: Yes, Lee Hart and husband are still together.
Political Fallout: Dropped out of the presidential race about a week after the photo appeared. Now a contributor to the online Huffington Post.
Quote: "Follow me around. I don't care. I'm serious. If anybody wants to put a tail on me, go ahead. They'll be very bored," said Hart, less than a week before the Donna Rice photo was published.



Warren G. Harding
 Republican President
Scandal: He was said to have carried on several extramarital affairs before and during his presidency, most notably with Nan Britton, from his home state of Ohio. More details will be available in 2023, when many of Harding's letters will be made public.
Did wife stand by him?: Florence Harding is said to have ignored the rumors of her husband's affairs. However, some believe his death in office was caused by her poisoning him.
Political fallout: With an administration rife with scandals of a nonsexual kind, rumors of affairs were the least of Harding's problems.
Quote: "I have only one real hobby -- my husband," Florence Harding said.

Alexander Hamilton
 Founding Father, Federalist
Scandal: Had an affair with Maria Reynolds, wife of