

## Which Jesus?

By David Salcido

**T**here's a large Christian Progressive church right across the street from the line of houses that make up my neighborhood. This church boasts a mostly African American congregation, but none of us are really sure just what it is that makes it "progressive," except, of course, for the sign. One thing we can all agree on, however, is that we love having these people around. They're courteous, polite and damn, do they know how to dress. Maybe that's what makes them so progressive.

Heathens that we are, there has been many a Sunday morning when we've hung out, on one front porch or another, drinking mimosas and enjoying the parade of brightly colored outfits which slowly fill the parking lot and gather in small boisterous groups before trickling inside to practice whatever arcane rituals their particular brand of worship calls for. Generally, this spectacle leads to lively discussion, ranging anywhere from the dichotomy of progressive religions to the fashionable timelessness of hats.

On a recent Sunday morning, we were joined by Lynda, a lesbian yoga therapist and long-time friend of my neighbor two doors down. She was just as fascinated as we were by the plumage on display across the street. "I wonder what their services are like," she said, absently, voicing a question we had all asked at one time or another. Being heathens, however, none of us could enlighten her.

She watched for a while longer, then said, "They really go all out, don't they?"

"Every week," answered the neighbor whose porch we had invaded. "But you should really see them on Easter Sunday. Then it's all about the hats. The bigger and more outrageous the better."

We all clucked and chuckled in agreement.

"Do you think they would let me in dressed like this?" Lynda asked.

We all took in her khaki shorts, Birkenstock sandals and "My Girlfriend Can Kick Your Boyfriend's Butt" t-shirt. The general consensus was negative.

She nodded. "Jesus probably wouldn't like it."

"Not that Jesus," I commented.

Lynda's eyebrows went up. "That Jesus? Is there more than one?"

"Of course there is," I answered confidently. "There are more versions of Jesus than there are Barbie dolls."

"Okaaaaay," she said, doubtfully. "Name some."

I thought about it. "Well, let's see. There's Catholic Jesus, who apparently wants us all ignorant and uneducated, so we don't question his ambassador on Earth, the Pope. There's Fundamentalist Jesus, who wants us all to believe that we're going to hell unless we close our minds and condemn anyone and or anything that exhibits any kind of difference whatsoever. There's Political Jesus, who, if our esteemed President is to be believed, wants us to invade every country with oil and subjugate them to the greater Democratic good..."

"Okay, okay," Lynda laughed. "I'm sorry I asked." Then, "You really don't like Christians very much, do you?"

"Of course I do," I said genuinely surprised. "Some of my favorite people are Christians. Why would you ask that?"

"Um... well, for starters, you don't have anything good to say about Jesus."

"Wait," I bridled, "I didn't say anything bad about Jesus. I was talking more about the people who use Jesus as the popular poster boy for their own twisted philosophies, just so they can get other people to listen. Poor Jesus. He's probably the most misquoted and certainly

the most misinterpreted philosophers of all time. Actually, I have a lot of admiration and respect for Old School Jesus."

"Old School Jesus?"

"Yeah, you know... love thy neighbor, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, let he who is without sin cast the first stone... that guy. I dig him. As opposed to Jesus 2006, the latest incarnation, whose philosophy seems to be 'if it's different, hate it and if it's radically different, kill it.'"

She laughed. "Yeah, I have to admit, I don't really like that version of Jesus much."

"None of us do."

Lynda turned her gaze back to the half full parking lot across the street. The progressive pilgrims had all arrived and filed inside. The lot was quiet. "You know," she said, "We're all going to hell."

"Yeah," I answered, "but which one?" I didn't say it out loud, but personally I'm hoping for a progressive hell with snappy dressers and really cool hats. I'm guessing I have a snowball's chance, but it's always good to have hope.

