



## Cheney Poses With Newborn Grandson, But Not His Lesbian Daughter

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A picture is worth a thousand words. In this case the silence is deafening.

Picture the photo of the Vice President and his wife and their newborn grandchild -- fresh from delivery and still wrapped in his hospital-issue receiving blanket. What's missing here? The child's parents, of course.

The fact that this White House chose to announce the birth of Vice President Cheney's grandson -- Samuel David Cheney -- with a photo of the baby without either one of his two mothers in sight should come as no surprise. This administration continues to try to have its cake and eat it too when it comes to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Americans.

Think about it. Samuel is the Cheney's sixth grandchild -- but can you recall seeing photos of any of the other grandchildren? The only thing that makes Samuel's birth newsworthy at all is that his birth mother, Mary Cheney, is both a lesbian and the daughter of the man who is second in command of an administration that has been more destructive to the lives of LGBT parents and their families than any other group in American history.

By virtue of Mary's status as the Vice President's daughter, she and her partner, Heather Poe, continue to be arguably the most prominent Republican lesbian couple in the country. Mary's pregnancy has been covered by the media since it was first announced. The couple welcomed their first child, Samuel, into the world earlier this week. And yet the mothers are not included in the photo that was sent out to announce the birth of their child.

A more astute media might be asking why there is no photo availability of the entire family, but that is not happening. As a result of the absence of a compelling and truly representative visual to accompany the story, there has been minimal media coverage of the latest addition to one of the nation's most prominent LGBT-headed families. Once again, this administration has manipulated the media for its own purposes -- and the media has allowed them to do so. And, once again, LGBT-headed families remain largely faceless and invisible to the majority of America.

As a lesbian mother and an advocate for full equality for LGBT-headed American families, I have followed Mary Cheney's pregnancy with great interest and empathy. I have read and appreciated her statement that their baby is a "gift from God" -- for is that not true of all children?

I certainly believe that about mine. I have also read Mary's statement that, in her view, their child is "not a political statement." I wish that were also true. I absolutely join Mary and Heather in their desire to live in a world -- and to raise their son in a world -- in which that were the case. However, the unfortunate reality is that our children and our families are politicized -- but not by us. Mary and Heather's invisibility in the public announcement of their own son's birth is proof of that reality.

It is no secret that President Bush and Vice President Cheney's re-election campaign strategy centered around mobilizing the most conservative elements of the Republican Party by targeting LGBT people and their families. Ballot initiatives about same-sex marriage were introduced in many states with the specific intent of bringing religious conservatives to the polls.

However, when asked about his daughter Mary's sexual orientation, Vice President Cheney has consistently asserted his love and support for his daughter. In addition, the Vice President was described by an official White House spokesperson as "looking forward with eager anticipation" to the birth of his sixth grandchild. Additionally, when asked specifically about Mary and Heather becoming parents, President Bush replied that he thought Mary would be "a loving soul to her child" and "a fine mom." Mary's partner, Heather, reportedly even receives protection from the Secret Service.

Nevertheless, in a cowardly move to mollify their conservative base, the administration stripped Samuel's lesbian mothers from the picture heralding his arrival. It simply doesn't get any more political than that.

*Jennifer Chrisler is the Executive Director of Family Pride, the nation's only organization dedicated to achieving equality for gay families and their children. She and her spouse are raising twin boys.*

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