



BOBBY
JINDAL
HIS DESTINY AND OBSESSION

TOM ASWELL

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My good fortune of falling under the influence of those who cared about me continued in my professional career. Tom Kelly gave me my first newspaper job—in advertising sales—at the *Ruston Daily Leader* when I walked in off the street with no experience in sales or journalism. Just as former US House Speaker Tip O'Neill said all politics is local, Tom Kelly taught me that all journalism is about people. Without the human element, there can be no story. No one ever took a greater interest in my career than Tom Kelly. He kept bringing me back to the *Leader* every time I would leave for another job—four times in all. I have yet to determine whether he saw promise in me or was simply stubborn. Either way, thanks, Tom.

It would be a few years before I would return to Louisiana Tech to earn my degree. Greasing the skids was Tech President F. Jay Taylor who wrote a brief note

to the Tech student aid officer: “Do whatever necessary to assist in completing the necessary paperwork to qualify Tom for a student loan.”

Initially, my major was physical education. I had this misguided ambition that I could be a great baseball coach. Meanwhile, Tom Kelly had made me the *Leader* sports editor. The late Wiley Hilburn, head of the Tech journalism department, stopped by my desk one day and said, “Aswell, you’re a good writer. Why don’t you give up this baseball coaching idea and major in journalism?” Eventually, I did. Years later I joked to Hilburn that someday I hoped to find it in my heart to forgive him. Wiley, if you’re listening up there, you’re forgiven. More than that, I thank you for steering me onto that lifelong career detour.

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Introduction

“Despite holding the title of governor of Louisiana for eight years, we know very little about Bobby Jindal beyond his carefully-crafted public persona and well-scripted talking points.”

—Louisiana political commentator C. B. Forgotston

Author’s note: C. B. Forgotston, who in 2001 was the first to predict that Bobby Jindal would run for governor, died on January 3, 2016, only eight days before Jindal left office.

James Gill, a Baton Rouge *Advocate* columnist of some renown in his own right, said Forgotston’s pro bono blog was “a must-read for Louisiana political junkies.” Forgotston, 70, a retired attorney who had worked in state government, despised Jindal. Gill, in tribute to Forgotston, called him “a tireless scold, just for the love of it.”

In his last blog, written on New Year’s Day, Forgotston wrote, “There are only ten days until Bobby Jindal is no longer governor of Louisiana.”

Elliott Stonecipher, a Shreveport political consultant, said Forgotston “was working for all of us, all the time.” He said Forgotston “lived his hope for a Louisiana which would, at least, care enough to save itself.” Stonecipher said there is no hall of fame for those like Forgotston who scrutinize and publicize the voting records of politicians. “If we cared enough, perhaps there would be,” he said. “Then and certainly, the first inductee would be C. B. Forgotston.”

It was over, really, before it ever started. On November 17, 2015, Bobby Jindal made it official that he was quitting his ill-fated quest for the Republican presidential nomination. The resounding response outside Louisiana was a collective national yawn. Despite spending the bulk of his final year as governor of Louisiana in absentia while campaigning in Iowa, he never attracted enough attention to join the frontrunners in televised debates. Mired near the bottom of the heap, out



Governor Bobby Jindal and Terrebonne Parish president Michel Claudet meet with Michael Chertoff, secretary of Department of Homeland Security and Bill Ellis, preparedness analysis & planning officer with FEMA, and other officials including New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu to discuss the damages in Houma September 2, 2008. (Photo by Jacinta Quesada/FEMA.)

of money and with no money coming in, Jindal finally conceded what voters in Louisiana (and apparently those in Iowa) already knew: “Now is not my time.”¹

Even with his best efforts, Iowans never warmed up to him and never really seemed to learn just who he was.

Does anyone really know Bobby Jindal? Is he the cool-headed father who, in 2006, delivered his third child at home? Is he the distracted president of the University of Louisiana System who preferred playing video games on an official visit to a Louisiana university? Is he the policy wonk who churned out a complex report on the financial problems with the federal Medicaid program? Or is he a skilled administrator who feels he is qualified to lead the free world? Is he the self-appointed engineering scholar who insisted on building those \$260 million berms that captured only 1,000 of the 4.1 million barrels of escaped oil from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill? Or is he the crafty politician? He said, “There’s no time for politics.” He then forfeited the spotlight of a nationally televised address.²

In 2006, barely able to call 911, Bobby Jindal followed a nurse’s coaching by telephone to help wife Supriya deliver their third child. Paramedics arrived just as he completed tying the umbilical cord. His apparent grace under pressure has been widely publicized by writers.

Not so his trip to Louisiana Tech University in Ruston during his two years as

president of the University of Louisiana System. Wiley Hilburn, head of Tech's Journalism Department, repeated the story of Jindal's visit on several occasions. "He was ostensibly on an 'official' visit to Tech," Hilburn said, "but he spent the entire day sitting at my desk playing computer games. He never saw the rest of the campus."³

In 2012, Jindal was scheduled to deliver a prime-time speech that doubtless would have bolstered his national image barring a repeat of his disastrous 2009 Republican response to President Obama's State of the Union Address. Instead, he chose to remain at home and take a leadership role as Hurricane Isaac approached. Like the Deepwater Horizon spill, it was a natural disaster tailor-made for Jindal. After all, he has shown a decided love for TV camera facetime so long as he does not have to answer tough questions from skeptical reporters. It is the type of situation where he commands center stage and controls the agenda—the best of both worlds.

But even then, Jindal revealed a fatal flaw in his political makeup. He lambasted the Obama stimulus package of 2009. (Nevertheless, he accepted the money and then flew by state helicopter to the remote outposts of rural Louisiana handing out blown-up checks to the locals.) Then, he predictably criticized Obama—but this time for not offering enough in federal help for Isaac.

Four years earlier, his response to approaching Hurricane Gustav appeared to put him on the brink of great leadership. In office less than a year, he made full use of television as he directed the evacuation from Gustav's path and presented himself as the voice of calm and reason. Rattling off statistics and hurricane relief information in a rapid-fire manner impossible to keep up with, he nevertheless gave the appearance of one in full command of the situation. He was even described by the *Washington Post* as a politician "on the fast track" following his Gustav performance. In retrospect, it was a preview of how quickly political fortunes can change.

Jindal's political ambitions, however, are worn plainly for all to see on the sleeves of his ill-fitting dark suits. But no one really knows the man himself outside his exclusive, protective circle. He rarely ventures outside that insulated bubble and when he does, it is heavily controlled by his handlers. Interviews and press conferences were a rarity in Louisiana, tightly scripted and limited only to friendly reporters.

How did this man evolve from obscure policy wonk to governor and presidential candidate in only a few short years? Once governor, how was he able to run roughshod over a docile Louisiana Legislature for eight years? How was he able to shove questionable ethics and education reforms down legislators' throats without

so much as a whimper of protest? And how was he able to convince lawmakers to go along with his sweeping privatization programs?

By the end of his two terms as governor, the state had given away its charity hospital system. A \$500 million surplus belonging to the Office of Group Benefits had been wiped out. And half of the \$410 million Medicaid Trust Fund for the Elderly. He raided the state's Coastal Protection Funds, slashed higher education appropriations and denied healthcare for hundreds of thousands by refusing to expand Medicaid. At the same time he made sure that nursing homes received their share of Medicaid. The operator of a number of Louisiana nursing homes, Elton Beebe, was, after all, one of his major campaign contributors.

Jindal was elected in 2007 and inaugurated in January 2008 as Louisiana's 55th governor—and the nation's first Indian-American governor. He entered office symbolic of change from the old way of doing business in the state. It had been a way that had seen governors, legislators, insurance commissioners, even sheriffs, all hauled off to prison for public corruption of one sort or another.

His election, while offering a glimmer of hope for change, raised its own set of questions that remain unanswered. The most pressing question was never asked by Louisiana's media: Was Jindal even elected legally? If not, would any of his actions as governor stand up to a legal challenge?

Born Piyush Jindal, he arbitrarily changed his first name to Bobby while still a young boy. It has been well-chronicled that he chose the name after the character on *The Brady Bunch*, the ABC-TV sitcom that ran from 1969 to 1974.

Years later, that raised questions as to the legal status of every bill, and every executive order he signed. Curiously, he never bothered to have his name changed legally. His paychecks as a member of Congress and as governor were issued to Piyush Jindal, not Bobby. Initially, the validity of his election itself was questioned in some quarters.

A check with the Louisiana Secretary of State's office quelled those doubts. State law allows a candidate to use only his nickname on a ballot so long as he uses his legal name when qualifying for office.

When he first appeared on the scene as some kind of political wunderkind, he was hailed by conservative radio talk show demagogue Rush Limbaugh as "the next Ronald Reagan."⁴

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich called him "the most transformative young governor in America."⁵

Steve Schmidt, chief strategist for 2008 Republican presidential nominee Sen. John McCain, said, "The question is not whether he'll be president, but when he'll be president—because he will be elected someday."⁶

Louisiana Governor Dick Leche was sentenced to Atlanta federal prison in 1940. Earl Long was carted off to a couple of institutions for the mentally ill in 1959. Even four-term former Gov. Edwin Edwards, like Leche, spent some down time in a federal lockup. By the time Jindal relinquished the governorship on January 11, 2016, he would be reviled, ridiculed and scorned more than any of them.

Other governors had tried to institute reform and all fell flat in their efforts: Sam Jones (1940-44), Bob Kennon (1952-56), Dave Treen (1980-84), Buddy Roemer (1988-92). All had tried to change the public face of Louisiana's ingrained political sculpture and all were doomed to single, four-year terms. But where others employed tact and diplomacy in their efforts to change business as usual, Jindal did not. He charged ahead full bore with his reform programs, inspired by Grover Norquist and the American Legislative Exchange Council.

Jindal's bullying, encouraged by that same legislative acquiescence, would leave countless thousands of helpless victims in his wake. His fiscal policies would, by the end of his two terms, leave the state wallowing in a \$900 million deficit in 2015-2016 and \$2 billion financial hole for the next fiscal year, as of February 2016. This despite his having inherited nearly a billion dollar surplus upon moving into the stately governor's mansion on Capitol Lake. His office was in the towering State Capitol that Huey Long had built but he destroyed Huey's beloved charity hospital system. He lived in the governor's mansion built by Jimmie Davis but he scorned the civil service system devised by the singing governor. Yet, the Louisiana media appeared to give him a free pass until it was too late.

Jindal didn't simply ascend to the state's highest elective office by accident, however.

It was a calculated progression that began with his employment at McKinsey & Company where he worked as a consultant for Fortune 500 companies.⁷

He shares that distinction with former Enron CEO Jeff Skilling.⁸

He joined the prestigious international consulting firm in 1994 but remained there for only a few months, establishing a pattern of never remaining long in one position until his election as governor of Louisiana in 2007. McKinsey remains the only private sector job he has ever held. Little is known about his job duties at McKinsey as the company's alumni Web site gives only passing mention to his career there. As we shall later see, he appeared to give that job only ephemeral attention as he pursued loftier political aspirations. At the same time, it is evident that he strived to implement many of the company's practices at the state level as governor. After McKinsey, he interned briefly in the office of Louisiana Republican Congressman Jim McCrery of Shreveport who assigned Jindal to

work on healthcare policy for his office. Jindal took all of two weeks to study the Medicare program and present a lengthy report on possible financial problems with the program—an incredibly short time to digest such a complex subject and to write an intelligent, cogent report, even for a Rhodes Scholar.

He was born on June 10, 1971, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana—but barely. His parents, Amar and Raj Jindal, immigrated to America from Punjab, India, six months before his birth. His parents both would become state employees, a class whom their son would later appear to hold in contempt. By any measure, he would have to be considered a Horatio Alger of academics. As a student at Baton Rouge Magnet High School, he played tennis competitively, operated a computer newsletter, a retail candy business, and a mail-order software company. He was one of only fifty students nationwide to be admitted to the program in liberal medical education at Brown University, a guaranteed ticket to medical school.

He graduated from Baton Rouge Magnet in 1988 and enrolled immediately in Brown University in Providence, R.I. While there, he would later write, he performed an exorcism on a fellow student. By now the story is well-known, having been published in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, among other major publications.⁹

He graduated in only three years, at the age of twenty, with honors in both of his majors—biology and public policy. His destiny was to become a living contradiction. As a trained scientist he would deny the science of evolution and global warming in his role of responsibility for molding official public policy for his state.

Named by *USA Today* to the All-USA Academic Team in 1992, he applied to both the Harvard Medical School and the Yale Law School but instead chose to study at New College, Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar. He received his Master of Letters in political science with an emphasis in health policy from Oxford in 1994 but rejected an offer to study for his Ph.D. in politics at Oxford. The subject of his thesis was *A Needs-based Approach to Health Care*.¹⁰

This was an area of expertise he would exploit to put his career on the fast track. While attending Oxford, he flirted briefly with the idea of becoming a priest but soon abandoned that idea.¹¹

But, apparently, not fast enough for his own ambitious timetable. Even at his first inauguration in 2008, family members were overheard by several in attendance as they discussed a presidential run. Before he would turn forty-four years of age, he would be running hard, and more than a little desperately, for the Republican presidential nomination. Watching him in his quixotic quest to find a place at the crowded table of GOP contenders would prove to be suggestive of a Shakespearean tragicomedy. His obsessive pursuit of the presidency left him with little time

to devote to what he continued to insist was the only job he ever wanted—the Louisiana governorship. Only when it became impossible to deny his real ambition did he abandon that empty claim. By the time his chaotic administration was drawing to a close, the state was a ship adrift in a sea of red ink and a man named Grover Norquist was said to be calling the shots from Washington, DC. Jindal was preoccupied with so-called family values issues, and even his former supporters in the legislature had finally turned on him.

But even before then, he managed to incense national Republican leaders. Following Mitt Romney's loss in the 2012 presidential election, he chided his fellow Republicans to "stop being the stupid party" and to "stop insulting the intelligence of voters."¹²

That did not sit well with the Republican hierarchy. His lack of national appeal could well be traced to his lackluster performance as Louisiana's chief executive officer. When he entered office in January of 2008, he was riding upon the hopes of four million Louisiana citizens. He inherited a \$900 million budget surplus from his Democratic predecessor, Kathleen Blanco. He leaves with a state on life support from eight consecutive years of fiscal crises. *Washington Post* writer Dana Milbank described him as sounding like "a homeowner dismissing the significance of his foreclosure by noting that he had done a fine job tending the flower beds."¹³

Robert Travis Scott, president of the Louisiana Public Affairs Research Council, said he had "never seen a budget cycle as desperate as this one" (Jindal's last year in office). While refusing to hold Jindal responsible for the entire \$1.6 billion shortfall, he held Jindal accountable "for the order of magnitude."¹⁴

Even after the legislature belatedly attempted to reverse earlier reforms in efforts to keep higher education solvent, there were late signs the patchwork repairs were failing. The 2015 legislative session had not been adjourned six weeks when it was learned the state faced yet another \$700 million budgetary shortfall. Through it all, however, Jindal appeared oblivious, choosing to concentrate instead on his ill-fated presidential campaign in Iowa.

As for that bizarre tale of his college exorcism, we will leave it to the readers and historians to determine if Jindal is simply a religious kook in search of a cult following or a principled man of devout faith.

One North Louisiana radio personality, however, witnessed the Jindal religious fervor up close and personal before he ever became governor.

Rick Godley was working at a Christian radio station in Ruston in 2007 when Jindal's handlers scheduled an on-air interview with Congressman Jindal, then making his second run for the governor's office.

"I always told my guests to just be themselves, not to try and be someone they

weren't," Godley said. "I did the same for Jindal. I told him to just outline his platform and tell us what he would do as governor." That turned out to be the last time Godley would get a word in during the interview.

"The first thing out of his mouth was how deplorable it was that his children were not allowed to dye Easter eggs in the public schools. I'm thinking, 'What in the world is he talking about?' He started in about public schools not being allowed to talk about God and he never shut up. I couldn't even break in to ask a question or to make a point."

Godley said after the interview was over and Jindal had left the studio, one of Jindal's handlers came in. "Timmy Teepell was with Jindal, but this wasn't Teepell," he said. "I don't know who it was. But when he asked me how it went, I told him I never wanted that guy on my show again."¹⁵

Anyone who still wonders why Jindal continues his attacks on Washington in general and the Obama administration in particular should understand it's all about politics. He is simply pandering to what he perceives as his base which is, at its best, a shrinking commodity.

His lack of voter appeal calls to mind the old Rodney Dangerfield joke. Rodney, it seems, had *two* imaginary friends as a child but they would go to the other end of the playground and never let him join them. Jindal never shows up in any of the lists of potential major GOP presidential candidates. That's because the Republican Party just doesn't want to play with him.

So, taking into account his polarizing negativity against Washington, it's pretty easy to see that things might have been different for Louisiana if he had never been elected governor.

Such conjecture raises the question of how Louisiana might have fared down through the years if the state had *always* had a governor like Jindal in Baton Rouge. Louisiana might even have beaten South Carolina in being the first state to secede from the Union.

But for simplicity's sake, an examination of the impact of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs on Louisiana should sufficiently address the question. What makes such scrutiny relevant is the fact that US Sen. Huey Long (whom Jindal often seems to be trying to emulate) was about as anti-New Deal then as Jindal is anti-everything federal is today.

Moreover, Jindal often seems to be trying to emulate Huey, albeit while appealing to a much different demographic base. Jindal's rhetoric is geared to an elitist, white electorate with jobs and 401(k)s, whereas Long was a champion of the poor, the unemployed, and blacks. Jindal takes money from Exxon to finance his political campaigns. Huey extracted money from its corporate predecessor, Standard Oil, in the form of heavy taxes to underwrite his ambitious public works projects.

Where Long wanted paved roads, free textbooks for school children and charity hospitals throughout the state, Jindal wants public services to be contracted out, preferably to supporters who pour money into his campaign coffers.

The nation was reeling from the Great Depression when Roosevelt came to power in 1932, thanks to Wall Street's greed. America likewise was suffering from the Recession of 2008 just as Jindal took office, thanks in large part to Wall Street again gone amok.

Huey Long did everything in his power to throw up roadblocks to FDR. His reasons? He planned to run for president in 1936 and he needed to incite opposition to Roosevelt and Washington in order to build a national political base. In fact, before his death in September of 1935, Long was quite effective as fewer than three dozen WPA projects were fully authorized for the state.¹⁶

Sound familiar?

Following Long's death and with his obstructionism abandoned by Long's successors, FDR funneled \$80 million into Louisiana for roads, bridges, water and sewerage systems, parks, playgrounds, public housing, library and bookmobile programs and literacy drives. That's \$80 million in 1930s dollars. That's about what it would take today to fund that proposed broadband Internet expansion for rural north Louisiana.¹⁷

We should never forget the date August 14, 1935. Had Jindal been around back then that would truly have been his own "day that shall live in infamy." That was the date that the Social Security Act was passed by Congress. We can only imagine how Jindal would have protested such a socialistic nanny state on that momentous occasion.¹⁸

If Jindal could somehow travel back in time to September 1935 where he would run and be elected governor just in time to revive the late Kingfish's anti-Roosevelt rhetoric, things might be quite different today.

Charity Hospital? Who needs it? But wait. Jindal wouldn't have that facility today to give away in his privatization plan yet to be approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). And without Big Charity, there probably never would have been similar state hospitals in Houma, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Alexandria, Shreveport or Monroe to close or privatize.

All those courthouses? Just drop them in the capital outlay bill and sell some more state bonds. The state's debt ceiling can always be raised by a compliant legislature.

As for all those buildings on the university campuses across the state, hasn't anyone been paying attention? Funding is being cut for all that. Who needs public colleges anyway? Let the students get a student loan and go to ITT Technical Institute in Baton Rouge.

And Ruston High School? That can be turned into a charter and vouchers

issued to the white kids—the smart, rich white ones.

All those New Deal programs that created jobs for Louisianians? Well, there probably wouldn't have been an unemployment problem in the first place if the workers weren't so greedy back then and would've agreed to work for 15 cents an hour. When you raise the minimum wage, businesses are hurt and people go on welfare.

It might also be a good idea to include a couple of programs President Lyndon B. Johnson rammed through Congress.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 opened the door of opportunity for African-Americans as nothing since the Emancipation Proclamation had done. And of course there was bitter opposition right down to passage—and beyond. There are those, some in elective office, who would repeal the act today, given the opportunity. The irony is that LBJ had opposed every civil rights measure when he was in Congress.¹⁹

Upon assuming the presidency on John F. Kennedy's assassination, he told one supporter, "I'm *everybody's* president now."

And, of course, there is the precursor to the Affordable Care Act, aka Obamacare.

Then there were those radical Social Security Amendments of 1965 which created Medicare and Medicaid.

There was rabid opposition to Medicare by the American Medical Association which insisted there was no need for the federal government to intervene in the relationship between patient and physician. And if any politician ever tried to terminate Medicare services today, there would be a blue-haired riot.

Medicare now provides medical insurance to 50 million elderly Americans and Medicaid does the same for another 51 million low-income or disabled Americans.²⁰

Louisiana has three members of Congress who are doctors. They are physicians: Senator Bill Cassidy of Baton Rouge, and Representatives Charles Boustany of Lafayette and John Fleming of Minden. What percentage of their incomes walked through their doors as Medicare or Medicaid patients?

And what if Jindal had made a different career choice and accepted standing offers from the Harvard or Brown University medical schools instead of entering public service? One can only speculate whether a Dr. Bobby Jindal would have harbored the same antipathy toward Medicare and Medicaid and patients covered by the two programs. Instead, he humored his father by majoring in biology but fed his own ambition by taking a double major in public policy. He felt that way he could save thousands, perhaps millions at once, instead of one at a time.

Now, after eight years as governor, less than seven of which were spent in Baton Rouge, Jindal is a private citizen in 2016. He has no discernible political future

as a choice for vice president or for a cabinet position. Jindal indicated he would devote his time to his nonprofit think tank America Next through which he has released policy papers on a variety of issues.²¹

But even on his way out the door, he could not resist a few unpleasant surprises for incoming governor John Bel Edwards.

In the waning days in office, his administration put into motion millions of dollars in pay increases for state employees even as furloughs are being considered to help alleviate massive budgetary shortfalls. Additionally, he quietly appointed nearly two dozen new board and commission members. A Jindal spokesperson was more than a little vague the week before Jindal left office, saying only that pay raise decisions had been left up to department and agency heads.²²

But at least four departments implemented 4 percent pay raises totaling more than \$19 million. With a minimum of seventy-eight different agencies and departments eligible for pay raises, the effect could be devastating to the new Edwards administration. In February, Edwards and Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne wrestled with a \$2 billion deficit project for the new fiscal year—and \$900 million deficit in 2015-2016.²³



Childhood photos of Bobby Jindal.

Chapter 1

Who Is Bobby Jindal?

Bobby Jindal was first inaugurated as governor of Louisiana on January 14, 2008. He would spend the next seven years and five months preparing for what he thought was his destiny: to be president of the United States.

Jindal formally announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination on June 24, 2015. A mere 146 days later, his dream had evaporated like the early morning South Louisiana fog that surrenders to the burning midday sun. Awakened to the harsh reality of big time politics and with only \$261,000 remaining in his campaign fund, he ended his quest on November 17.

But just who is Bobby Jindal? What was it that endeared him to the Republican national leadership in the first place—people like John McCain? What was the “IT” that people like Rush Limbaugh, Congressman Jim McCrery, Governor Mike Foster and even President George W. Bush saw? *Esquire* magazine asked rhetorically if he was a problem solver and not a politician, someone who sees a white man in the mirror, or a right wing extremist aligned with the ultra-conservative evangelicals.¹

Born on June 10, 1971, as Piyush Jindal, it is well established that he adopted the name “Bobby” for himself after a character on the ABC television sitcom *The Brady Bunch*. But even the circumstances of his birth and his adopted name raise questions if not outright controversy.

That’s because Jindal subscribes to the evangelical tenet that life begins at conception and because he has never legally changed his name from Piyush to Bobby. If he were to take the life begins at conception literally, it would disqualify him from ever becoming president. That’s because he was conceived in India and his parents moved to this country when his mother was three months pregnant with the future governor. The US Constitution requires that any candidate for president be “natural born citizen” of the US.²

Therefore, it would come down to the choice of the Constitution or the Bible. Jindal apparently had no problem choosing the Bible in his opposition to abortion and the Bible for the benefit of his political aspirations.

Though he was born in America, the deeply-ingrained caste system of India

may well have filtered down to Bobby Jindal through his émigré parents' Hindu faith.

If so, that may explain his "callous, heartless disregard of Louisiana's poor and mentally ill," said one observer who wished not to be identified. It is those who would be the "outcasts" and "untouchables" in Jindal's cultural world, he said. That could explain the lightened skin tone in the oversized wall portrait of Jindal that greeted visitors to the governor's office on the fourth floor of the State Capitol.

In his first run for governor in 2003, Jindal prepared for a TV debate with layers of makeup to lighten his complexion. When he appeared on camera, his skin "was about five shades lighter than it should have been, to the point that he looked ridiculous in person," an eyewitness said.

Why would he go to all that trouble to pass himself as being lighter in color? While prejudice against dark skin is prevalent in America, especially in the South, it is literally a religious tenet in India.

This reaction to skin color in India has its roots in the caste system, called *Varna*, which means color. That can be attributed in part to a verse from the *Rig Veda*, an ancient Hindu scripture, which describes the creation of the human race from the primal man, *Purusha*. Even today, most of the "untouchables," or *Dalit*, are the darkest persons. In the caste system, the dark skinned are outcasts, relegated to menial jobs.³

No matter which part of India one may be from, skin color makes a huge difference in the way in which you are treated. The belief held by many in India that light is better than dark is not held in the context of Caucasian-African comparisons. Fairer people do better in the job and marriage market. A fair-skinned Indian has more marriage offers and has a better chance of marrying "up" as compared to someone darker.⁴

India's obsession with lighter skin is well documented. The market for face cleansers and shower gels that claim to lighten the skin has skyrocketed there. India's whitening-cream market was \$432 million in 2010 and growing at a rate of 18 percent per year. In 2012, Indians spent more money on 233 tons of skin-whitening cosmetics than they did on Coca-Cola.⁵

"Indians are very racist," says film star Nandita Das, herself an Indian. "It's deeply ingrained. But there is so much pressure by peer groups, magazines, billboards and TV advertisements that perpetuate this idea that fair is the ideal."⁶

So, could it be that Bobby Jindal, consciously or subconsciously, perpetuated the caste system in Louisiana during his term as governor?

He would deny that, of course. But for the hundreds of thousands denied

basic healthcare and other services under his tenure, there might well be a different answer.

Equally perplexing was his running for governor as Bobby Jindal even though he never took the trouble to legally change his name. Voters twice elected “Bobby” Jindal as a member of Congress, twice as governor and on four occasions he took the oath of office as Bobby, not Piyush. It turns out, however, that in Louisiana at least, it is legal to place one’s name on a ballot by a nickname so long as the candidate’s real name is used when qualifying for office.

No one could ever say he was born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth. During his early childhood years, the family did not even own a car. His father, who initially found work with a railroad, commuted to and from work by bus. His mother, meanwhile, went to work for the State of Louisiana as one of its very first IT people. Thirty years later, Bobby would become her boss upon becoming governor.⁷

As a child, Bobby competed in tennis tournaments. He soon gave that up to start a computer newsletter, a retail candy business and a mail-order software company, all while also working concessions at LSU football games. Bobby was seven when his brother, Nikesh,, was born. It was not until Nikesh came along that the elder Jindals purchased their first home after residing in a series of apartments. Nikesh followed his older brother to the Ivy League but did not attend Brown nor did he go into politics. Instead, he attended Dartmouth and Yale to study law. Today, he is an attorney working with a prestigious Washington, DC law firm.⁸

About the same time a 13-year-old Bobby enrolled at Baton Rouge Magnet High School, he began questioning his ingrained Hindu faith, thanks in part to a girl named Kathy. He had been allowed to skip a grade along the way because of his exemplary grades. A devout Catholic, Kathy convinced Bobby to attend his first Roman Catholic mass. As a cover story, he says today that he lied to his parents, telling them he was going to a party so they would not know he was surreptitiously attending church. He also fell under the influence of his best friend, a born-again Baptist named Kent who gave Bobby his first Bible.⁹

As something of a paradox, Bobby also was an admirer of the character Alex Keaton, a Republican teen son in the NBC sitcom *Family Ties*. Another favorite was Gordon Gekko, portrayed by Michael Douglas in the movie *Wall Street*. As evidence that he liked Gekko, Bobby began wearing suits to school. Jindal’s suits were occasionally accented by a bow tie with the imprint of a dollar bill. He also opted for a briefcase instead of a backpack like the other students carried to class.¹⁰

One former classmate was Reagan Farr who explained Jindal’s attraction to Alex and Gordon. He said the characters, though fictional, represented the American

dream that would appeal to the teenage son of immigrant parents.¹¹

Another Baton Rouge High classmate, Elaine Parsons, remembered Jindal as the president of the school's math club which she described as "a big deal socially" at the school which stresses academics and which has no major sports team.¹²

It was while a student at Baton Rouge High that Bobby first began to consider Christianity as an alternative to his family's Hindu faith. His initial venture into his new spiritual experimentation was in Protestant-leaning, non-denominational teachings. He would not embrace the Roman Catholic faith until he entered Brown University.

But even in his early teen years, he already was putting distance between himself and his Indian heritage. As he moved closer to accepting Christianity, he told his spiritual adviser his parents would see his conversion as a "total rejection of being Indian." He said it would be like turning his back on his heritage. It would be like saying, "I hate everything about who I am and I reject everything about my family," he said.¹³

Though he may not have known it at the time, those words would prove prophetic. He would later wear his "non-hyphenated American" identity like a badge on the presidential campaign trail, saying, "We're not African-Americans or Asian Americans. We're American. If you come to this country, learn our language and get a job. Immigration without assimilation is invasion."

In late August 2015 *The Advocate* reported that Bobby Jindal and wife Supriya were planning to move into a 6,115 square-foot custom home in Baton Rouge after leaving the governor's office. Though he was more than two months away from bowing out of the race, the news of his new home raised immediate questions about the validity of his presidential campaign.

The home was being constructed in an exclusive University Club gated community south of LSU where prices run from \$450,000 to more than \$1 million. University Club is a 1,200-acre, master-planned community that abuts a 22-acre golf course, two pools, a fitness center, and tennis facility. LSU President F. King Alexander resides in the community and the Jindal children attend University Lab School on the LSU campus.¹⁴

Bobby Jindal appeared to be serious in his quest for the White House as he embarked on a tour of each of Iowa's ninety-nine counties in mid-July mired in abysmal standings in the polls there. Despite his poor showing, his campaign staff continued to insist he was gaining support in the Hawkeye State.

Even as he did so, however, some observers speculated that he might have been angling for a cabinet position in a Republican administration.

Secretary of Health and Human Services was one possibility.

Secretary of Education was another.

Still another was the possibility that Jindal might be positioning himself for a post-election high profile and big speaking fees that go with a national campaign—even a failed one. It worked for Sarah Palin following her selection as John McCain's running mate in 2008. Even Bristol Palin capitalized on Mom's time in the spotlight, pulling down \$30,000 per speech.¹⁵

When former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee made his first run for president in 2008, his total assets were less than \$700,000. He parlayed that run into a Fox News gig paying \$500,000 per year and he and his wife now own a beach house worth almost \$3 million.¹⁶

Rick Santorum's speaking fees jumped from \$6,000 in 2010 to \$40,000 and \$50,000 following his unsuccessful run for the Republican nomination in 2012.¹⁷

George W. Bush and Bill Clinton commanded six-figure speaking fees after their presidential terms. Even Hillary Clinton was pulling in \$200,000 per speech. Condoleezza Rice was charging \$150,000 per speech following their respective stints as secretaries of state.

Harry Truman eschewed such exploitation of his former office. When asked to serve on the board of various corporations after leaving office, he refused. His only pension at the time (\$13,507.72 a year) came from his US Army service. Only later did Congress pass the Former President's Act which provided him an annual retirement of \$25,000.

"You don't want me," Truman said. "You want the office of the president, and that doesn't belong to me. It belongs to the people, and it's not for sale."¹⁷

So, what lies in the future for Jindal? Like Palin, Huckabee and Santorum, his campaign appears doomed for failure. Unlike Truman, he likely will not hesitate to capitalize on his stature for financial gain. Whether it be as former governor, president of the Republican Governors Association or would-be presidential candidate, Jindal is not likely to fade into oblivion.

There is always a slot on Fox News, a position as a policy wonk for the Cato Institute, or well-paid speaking engagements. Whichever course he chooses, he can opt to build for another presidential run four or eight years down the road from his new \$800,000 custom home in Baton Rouge.

It worked for Richard Nixon after he lost to John F. Kennedy in 1960 and it worked for Ronald Reagan when he lost the Republican nomination to Gerald Ford in 1976. It even worked for George H. W. Bush when he parlayed his vice presidential service into the presidency after first losing the nomination to Reagan in 1980 eight years earlier.