

**INTERNATIONAL**

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# Trump's Christian right wing is cracking

Three Christians. A black pastor, a young Catholic and a Protestant of Asian descent. All are opposed to abortion. But all three turn their backs on Donald Trump. Is the president losing support from the Christian right wing of the United States?



THEME: ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES



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Boston / Portland

They line up with their signs in front of an abortion clinic in Portland, Maine. The few passers-by who stop to talk get material about pregnancy, including a small rubber doll representing a 13-week-old fetus.

For her, abortion is the only crucial issue when she votes in the November 3 presidential election. Although Joe Biden is also a Catholic, he can never get her support because he and the Democrats are in favor of legal access to abortion and the woman's right to rule over her own body.

"Trump has done more for the fight against abortion than any other president by appointing conservative judges. You do not have to be perfect to be president, and God has clearly had a purpose in placing him in the White House. "



Joanne Russell (left) demonstrates in front of an abortion clinic in Portland with Andy Levesque (70). Photo: Anne Hollande.



Abortion opponents show a doll of a fetus at 13 weeks. Photo: Anne Hollande

**” I am what is called "never Trumper". I will never be able to vote for him. He has chosen to be a terrible human being.**

Eugene Rivers, Protestant pastor and founder of the Seymour Institute for Black Priests

In 2016, 8 out of 10 white Christians voted for Donald Trump, and polls show he can expect massive support from the U.S. Christian right wing again this year. Preferably in the so-called Bible Belt, which stretches from states like North Carolina south and west into the middle of the United States. Nearly every second American identifies as a Protestant, while one in five is Catholic.

But a revolt is on the way. Led by Christian pastors, several groups of Christian abortion opponents in the South recommend voting for Biden. Groups like Not our Faith and Pro-Life Evangelicals for Biden recommend seeing the fight for life as more than just the fight against abortion.

In a statement, they state that they disagree with Joe Biden on the issue of abortion. But when voting, one should not only look at a subject, but seek a biblical balance and look at people's lives from beginning to end.

Among them is a grandson of the influential and now deceased priest Billy Graham, Jerushah Duford, who has always voted Republican. She also urges other evangelists to vote for Joe Biden and to distance themselves from the president.

"The Jesus we serve promotes kindness, dignity, and humility. This president does not represent our faith," Duford explained to the New York Times.

The revolt has spread to the Catholic Church. The nun Mary Traupman explained in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that she is voting for Biden as a protest against Trump's separation of refugee families at the border, his environmental policy and the rejection of health insurance for the poorest.

In Boston, Catholic priest Paul Garrity was called to order by Cardinal Sean O'Malley when he supported Biden on Facebook. According to the cardinal, the struggle for life from conception to death is the church's highest priority.

Catholics make up approx. a quarter of voters in the United States, and in general, they appear to be more open to the possibility of having an abortion than the evangelical Protestants.

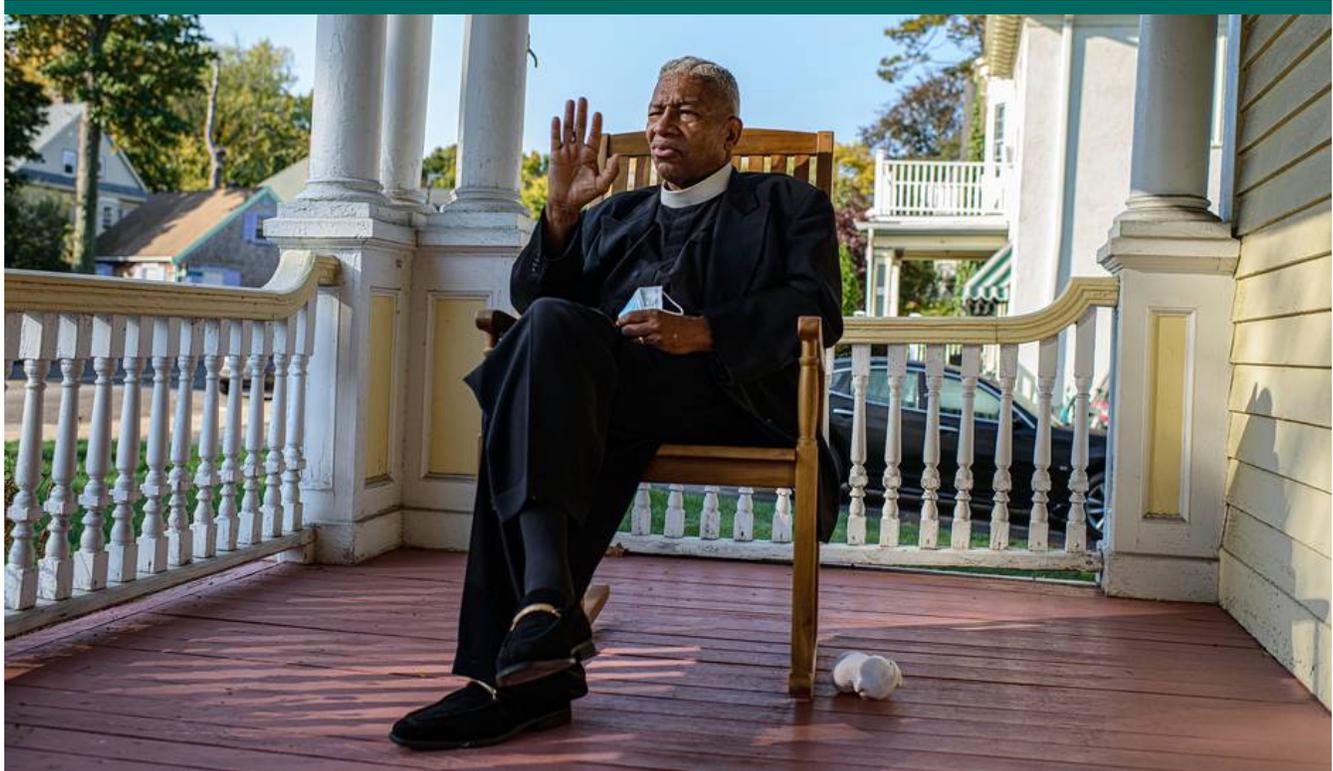
In the election campaign, both Trump and Biden play on their religious virtues. Biden often talks about being a Catholic, going to church on Sundays. Unlike the first Catholic president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, who stated that he was a Democratic candidate who also happened to be a Catholic, Biden actively uses his faith to obtain votes.

So even though Trump's Catholic supporters write off Biden as a false Catholic, a poll in the Wall Street Journal shows that Joe Biden has a small lead over Trump of 49 against 46 percent. among Catholics. Four years ago, Trump won a majority of Catholics.

*JP Explorer has asked three different Christian abortion opponents to explain why they have turned their backs on Donald Trump:*

## 1

### **The black on large**



Pastor Eugene Rivers is an institution in Boston, USA. He opposes abortion but distances himself from Trump. Photo: Anne Hollande

**Pastor Eugene Rivers** is a Conservative and was an external adviser to President George W. Bush. As a black man, he may be atypical of the Christian uprising against Trump because blacks have a tradition of voting democratically.

But he's a good story. He grew up in Philadelphia with a single mother and as a 12-year-old was forced to join a gang. The alternative was to get his head stuck in a toilet bowl and drown.

He cried out to God for help in the midst of an existential crisis between life and death when the boy Mad Dog from another gang in 9th grade tried to murder him with a meat knife.

With the help of a priest, he broke the social patterns and was educated in philosophy and history at the elite Harvard University. He later became a Protestant pastor and founded the Seymour Institute for Black Priests. His theories about using the church to get young people out of crime are used in Boston and other American cities.

"I am what is called 'never Trumper'. I will never be able to vote for him. He has chosen to be a terrible human being. I hope he loses big and that black voters show up. They only do that when they really love someone like Obama, or when they hate someone like Trump. "

percent, Mormons 1.6 percent, Muslims 0.9 percent, Jehovah's witnesses 0.8 percent, 22.8 percent . is not a member of a church according to the CIA's factbook.

Surveys have shown that in 2004 a majority of Catholics voted for George W. Bush, in 2008 and 2012 they voted for Barack Obama and in 2016 for Donald Trump.

According to polls, Trump won the Catholics by 50 percent. mod 46 pct. to Hillary Clinton. Up until the election this year, Joe Biden has a small lead over Trump of 49 against 46 percent. among Catholics, shows a poll from the Wall Street Journal and NBC News.

Catholics sit at 30 percent. of the seats in Congress.

If Biden wins, he will be the second Catholic American president in history. The first was John F. Kennedy.

The now 70-year-old pastor explains that there is a huge difference between black and white churches. Blacks cannot afford ideological fights or letting a single topic like abortion determine who they vote for.

"As blacks, we have to make pragmatic decisions every day. We support a policy that protects the poor. I am against abortion, but I have no problem with those who are not. I am conservative, but as a Christian I accept everyone. My friends are left-wing, gay and everything else. "

According to Pastor Rivers, blacks have at one point benefited from racial segregation in the United States. They have been allowed to have their institutions and churches at peace. It has provided a free space to develop an African-American culture that today dominates American culture in music, food, language and popular art. With a smile he continues:

'Sunday is the most racially segregated day of the week and it is good. Martin Luther King never called for the integration of black and white churches. Why should we spend Sunday with whites who can neither preach nor sing? "

## The Conservative Protestant



Throughout his life, Dan Oh has been a Republican and a staunch opponent of abortion. Now he's voting for Joe Biden.  
Photo: Anne Hollande

**Dan Oh** sits at the helm of a Presbyterian Protestant church in Beverly, a wealthy suburb of Boston. He is opposed to abortion and has voted Republican all his life. This year, he is calling for a vote on Joe Biden.

“Honestly, I would vote for anyone other than Donald Trump. I disagree with Joe Biden on many points, but I am convinced that he is basically a good person. Trump threatens the moral compass of our entire country,” said the 64-year-old chemical engineer, who came to the United States from South Korea as a 10-year-old with his parents.

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scary.

It is reminiscent of what happened in Germany in the 1930s:

“For the first time in my life, I am afraid of the future of this great nation. I fear that people who are loyal to the president will show up with their machine guns in Washington if he loses.”

Dan Oh does not believe that Trump's alliance with Christian groups is only about how he himself can benefit from it.

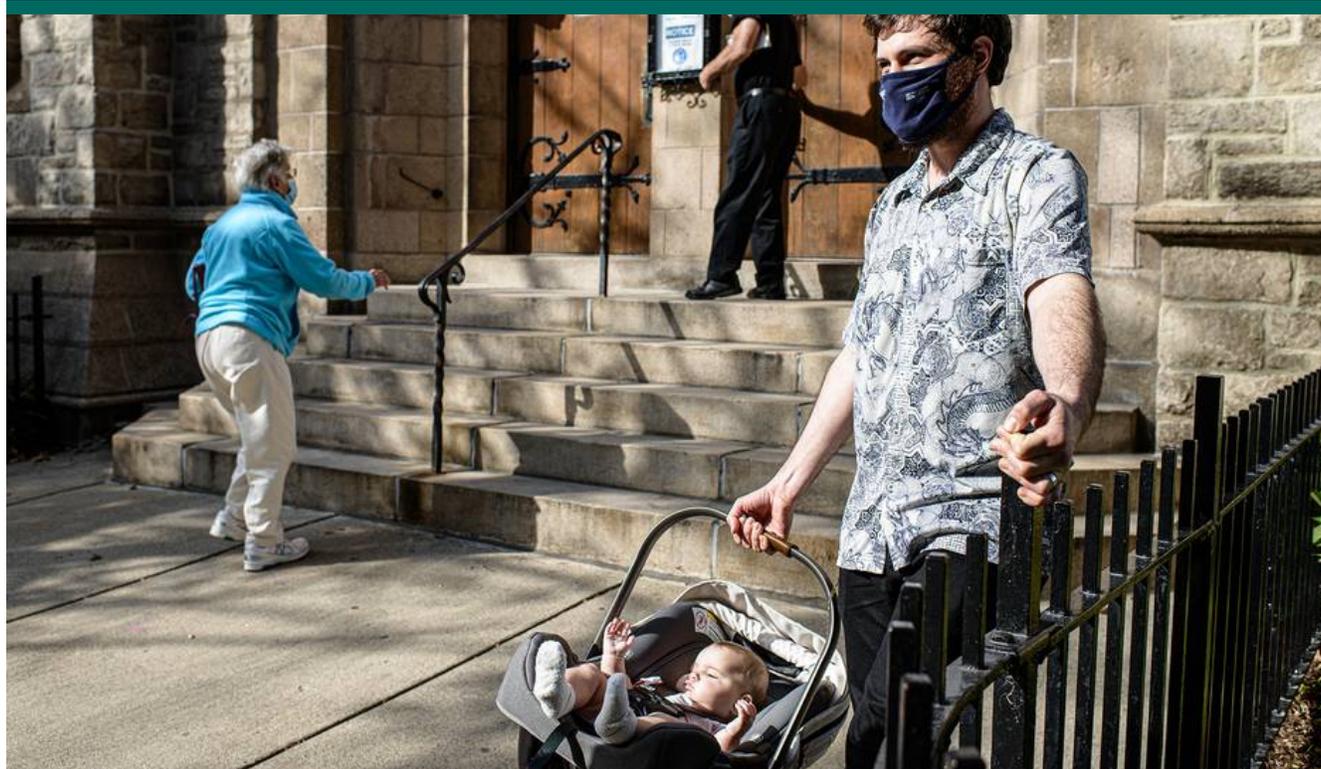
“He is not interested in the unborn child. He merely exploits Christians to obtain votes. He has no sympathy for the unborn child or for that matter for the living such as minorities or those he calls losers,” he says.

“In the past, like other Protestants, I voted for the candidate who was in favor of banning abortion, no matter who he was. But not anymore. Republicans are good at protecting the unborn child, while Democrats are better at protecting those who are alive by fighting poverty and social injustice. I prefer the latter.”

According to Dan Oh, many in his church think like him, but he is not sure that the Christian uprising will have much effect in the American southern states, where Christians are part of Trump's base.

## 3

### The young Catholic



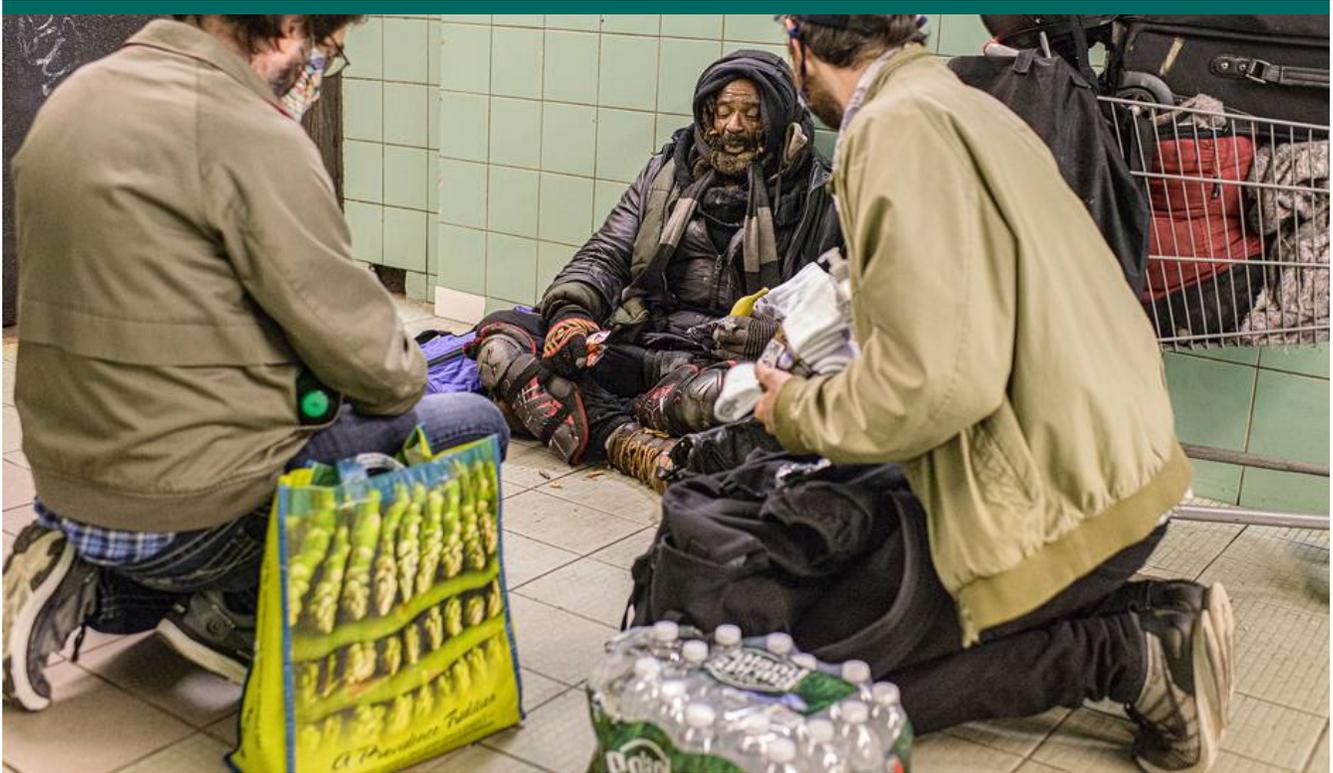
Eli Roberts is a devout Catholic and against abortion. But he is also against Trump. Photo: Anne Hollande

**Eli Roberts** is a Catholic just like Joe Biden. But unlike the former vice president, the 28-year-old music teacher and newlywed father of a little daughter is a staunch opponent of abortion.

He describes himself as a Catholic who does his best to live up to the teachings of the Church, which he believes come from God. A side benefit is charitable work. He has founded the local organization Back Bay Mobile Soup Kitchen, which several times a week moves out among Boston's homeless to provide them with water, some food and warm socks.

"If I could, I would tighten the rules and introduce a ban on abortion in the United States. But it would require society to agree to stretch a social safety net that would give the woman all the support she needs. "

Roberts cheered in 2016 on Bernie Sanders in hopes of developing the United States in a Social Democratic direction. This year, he votes for Joe Biden, though he describes the Democratic candidate as a heretic with no integrity. But, he states, Trump is 1,000 times worse in every way and is the worst thing that has happened in a long time for both the United States and the rest of the world.



Eli Robert (right) has founded a mobile soup kitchen that helps the homeless in Boston. Here he is with the homeless Quam Bradley. Photo: Anne Hollande

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Approx. a quarter of U.S. voters identify themselves as Catholics, and they could be decisive in the upcoming election in swing states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Arizona.

According to an analysis from the think tank Pew Research Center, 56 percent support of Catholics the right to abortion, which is only slightly less than 61 percent of all Americans.

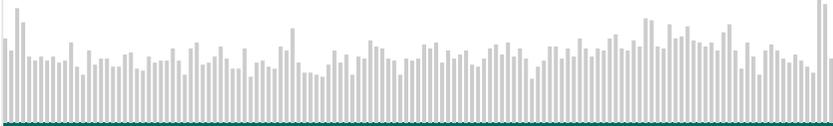
Eli Roberts does not give much for the numbers. Many of those who describe themselves as Catholics do not know the five basic rules of religion, he notes: Prohibition of abortion, prohibition of assisted suicide, prohibition of genocide, prohibition of torture and prohibition of accidental killings in war by e.g. drone bombing.

abortion if one votes for him for other reasons that are proportionately justifiable.

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