

**THE BLOG****Bye Bye 'Berto**

By Marty Kaplan

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WANTED: Total toady. Not a cut-and-runner. Must love torture. Contempt for Constitution a plus. Amnesia essential. Benefits include media boredom the day your mission is accomplished, plus a tenured position at the George W. Bush Library and Institute.

No sooner did word of Alberto Gonzales's resignation leak than the talking heads on TV started spreading the new conventional wisdom: official Washington is happy to let him slither off to private life without further persecution or prosecution. All that politicization of the Justice Department, forgiven. All those perjury thingies, forgotten. All the stonewalling and can't-recalls, yesterday's news.

Yesterday, his name was "embattled Attorney General Alberto Gonzales." Tomorrow, he'll swap "embattled" for "former." Not "disgraced." Not "impeached." Not "indicted." Not even "controversial." He'll join Karl Rove in the great reputation laundry, a figure of Beltway sympathy.

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"Ya gotta respect a guy with that kind of loyalty," pundits will say, placing his loyalty to a corrupt administration above his loyalty to the American people." Orrin Hatch will contend that he doesn't understand what the big fuss was all about. Arlen Specter will let bygones be bygones. Gonzales's departure, like every other symptom of Republican pathology, will be proclaimed a GOP victory. "Now Bush has a chance to accomplish some major items on his agenda before the end of his term," we will be told. You know, like warrantless wiretapping, swifter executions, phony terrorist busts, corrupt prosecutions, and interference with free elections.

If Americans didn't have the attention span of a newt, if the media cared as much about the health of democracy as the health of the bottom line, if Democrats had the courage of their convictions, the last chapter of the Alberto Gonzales story will not have been written the day he resigned. If, if, if... I know: If Gonzales had had integrity, he wouldn't have been an invertebrate.

UPDATE: Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tx) says it's a sad day for the country when the top Hispanic in the nation is hounded from office. Yeah, and Clarence Thomas is the top African-American in the nation.

UPDATE II: In his brief public appearance, Gonzales says only that he is "concluding" his public service. No "citing personal reasons." No questions from the press. Like Cornyn, he plays the Hispanic card: "My worst day on the job

was better than my father's best day." I wonder if his fath— WAIT! Look over here! It's Michael Vick!

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