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• [Looking Back](#)

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• [Philologos](#)

[Home](#) / [Breaking News](#) / SUPER TUESDAY: Intermarriage, Election Style

SUPER TUESDAY: Intermarriage, Election Style

By Rebecca Spence

Tue. Feb 05, 2008

A prominent supporter of Hillary Clinton and an equally weighty backer of Barack Obama count themselves as members of the same swanky Beverly Hills synagogue — and the same family.

Toni and Bruce Corwin, both past presidents of Temple Emanuel, are partners in a Clinton-Obama “intermarriage.” The pair hasn’t voted differently since 1968, when Toni voted for Bobby Kennedy in the California primary, and Bruce registered Republican that year so as to cast his vote against Senate candidate Max Rafferty.

In the 2008 primary, Toni, 65, is throwing her weight behind Clinton, while Bruce, 67, is siding with Obama. But the couple, married 40 years, says it hasn’t strained their marriage.

“We tease more than we argue,” Toni said. “It’s my girl and his guy.”

Bruce, CEO of his family-owned chain of independent movie houses, Metropolitan Theatres Corp., was first introduced to Obama two and half years ago, prior to his Illinois Senate run, at a small breakfast for local Democratic Party leaders.

“I called Toni and said, ‘I just heard a future president of the United States,’ never dreaming it would happen this quickly.”

But when Bruce, who currently chairs the board of Temple Emanuel, heard Clinton speak just two months ago at an intimate campaign event in a West L.A. home, he switched camps.

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“I’m a flip-flopper on this one,” he said, describing Clinton as “extraordinary and very competent.”

The Corwins have long supported the Clintons, dating back to Bill Clinton’s first presidential run in 1992. They attended the inauguration, and later supported Hillary Clinton’s bid to become a Senator from New York. Both Corwins, in fact, are maxed out on primary campaign contributions for Clinton.

And yet, said Bruce, when he ran into Obama in the lobby of the Beverly Wilshire Hotel a month later, he was once again mesmerized by the young politician’s magnetism.

“I ran out and shook his hand, and we were talking in the lobby. I said to myself, ‘deep down, this is the guy I want,’” he said.

Despite Toni’s unflinching support for Clinton, she was not, she says, upset by her husband’s ultimate choice.

“Everybody’s got to do what they’ve got to do,” she said. “I didn’t try and convince him.”

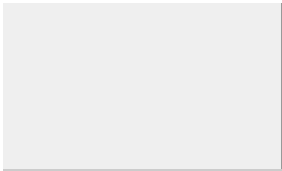
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