

White Evangelicals on the Wrong Side of History – Again

Written by Rev. Amos C. Brown
Friday, 25 May 2012 18:42

Throughout the diabolical devastation of slavery to the turbulent tragedies and injustices endured during the Jim Crow era and the civil rights movement, many southern evangelical preachers were on the wrong side of the issues. In 1845, during a gathering of White Southern Baptist ministers in Augusta Ga., there was a rippling internal controversy over whether slave owners could be missionaries in foreign countries while owning slaves. Thus, on the heels of being sharply divided over the issue of slavery, the Southern Baptist Convention was formed, breaking away from the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

As this southern contingency of evangelical preachers said “no” to giving up their slaves, they also said “no” to the human rights of African Americans. It was the beginning of a long pattern of lining up on the wrong side of the issues when it came to standing up for liberty and justice for all. Revisiting this bleak chapter of American history is critical to understanding the religious right in 2012. To understand the history of the southern evangelical movement and its evolution, it is helpful to understand how modern day southern evangelicals have developed an alliance with a right-wing agenda that continues to, with vigor, divide, devastate and destroy human and civil rights.

Let us fast forward to North Carolinians’ recently held voting for the state constitutional amendment to ban gay marriages and civil unions. It is no coincidence that staunch White southern evangelicals, the National Organization for Marriage (who designed a secret strategic plan in 2010 to drive a wedge between gays and Blacks), and the right wing of the Republican Party, have aligned themselves for political gain on this issue though they want you to believe it is purely a theological stance consistent with Biblical beliefs.

The goal is to weaken and fragment the African-American voting block for President Obama in November while courting much needed Hispanic voters for southern evangelical support for Republican nominee Mitt Romney.

To put this in context, ask yourself: What side of civil rights did the southern evangelical preacher or right wing political base stand when it came to issues such as equal protection under the law, desegregation, women’s rights and voting rights? What side did the Reverend Billy and Franklin Grahams of the worlds stand during the civil rights movement?

For generations, politics and religion have made for strange bedfellows, all the more reason for

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Black people in particular to not be used as a political tool in the vote for a ban on gay marriage in North Carolina or get caught up in the middle of an age-old divisive tactic and strategies aimed at promoting a right wing, money and power-driven agenda and, more aggressively, the conspiracy against the re-election of President Obama.

While I personally do not perform same-sex marriages because of my Baptist faith tradition, I will not be guilty of being intolerant. I was supportive of the president before his decision to support same-sex marriage and I am still supportive of him. President Obama gave his personal reasons for adopting his position and made it very clear that those who for religious reasons did not agree with him, he still had respect for their faith traditions. The Bible says in the words of Jesus, “We must be wise as serpents and humble as doves.” Therefore, African Americans should still support this president because our main goal is to make sure that he is re-elected.

Let’s look at how people on the other side behave. Rev. Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, said during the Republican primary that Mormonism is a “cult” and that Romney is not a Christian. However, Jeffress has since come out boldly endorsing Romney for president. Here’s a minister that in one instance can withhold support from a candidate because of his religious convictions yet closes rank behind that same man after he was selected to oppose America’s first Black president.

In 1960, some Blacks, including preachers, did not support John F. Kennedy for president because he was Catholic. But Kennedy was elected and the nation did not collapse. We must go beyond our faith traditions and support President Obama so that our economy will be improved, quality brought to our schools, safety brought to our communities and we all experience peace in the world.

America is a democracy and not a theocracy. And in our democracy, all law abiding citizens are entitled to equal protection under the law. We must recognize the hypocrisy of denying the rights of the LGBT community as a political strategy in hopes of regaining the White House.

To southern evangelical preachers in particular, from the half-hearted apologies for slavery to the countless insults hurled at President Obama, your attempts to divide and conquer the Black and the gay communities for political posturing and positioning will not go unchecked.

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