



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Gay Rights and Bad Bible Scholars

In the aftermath of President Obama's statement in support of gay marriage there was a lengthy article in the Washington Post regarding the potential impact that this might have on his base. The article included interviews with two African Americans, both of whom had been Obama supporters in 2008. As a result of this announcement, one of them said that he is going to vote for Romney in order to be true to God.

I found myself very perplexed by this statement. I want to make sure that I get it right. This individual has decided that it is OK with God for him to vote for someone who wants to make the poor poorer, quite possibly take us into a war of aggression with Iran, and is, himself, a member of a religious sect that until not very long ago thought that Black folks had no place in their religion. Am I missing anything?

This character is illustrative of a much larger problem that needs to be addressed forthrightly. There is a very selective use of The Bible when it comes to addressing matters relative to women and gays/lesbians. One such example that has been making the rounds on the Web has to do with Deuteronomy, and specifically, Chapter 22. If you are not up on Deuteronomy, among other things



TRANS AFRICA

Bill Fletcher Jr.

I may be wrong but I do not remember Jesus focusing a great deal of attention on who was marrying whom but it is clear that Jesus was very concerned about the poor and sick. He was very concerned about the money changers. And he was very concerned about the Romans who were oppressing the Hebrews

it says that if a woman is not a virgin at the time of her marriage that she can be killed.

I found myself thinking about Deuteronomy in connection with the statement by the African American quoted in the Post. I asked myself, how selectively does this individual interpret The

Bible? Does this person, for instance, believe that we should currently implement that section of Deuteronomy? If not, why?

There is nothing new about selective interpretations of The Bible. Growing up, my father would regularly remind me that White supremacists claimed that Black people are the children of Ham and that we are Black

because we are cursed. My father would point out that it did not matter to them that the Bible does not say that. The White supremacists wanted to believe this and they would find a way to connect that with their interpretation of God and God's word.

I find it very disturbing that peo-

ple continue to hide behind The Bible in order to justify their own set of prejudices and demons. Even otherwise very good people will offer a selective use of The Bible and I continue to find it very perplexing. Consider, for a moment, the amount of time that The Bible places on the question of injustice and the plight of the poor. I may be wrong but I do not remember Jesus focusing a great deal of attention on who was marrying whom but it is clear that Jesus was very concerned about the poor and sick. He was very concerned about the money changers. And he was very concerned about the Romans who were oppressing the Hebrews.

What are we to make of those who have decided that gay marriage is the once and forever dividing line but can turn a blind eye to the forces in this society that ravage the poor and promote war? What are we to make of those who have decided that gay marriage is against God's word but are silent on Deuteronomy?

Just asking.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a Senior Scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies, the immediate past president of TransAfrica Forum, and the co-author of Solidarity Divided.

White Evangelicals: Wrong Side of History

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 evangeli-

SOCIAL JUSTICE

By Rev. Amos C. Brown

cal, 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

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 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 pro-

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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

moting 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.