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## RELEASES



### An Open Letter to the Black Community concerning the NAACP and Same-Sex Marriage

Dear Mr. Bond,

This letter has caused me great pain to write, and I hope that you will understand the deep faith that it took to put these words to paper.

I am President of the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of African American churches across the United States. NBCI works to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI's mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. The National Black Church Initiative's methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science.

Sometime during the year I approached you at the Kennedy Center to talk about a rumor that has permeated the African American religious community that the NAACP has received large contributions from gay organizations for the purpose of advocating their right to marriage as a civil rights question. Your response was, "I'm not turning down any money," and you did not bother to launch a defense of gay marriage as a civil rights question. I indicated that you may have extraordinary difficulty within the national leadership of the Black religious community because many of us feel that the NAACP has no business in determining a theological question like gay marriage. The vast majority of African American religious communities see no relevance in characterizing gay marriage as a civil rights issue. At the time I handed you my card and suggested we have a round table discussion on the topic before we allowed it to divide us. You agreed, took my card and I never heard back from you.

During the Black Caucus I cornered Mr. Jealous and I told him of our encounter and said that the NAACP may have an issue when it comes to gay marriage. This is because the ministers will not stand for the oldest civil rights organization to be used by the gay community to justify their unethical sexual behavior. I explained to him, very clearly, that we did not march, die, struggle and donate so that two men or two women could have raw sex with one another.

For the NAACP to take up this cause is an abomination and an affront for all African Americans who died for human and civil rights. Again, I gave Mr. Jealous my card and indicated that we needed to have a discussion about this outside of the barometers of the media. He took it and said that he would get in touch with me, which he never did.

Since these two encounters you have appeared around the country, speaking in favor of gay marriage, despite stiff opposition from 99 percent of Black clergy, who are either a member of the NAACP or a friend of the NAACP's causes. You have ignored our voice and have the audacity to suggest that two men having sex with one another is a legitimate civil rights issue. How outrageous! I'm sure you would argue that you were speaking as a private citizen, and that you were entitled to your views, but you are a wise man who has been in the public eye for over 50 years and you clearly know that even if you were speaking your personal views, as chairman of the NAACP your views would be viewed by all as the official position of the NAACP. You understand the power of perception; it is not lost on you. You of all people cannot argue with any persuasive truth that no one would ever link your personal views to the NAACP. If you would try to do such a thing we could only respond in the affirmative: how foolish.

As a graduate of Howard University School of Divinity I was appalled to hear of Dean Pollard's, who supports same sex marriage, attempt to masquerade his support for this sinful institution as his own personal views.

We warn him and I warn you that there is no way that we are going to allow you or anyone to utilize these institutions that African Americans have put their lives on the line for to be prostituted for a contribution from the white, gay community.

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LETTERS

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THIS WEEK

in the Black Press Archives

Utilizing the tragic history of sweat, tears, beatings, murders and hatred that the NAACP was built upon in order to promote two men or two women having sexual relations makes no moral sense to us. No matter what you say you will not be able to persuade us that this is somehow a civil rights issue that we should lay down our lives for. How wicked it is that you and Mr. Jealous would even contemplate such an act.

Homosexuality is a way of life for our gay brothers and sisters, but there is simply nothing we can do about that.

Whether a learned behavior or a genetic disposition, it is what it is.

The Black Church has nothing but deep love and respect for our gay brothers and sisters, but we cannot allow you or them to redefine a sacrament of the church because you deem it as a right.

You deeming something as a right does not have any moral sway in the church.

The NAACP is a hundred year old institution, and did not get to the position it is in by taking up causes that are contrary to the will of African American population and the Black Church. Now, with one single speech on a sunny day on the Mall in Washington, DC, you have stained the tradition of great men like W.E.B. DuBois, Roy Wilkins and Rev. Benjamin Hooks, who devoted their lives to the NAACP. These men know what you have failed to understand; that there are great questions of our day that all men must speak to and then there are personal political matters (gay marriage) that only those who want to advance the right of a small minority with a selfish end.

The Black Church is the foundation of the NAACP. There would be no NAACP without the Black Church. There have been countless meetings held in the church, countless prayers given for the survival of this organization, countless people giving their lives and money to pay for legal expenses and other related civil rights work to be done through the Black Church. And now you are trying to persuade us that the scriptures are wrong, that our instincts are unethical and that we should devote ourselves to human rights for everyone despite the fact that their behavior is contrary to our religious tradition. How can good men and women of consciousness trust you or the NAACP in this manner?

Now you have cheapened our tradition and rendered it of no effect by being willing to sell its birthright to white, gay males who were in no way around when the beatings, lynching and the murders took place. When we fought we fought for the dignity of everyone, including gays, but the marriage question is not about a lack of rights. They have the right to marry the opposite sex if they choose, but they have no right to make a mockery out of the oldest civil rights organization in the country because they want to have sex with another man/woman. In addition, we know that there are black and white gays killed during the civil rights movement, but the fight was for human dignity and equal access. The fight has never been for equal sexual partners.

Let us be clear, our gay brothers and sisters do not lack their constitutional rights. They do not lack an ability to make money or access to the courts. However, they are asking the oldest civil rights organization in the country to sell its birthright just because they feel that they should have the right to be "as wicked as they want to be."

You have been very disrespectful to the Black Church, which your father would have never been. Even when the Black Church told you that gay marriage is not a civil rights issue and warned you that this issue would split the civil rights organization you and Mr. Jealous have made a judgment call and decided to define human rights in terms of a man's right to have raw sex with another man. Gay marriage is about sex and this why the church has objected to this. The NAACP has no business in the issue of marriage. This is a church matter, and no one appointed the NAACP as the Vatican City.

The definition of marriage is clear and it is between one man and one woman. Marriage is the unique human institution that bonds men and women in a permanent relationship. In marriage men and women experience a complementarity in which they cooperate and bond physically, psychologically and emotionally.

Together in marriage, they imitate Christ's relationship with the Church.

Marriage is more than two people who love each other, however. It is also the place where children are created and nurtured with the complementary gifts of mother and father. For this reason, throughout all time, cultures have recognized and valued marriage between a man and a woman.

Why are you doing this? What do you hope to gain from such a disrespectful act against the Black Church? Is this all about the contributions? Are you willing to sell the soul of the NAACP for money? If a gay African American man came to the

NAACP and told you that his church had discriminated against him and that he wants to sue his church will the NAACP sue the Black Church for the right of gay men to have sex with each other? Have we stooped this low in our traditions in the Black community that we are willing to forsake that very foundation of our cultural heritage as founded in the church? The church as spoken on this issue and we have been very clear: a marriage is between a man and woman.

Recently you spoke out for same sex marriage in New Jersey and I could not stand it any longer. As a member of the NAACP Youth Corps over 35 years ago in Savannah under the leadership of W.W. Law and Curtis Cooper I would have never imagined that I would be fighting against the NAACP over an issue that is so clearly morally defined, not only in society, where 32 states of rejected same sex marriage, but also in the scriptures where the Bible calls homosexuality an abomination to God.

What do you expect us to do? Do you expect us to go along with this? I say to you and every other member of the NAACP Board: No! No! No!

If you persist in this direction we will denounce you publicly and direct our churches to not give the NAACP a dime. We have no choice in this issue because of you and Mr. Jealous' persistent arrogance and casual dismissal of us as if we have no rights to raise this question. Your inability to sit down and discuss this issue and all of its ramifications with us is disturbing. As you well know, we have more pressing issues to deal with such as education, health, the economy, unemployment and foreclosure. However, the NAACP has decided to take up gay marriage as a civil rights question. You are on the borderline of creating a large schism in the Black community that will last for years if you continue to insist on this matter. For the sake of the Black family and the Black community, I beg you in Christ to denounce same sex marriage and to move aggressively on the issues cited above. I will not, and I am sure other clergy will not, allow you to cheapen the NAACP by claiming that having gay sex is a civil right.

I am deeply regretful that I had to write such a letter during this holy season, and I pray God's mercy on you, Mr. Jealous and your families and hope that we will finally have the chance to sit down and discuss this.

I have attached a press release denouncing the beating of a gay man in New York that we issued some time ago for the reason of demonstrating that we clearly understand the difference between a political question like gay marriage and protecting the real human rights of an individual.  
Sincerely,

Rev. Anthony Evans  
President, NBCI

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