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PERSPECTIVE

Editor's Note

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

Obama's anti-gay preacher problem



together even though we may have disagreements on certain social issues," Obama said at a press conference on Dec. 18. "That

Way back in January, before the 2008 primaries, *The Advocate* interviewed the president of Charleston, S.C.'s Stonewall Democrats chapter, Keith Riddle.

Riddle told the national news glossy that the infamous, fall 2007 Donnie McClurkin incident in Columbia kept coming up in "every conversation" he had with LGBT folks.

"Obama never really apologized for that. I do believe that sometimes, it's time to move on," he told the magazine. "But people just don't move on that quickly."

Donnie McClurkin, the anti-gay, ex-gay preacher brought in for Obama's South Carolina gospel tour, wasn't the only preacher-related conundrum Obama had to face as he barreled his way to becoming the first African-American president in U.S. history. The other preacher, Obama's own Rev. Jeremiah Wright, was a man many Americans found distasteful, offensive and an outright, left-wing radical.

Obama's gay advisors were mysteriously absent when the McClurkin incident went down. It puzzled the gay community how such an anti-gay voice could get past them.

"No matter how he or his reps defend, deny or explain it, the Donnie McClurkin fiasco was arguably the single greatest miscalculation in the entire primary," we wrote in a staff editorial before North Carolina's primary. "And that's at best, because at worst it was the most egregious example of political expediency seen in the entire primary. Either way, it stung like hell."

Now Obama has stung the queer community, yet again. In mid-December his inaugural team announced that the Rev. Rick Warren, pastor of the mega-Saddleback Church and author of the nationally-acclaimed "A Purpose Driven Life," will lead the nation in the inaugural invocation.

The hope Obama instilled in countless millions of Americans is continuously being dashed among his gay and lesbian constituents. On the heels of our painful losses in Arizona, Arkansas, Florida and California, many queer folks looked to the inauguration as another time of hope — one day they could share in the joy of being American citizens and dare to dream that Obama might bring change for us and our families.

"It is important for America to come

dialogue is part of what my campaign has been all about. We're not going to agree on every single issue, but what we have to do is create an atmosphere where we can disagree without being disagreeable."

What's up with this idea that gay and lesbian Americans should sit down and "disagree without being disagreeable" with those who call us pedophiles, call us sick and sinful and malign and demean our families? What kind of political B.S. is this?

It's this non-sensical "big tent" approach — including some of the most hateful and homophobic people in America — that keeps getting Obama in trouble, and making our collective queer dreams look more and more like fantasy and science-fiction.

In a separate commentary on my personal blog, I asked, "If including all American viewpoints is important, why not include a preacher associated with the KKK or Aryan Nation? Well, duh! Because we realize that their opinion is antithetical to our American dream and dangerous."

I added, "The same should go for including anti-gay pastors like Rick Warren. He and his ilk stand in the way of forward, progressive movement toward a more fair and equal United States of America."

As long as our lives, loves and families continue to be painted as a "social issue," we will continue to be victimized by shrewd, pandering politicians like Obama and anti-gay, anti-American preachers like Rick Warren.

And, as much as I hate it, I'll continue to hold out hope that Obama will be best for our continued fight for comprehensive and inclusive hate crimes legislation and an Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

I'll hope he'll push forward with plans to repeal the *Defense of Marriage Act* and the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. But given my continued disenchantment with Obama and his weird love affair with anti-gay preachers, there's just something inside of me that says, "Don't hold your breath."

Harvey Milk told us, "You gotta give 'em hope." I'm pretty sure he'd also say you have to follow through. Can Obama do it, or will he continue to play to the Right? All this; and he hasn't even been inaugurated yet. ▀

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