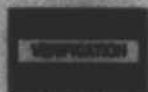


OPINION/ FORUM

THE CHRONICLE Celebrating 38 Years

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What really matters in this election

On Nov. 4, 2008, many Americans shared, for the first time, an unbelievable calm, pride, and, yes, hope in our country. For a moment, we dared to believe that a "colored" man born of a white American mother and black African father and raised by white grandparents could not only be president of these United States, but could be the very vehicle of hope and change from what we, as a people, had been to what we could be.

President Obama has been the benefactor of many prayers over his tenure, because we all know that there are forces that will work to undo good.

The opposition to good had already set up the biggest obstacles to a successful presidency. The opposition lined up on the most extreme side possible, refusing to accept change, opposing anything that would help, even if it meant hurting the people who voted them into office.

But President Obama has not let us down, even if he has not fulfilled his own measure of hope. This country never before faced a looming depression which threatened to be worse than that of the 1930s, nor had this country experienced the worst depths of an inherited recession.

President Obama proved to be a determined leader who would follow the advice of reasoned economists, while trying to fulfill some of his biggest hopes and promises for this country. We can't blame the president if he dared to hope that Democrats and Republicans could work together to put the greater good over selfish interests.

Instead, the Republican Party birthed the biggest temper tantrum in history: the Tea Party, who by its very name, represented an extreme desire to break away from the unity of hope and change that was before us. Collectively, they decided to make defeating President Obama their top goal. The Republicans contrived every device to get a majority to block anything that would make a successful presidency for Barack Obama. Yet, this very president found a way to carry out his commitment to those who dared to hope and believe in change. We applaud him. True to his beliefs, he tried but did not give in to the organized temper tantrum.

Republicans should not be rewarded for their behavior, which, among other things, led to lowering the nation's credit rating, nor should they be given leadership over the progress made by President Obama.

With a few notable exceptions, the African American community has stood behind a president that it deems qualified and worthy of their support. We have denied our own special interests for that which is greater and better. Even the Congressional Black Caucus came to realize that Black America would not deny change and hope in exchange for special interests; that our interests would be best served if the man born for a time such as this was successful for all people.

Instead of a temper tantrum, we choose temperance, hope and prayer for a president we knew would be treated worse than any other in history.

In the next few days, we have the opportunity to give President Obama our vote of confidence for another term. He needs our support more now than ever before. Let's not be fooled by offers of jobs and pie in the sky by those who talk the talk but can't walk the walk.

We think that America has moved on from hatred and division to embrace what is good and better, but the last four years have shown us otherwise. Choose to be on the right side of history and to be better. You will never lose with that.

Who We Like

- President: **Barack Obama**
- U.S. House 12th District: **Mel Watt**
- U.S. House 5th District: **Elisabeth Mottlinger**
- Governor: **Walter Dalton**
- Lt. Governor: **Linda Coleman**
- State Auditor: **Beth Wood**
- Agriculture Secretary: **Walter Smith**
- Insurance Commissioner: **Wayne Goodwin**
- Labor Commissioner: **John Brooks**
- Secretary of State: **Elaine Marshall**
- State Superintendent: **June Atkinson**
- State Treasurer: **Janet Cowell**
- State Senate District 32: **Earline Parmon**
- NC House District 71: **Evelyn Terry**
- NC Senate District 31: **Delmas Parker**
- NC House District 72: **Ed Hanes**
- NC House District 74: **David Moore**
- NC House District 79: **Cristina Vazquez**
- Forsyth County Commissioner District B: **Gail McNeill**
- Register of Deeds: **Norman Holleman**
- N.C. Supreme Court: **Sam Erwin IV**
- N.C. Court of Appeals: **Linda McGee, Wanda Bryant and Cressie Thigpen**
- Forsyth County District Court: **Amy Allred and Andrew Keever**



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Harming the Billy Graham Legacy

Below is an excerpt from an open letter by N.C. NAACP President William Barber, and signed by more than two dozen state religious leaders, to Rev. Franklin Graham, the son of Rev. Billy Graham, and the leader of the Billy Graham Evangelical Association. The letter is in response to Franklin Graham's decision to fund an anti-President Obama print media campaign.

Dear Rev. Franklin Graham:

We write today as a brother in the faith, as a member of God's human family. This letter comes in Christian love but also with great hurt and concern. Earlier this year, your acts as the president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelical Association compelled us to ask you to examine yourself and to cease arousing unwarranted suspicion regarding President Barack Obama's Christian faith.

In February 2012 you expressed your doubts about his faith on national television, partly because he had tried to engage Muslim nations and leaders in a dialogue about the world's future. North Carolina Evangelicals and prophetic ministers, steeped in the African American church, asked you to cease arousing unwarranted suspicion about the President's faith. These Christian clergy and scholars wrote to you in private as the scriptures first demand. Among many things in our pastoral and prophetic critique, we said to you on March 5, 2012:

...It seems to us that your apology is helpful and yet narrow and almost grudging. And we feel a

reluctant confidence that you and many other Evangelicals will continue to disparage President Obama and the faith of other Christians through a critique that pushes him and many of us outside the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith.

It is not your inclination to criticize that concerns us. Like you, we believe that our Christian faith calls us to critique the powers and policies of our society through the lens of Christian ethics. Many of the things for which you and other Evangelicals have assailed the President for doing are not anti-Christian; they are at the very heart of Christ's work among us!

President Obama's faith was formed in a prophetic Christian tradition that certainly resonates with our own traditions, experiences and Scriptural readings. In *Dreams from My Father*, he writes of the first stirrings of his Christian faith: "...at the foot of that cross... I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones. Those stories of survival and freedom and hope became our story, my story... at once unique and universal, black and more than black."

You were apparently unmoved by our criticism. Last week, as the CEO of the non-profit, tax-exempt Billy Graham Evangelical

Association, you used the Association's funds to buy expensive full page ads in major newspapers in North Carolina and other parts of the country to further arouse unwarranted suspicion about the President's personal faith. The paid advertisement contained transparent insinuations about "support for the nation of Israel", the "sanctity of life" and the "biblical definition of marriage," with a photo of your father and his signature. Your ad implied he wrote the text of what was a clear endorsement of the President's opponent because he was more of a Christian than the President. This political endorsement was particularly ironic, since the non-profit you preside over has, until a couple of weeks ago, questioned whether Mormonism is part of the Christian faith.

If Billy Graham has indeed changed, and at 93 has decided to join the Religious Right, which wants to restore the closed, exclusive society of the past, historians should hear it from him first hand, since his legacy has been one of openness and inclusivity. We were brought up on stories of Billy Graham tearing down the ropes of Jim Crow at his crusade, and his invitation to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to preach with him at a crusade. It would be a radical departure for Billy Graham to now exclude souls he might reach in his ministry for partisan reasons and a theologically narrow critique.

Although you told the media "If you want to think I'm behind all of it, I don't care," we respectfully ask you to reconsider this flippant remark. Your father's historical legacy is at stake.

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, president of the North Carolina NAACP



Graham

Trivializing Rape



John Mendez
Guest Columnist

As a recent graduate of the Institute of Contemporary Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis and its affiliate, the Washington School of Psychiatry, where for the last four years I studied physical trauma; and as a pastor who often ministered to traumatized persons for almost 30 years, like most Americans, especially women, I was outraged by the recent insidious "legitimate rape" remarks by Missouri GOP Senate Candidate Todd Akin and Tea Party-backed Candidate Richard Mourdock (a Republican seeking a U.S. Senate seat in Indiana), whose comments during a debate said that pregnancy as a result of rape is "some-

thing that God intended to happen."

There is an even more glaring insensitivity and retrograde thinking involved in these remarks - that is the trivialization and trauma of rape. To suggest that there is such a thing as "legitimate rape" or "God's will rape" belittles and trivializes the terrifying experience of rape, something that neither Akin nor Mourdock gave much thought to.

Rape is a traumatic experience. According to Psychoanalyst Dr. Robert Stolorow, trauma is perceived as an "unbearable, overwhelming affect." It is a psychological injury. Painful emotional trauma results in a breakdown in what Stolorow refers to

as "the absolutisms of everyday life," which are necessary for one to experience the world as a safe, stable and predictable place. The experience of rape shatters the victim's emotional world. Rape destroys the victim's sense of personal inviolability and safety that she had known in the past. The rape victim's life is changed forever. She or he will never experience herself or himself

or the world the same way again.

To suggest that God initiates such trauma and tragedy in a woman's life for the sake of her becoming pregnant is at best despicable, and at worst pathological. With their remarks, Akin and Mourdock clearly show

they do not have high regard and respect for women or their opinions. Whether we agree or disagree with abortion, it is a woman's decision. Maybe all rapists ought to be released from prison so they can further do God's will, according to the way that Mourdock and Akin think.

Theologically, their views make God look like a callous, cold and uncaring cosmic monster. Their thinking, however, runs contrary to the New Testament that teaches that God is not a God of oppression, but a God of liberation who helps, heals and gives us hope. God does not only love us, but "God is love." I cannot imagine anyone, including God - who is love - sponsoring an act so dehumanizing, depersonalizing and degrading as rape in order to make a woman pregnant.

The Rev. Dr. John Mendez is pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church.



Akin



Mourdock