

editor's note

by matt comer
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Stop talking. Start walking.



Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx's Dec. 8 forum at the Lesbian & Gay Community Center of Charlotte marked an important milestone in the city's history (see our story online: goqnotes.com/9408). For the first time, a sitting Charlotte mayor attended a town hall-type event with the LGBT community, listened to our concerns and discussed openly several important matters in the civic life of this city. That Foxx was willing to sit down and answer some tough questions from a frustrated community says a lot about him compared to past mayors and other public officials here.

I believe Foxx was sincere when he gave us his general commitment to equality and inclusion in Charlotte. I fully appreciate and am grateful for his willingness to talk with us and hear us out. But, I'm afraid I'm not yet convinced he's willing to take the time to fully understand our issues or give them the public spotlight they rightly deserve. Further, I'm not sure he completely understands or can empathize with the frustrations that result from our continuously unrequited love for this city and our neighbors.

In closing his time with our community, Foxx said, "I've been to seven town hall-type events through this year and this is my last of the year. I didn't come expecting pats on the back or not to answer tough questions and that's okay. The point is, I'm here."

While being present at such an event was progress, it isn't enough. Charlotte's and Mecklenburg County's political histories are pockmarked with some pretty foul, anti-gay actions. The city is among the last to make moves on LGBT inclusion when compared to any other city by any other measure — whether we're talking about municipalities in North Carolina or similarly sized cities across the nation or similarly placed cities in the Southeast or even among the three other 2012 Democratic National Convention finalists.

Only real political courage will be enough to fix this slim and pathetic record of progress. And, while Foxx was "there" at the forum, I have doubts whether or not he'll be "there" for us when it matters the most. On one level, Foxx seems to want to push forward on issues of LGBT equality. He's fully supportive, even publicly so, of the city man-

ager's decision to add "sexual orientation" to employment non-discrimination policies.

On the other hand, however, Foxx and other public leaders seem reticent to support action on LGBT issues by fully-on-the-record and public votes of the city council. To Foxx, it seems more important that our "agenda" items get done regardless of the process. Such a perspective neglects important facts. Behind-the-scenes policy progress by bureaucrats will never result in permanent and progressive change. Such movement requires action by the city council, which in turn requires elected officials who are willing to publicly stand by their principles.

Next spring, our city will enter into another municipal election season. I call on LGBT and straight ally community members and leaders to hold their elected officials accountable. Keep asking hard questions of people like Mayor Foxx and members of the city council. When they come to candidate forums, be sure to ask them about LGBT issues and don't let them skirt around the issues. Demand they make a commitment to push forward on equality. Such commitments should be easy in a city whose private businesses and political culture long surpassed the queasiness public leaders feel when talking about LGBT people.

If our council members and mayor remain uncommitted to full equality, our community must be willing to hold them accountable. Do not donate money to their reelection campaigns. Do not canvass for them. Don't phone bank for them. Don't put their campaign signs in your yards. On election day, vote for more progressive candidates or simply skip past their names and opt not to vote at all in their races.

Whether this city moves forward or remains stalled and mired in anti-gay equivocation is entirely up to us, our friends and families and our allies. At the end of the day, public officials answer to the public. This city's public is ready for change. Why the "treetops" of this city refuse to hear the groundswell of LGBT support from the grassroots confuses me, but such willful ignorance and inaction simply cannot continue to be rewarded every time we enter a voting booth. : :

guest commentary

by Dr. Michael Brown

Setting the record straight

In his recent editorial, "A Prayer for Michael Brown" (Dec. 11), Matt Comer wrote that he is now convinced that I honestly "believe everything that comes out of [my] mouth." This marks a significant advance from his 2008 editorial in which he claimed that I followed "a carefully plotted and scripted message of 'compassion,' 'love' and 'gentleness.'" Today, he believes the love is genuine and the words are sincere, but he feels that I'm operating out of "some sort of deeply-rooted dislocation from reality," with my words providing "more than ample evidence of a journey into delusion," all of which underscores my alleged "unique brand of lunacy."

The basis for these charges is that I supposedly compare "homosexuality to child rape" and that I "paint gay people in the same light as child rapists." Is this true? God forbid! Why would I compare the forcible rape of an innocent child with the consensual acts of two adults, even if those acts are immoral or wrong?

What I have addressed — and which Matt, it appears, has consistently and persistently misrepresented — is: 1) the similar arguments used by both gay activists and advocates of "man-boy love"; and 2) the failure of many gay leaders to condemn the youthful (and, often fondly-recalled) same-sex encounters of some of their leaders.

Let me explain briefly. First, we constantly hear that homosexual behavior cannot be considered morally wrong because "I was born this way and I can't change." Yet this is the very argument used by pedophiles (among others), who also claim their behavior or orientation is innate and immutable. In response, a gay person would say, "But my sexual acts are not coercive or harmful." That, however, is an entirely different subject, and it fails to address the obvious question, namely: If claiming that "I was born this way and I can't change" is no justification for the pedophile's sexual attractions, how does this argument, in and of itself, justify homosexual attraction? How does saying "I was born this way" provide moral justification for any behavior? Clearly, it does not.

Second, influential gay leaders like Harvey Milk and Larry Kramer and Troy Perry have freely referenced their childhood sexual encounters, often in positive terms, with Milk having his first experience with gay men at the tender age of 11. Kramer once commented, "In those cases where children do have sex with their homosexual elders . . . I submit that often, very often, the child desires the activity, and perhaps even solicits it . . ."

Where is the widespread condemnation of this in gay circles today? Why is it that I am accused of operating out of "some sort of deeply-rooted dislocation from reality" for allegedly comparing homosexuality to pedophilia (which, again, I have never done), while gay leaders wink at the pederastic past of some of their heroes? Today, Milk is venerated, while those of us who question whether he serves as an appropriate role model are vilified. Could it be that the "deeply-rooted dislocation from reality" is actually on the GLBT side?

Although there is much more to say, space only allows me to address one final point in Matt's editorial, namely, the meaning of Christlike inclusion. GLBT leaders often point out (rightly so) that Jesus spent time with those whom society marginalized, specifically the prostitutes and corrupt tax-collectors, commonly viewed as sinners. But what did Jesus do? Did he encourage the prostitutes to serve their clients better? Did he teach the tax-collectors how to extort more money? Of course not. Rather, he reached out to them, got involved in their lives, and changed them. He practiced transformational inclusion, which I wholeheartedly advocate, not affirmational inclusion, which the GLBT community advocates.

I for one am eternally grateful that Jesus didn't affirm me in my lifestyle. Rather, he died for me and transformed me. And so it is my fervent prayer and hope that Matt will experience this same transforming love. Who would want to resist the life-changing love of God? : :

— To contact Dr. Michael Brown or for more information, visit askdrbrown.org.

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