

Wright is Still Wrong!

Written by Harry R. Jackson, Jr.
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This past week Rev. Jeremiah Wright emerged again from the ashes of obscurity to the spotlight. Like the mythical phoenix rising again from the fires of death, Wright is still politically alive after becoming a symbol of racism and division for mainstream America. His actions mirror his friend, Louis Farrakhan, who has recently attempted to malign Jews worldwide. The question I would like to answer here is, "How can such vehement hate mongers like Wright and Farrakhan survive so long in a land that longs so much for racial and religious equality?" Let's explore the answer as we look at the current status of Rev. Wright. How did he arise again?

Wright recently taught a weeklong course at the Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS). The school is a 150-year old institution affiliated with the United Church of Christ (UCC). As many may not remember, Rev. Wright's former church (Trinity United Church of Christ) is the largest church in the UCC denomination. This denomination supports Rev. Wright's assessment of America's moral condition and motivations. CTS represents institutions that have continued to embrace the famed Chicago minister long after he dropped off the national radar.

CTS's website carries this revealing description of their mission and worldview: "Since our beginning, Chicago Theological Seminary pushes at the growing boundaries of the church in order to make our faith relevant and transform our society in the image of justice." It seems that this school's understanding of "biblical justice" is very different from the views of other mainstream Protestant or evangelical churches. Groups with a socialistic view of politics and an affinity towards liberation theology are seemingly the only ones that have thrown their arms wide open to Jeremiah Wright.

The New York Times and Fox News carried several stories this week that have exposed Wright's incendiary language. For example, the news outlets related his assessment of the civil rights movement; it "was always about becoming white," Wright opined. Another quote was "White folk done took this country. You're in their home and they're going to let you know it." Rev. Wright also compared the United States with apartheid South Africa during his CTS seminar. Finally, the former pastor told the class that they will never "be a brother to white folk."

While the news outlets were shocked that the reverend was bold enough to repeat the same kind of rhetoric that almost derailed the president's candidacy in 2008, those of us close to the ground recognize that Wright has continued to sing the same song anywhere he could for the last two years. In fact, earlier this year, Rev. Wright spoke to packed services at a D.C. church related to his United Church of Christ denomination.

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How does he stay on the speaking circuit, despite his imbalanced rhetoric? It is very simple - he paints himself as a victim of the same system that he claims immorally persecutes others. Wright's methods are as unorthodox as his message. Like Louis Farrakhan, he has learned to manipulate the media for his own gains. For example, in March 2010, a huge awards gala was conducted in Chicago. Wright presented himself as a political martyr and victim of a repressive, right wing machine. He even went so far as to award himself, Father Michael Pfleger, and Minister Louis Farrakhan with "Living Legend Awards." Both local and national media carried the story of the awards gala. This kind of earned media was like giving Wright a huge "free" commercial. Such news stories are more credible to the average individual than spending millions of dollars on traditional commercials.

To my knowledge, Fox News was the only organization that disclosed the fact that the awards were actually given by an organization that Wright controls. Unfortunately, folks like Wright are pushing for people to return to race-based politics. In a Wright-oriented world, blacks would always vote Democrat and whites of both parties would not be trusted. He would advocate for gay marriage, gay clergy in Christian churches, and freedom for impoverished women to have government paid abortions. Further, he would cast America's military interventions in crises all over the world as imperialistic and greed-based.

It's time for the nation to move beyond Jeremiah Wright's negativity and tackle the problems of race and generational poverty in America. Blacks and whites have to come together if we are to solve the nation's biggest problems. Whites need to be willing to work with and for blacks and other minorities in business, and they need to elect more qualified blacks to public office. On the other hand, there will have to be some fundamental rethinking of principles and values in the black community. All minorities will have to decide how long they intend to live under the thumb of politicians who manipulate them with accusations of conspiracies and institutional racism - with no proof. One of the major signs that change is at the door is the fact that 31 African Americans are running for Congress in the Republican Party primaries in 2010. If just a third of these people win, there will be a shift in the racial dynamics of party politics.

Years ago, The High Impact Leadership Coalition developed an important document - "The Black Contract With America On Moral Values." We said the blacks and whites should be able to come together on six critical points. Four of these arenas are still very important to our nation's advancement such as: family protection, poverty alleviation/wealth creation, educational reform, and prison reform. True problem solving in these areas can lead to a better America, but the nation's challenges will not solve themselves. We need some champions! A handful of people taking initiative can transform our nation for the better. What about you? Do you want to make a real difference? Perhaps the best way to articulate our personal choice is to ask the question: " Do you want to be Wright ...or Right?

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