



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 17, 2012

Black Pastors Challenge NAACP's Support for Same-sex Marriage

A coalition of black pastors has taken a public stand in opposition to an endorsement of same-sex marriage made by the nation's largest civil rights organization. On May 19, 10 days after President Obama announced his embrace of "marriage equality," the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) [passed a resolution endorsing same-sex marriage](#), calling the move a continuation of the group's "historic commitment to equal protection under the law."

But as the 103-year-old organization met for its national convention in Houston July 7-12, the [Coalition of African-American Pastors](#) (CAAP), a group of leading black clergy, challenged the NAACP's position, saying that it flies in the face of its founding principles and the present needs of the black community. "The attention of the NAACP should be placed on the many challenges facing the African-American community: gangs, teen pregnancy, poverty, violence, and the fact that more black men are in prison than in college," said the Rev. William Owens, founder and president of CAAP.

Owens said that the NAACP "needs to be recalled to its founding purpose. Black people face acute and urgent needs, from unemployment to education, family fragmentation, discrimination, and crime. We are calling on the NAACP, a beloved organization in our eyes, to reclaim its mission. The black church founded the NAACP, and it is not the organization for the advancement of gays and lesbians." The Christian leader challenged the NAACP to "return to your roots and stand with the black church on marriage. The black church in our eyes remains the conscience of America."

Owens told the online [Huffington Post](#) that the NAACP "is supposed to be an organization for black people who were beaten, who were mistreated, and who were enslaved." Instead, he challenged, it is "advocating for something that's not normal, that's not natural. It's still out of line, it's against moral law. Gay marriage is leading us down a bad path. Our young people are already hurt. They're already damaged."

Ben Jealous, the NAACP's president, claimed that the group's 64-member board overwhelmingly supported the measure endorsing homosexual marriage. "If you go to the board, you'll see a lot of religious leaders," he told the Huffington Post. "All of the religious leaders on our board, except for one, were for marriage equality."

Jealous was referring to the Reverend Keith Ratliff, a member of the group's national board, [who resigned from the organization after it passed the resolution](#). "I'm against same-sex marriage," Ratliff told [CitizenLink](#) shortly after the group passed the resolution. "There are a number of issues that the NAACP has to address and deal with, and I certainly don't think same-sex marriage should be a top priority." Ratliff emphasized that the campaign for homosexual rights has no similarities with the struggle by blacks for civil rights. "There is not a parallel between the homosexual community and the



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struggles of African-Americans in our country,” he said. “I haven’t seen any signs on any restrooms that say, ‘For Homosexuals Only.’ Homosexuals do not have to sit on the back of the bus, as African-Americans had to.”

The coalition of black pastors said that they were also challenging President Obama to rethink his position on homosexual marriage. On May 9 Obama announced that he had “concluded that for me personally, it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same-sex couples should be able to get married.”

William Owens told the [Christian Post](#) that CAAP had “requested a meeting with President Obama, and until he meets with us, we are going to ask black Christians to withhold their support until he personally hears our concerns.” Owens emphasized that “more than anything, this is an issue of biblical principles and President Obama is carrying our nation down a dangerous road. Many African Americans were once proud of our president but now many are ashamed of his actions.” He added that “you have to stand on the Word of God regardless of your race or political affiliation. If the president is serious about his faith then why would he not meet with men of faith of his own race?”

Owens and CAAP are not the only black leaders to challenge the black community’s support of Obama. In May [Bishop Harry Jackson, Jr.](#), a noted black Christian leader and pastor of Hope Christian Church in Baltimore, Maryland, told the [Christian Post](#) that the actions of the NAACP and other black groups are deeply disturbing. “The black community is in an adulterous relationship with President Obama,” Jackson warned. “He is asking us to stray from the most basic tenets of Scripture — that marriage is an institution made by God for man and woman to become one and procreate. He’s telling us it’s fine to hold onto our beliefs but that it’s also okay to accept his stance on a position that goes against that core belief.”



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