

**The
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on issues affecting African Americans
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**Obama Not Marching with Black Pride
Inclusion**

By the Rev. Irene Monroe

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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June is Pride Month. And Black Pride contributes to the multicultural aspect of joy and celebration in the queer communities. Black Pride symbolizes not only black LGBTQ uniqueness as individuals and communities, but it also affirms our varied expressions of LGBTQ life in America.

This year will be our first Black Pride parade with an African American as president. And, no doubt, Obama's presidency engenders pride but not much hope. In Obama's first days many of us want to know, what is it with Obama and his team when it comes to our inclusion in his transformational administration?

One of our biggest obstacles in the African American community has been and continues to be the Black Church. Obama wooed Black homophobic black ministers to win black evangelical voters during his campaign bid.

For example, when it was disclosed that Obama's inspirational gospel singer Donnie McClurkin, poster boy for African American ex-gay ministries, could be a potential liability, not only to his three-city gospel tour to capture South Carolina's black evangelical voters, but also the nation's LGBTQ voters, he went into damage control. As an appeasement plan, Obama invited an openly white gay minister, the Rev. Andy Sidden, pastor of Garden of Grace United Church of Christ (formerly MCC Columbia) to speak at the gospelfest.

The Obama camp thought they had stopped the fire before it got out of hand. But it backfired.

Instead it actually outed black closeted ministers and some of the black gospel chitlin' circuit's closeted gays ministers who usually are the biggest opponents of queer civil rights.

And Obama's act didn't get him out of hot water with another constituency in the African-American community – black LGBTQ voters. Many of us denounced the Obama campaign for choosing a white minister.

"It boggles the mind that the Obama campaign would select a white pastor to deal with a situation that is awash in black homophobia," Pam Spaulding of the highly acclaimed blog "Pam's House Blend" wrote.

Unfortunately Obama's choice reinforced two myths many black evangelicals hold: homosexuals are white and homosexuality is an abomination.

Frustrated with Obama's inattention to our issues, Edwin Greene, an African American gay man from Cincinnati said, "I think that if black LGBTs want Obama's attention we need to "make some noise", so to speak. Let's organize a black LGBT demonstration / march on Washington, DC, this year. The noisy wheel gets the grease, so to speak. Let's show Obama, the nation and the world (and ourselves, most importantly) that we mean business."

For many of us LGBTQ African American religious activists across the country, but especially here in Massachusetts, we feel that Obama is not serious in making a dent in combating black homophobia or reaching out to the black LGBTQ community.

For example, Joshua Dubois who is the head of the White House Office for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships is to coordinate outreach to religious and community organizations. But many of us are scratching our heads because we have never seen or heard of Dubois. Sylvia Rhue, Director of Religious Affairs for National Black Justice Coalition, the only African American gay civil rights organization in the country, knows nothing about Dubois.

Since Obama's announcement of him, those of us involved in making our black churches open and affirming are looking for Rev. Joshua Dubois, especially here in the Greater Boston area. Dubois, a young African American Pentecostal minister, directed the religious outreach for the Obama campaign. He's reported to have worked as an associate pastor at a Pentecostal church in Massachusetts. But where?

"I know W.E. B. Dubois, but who is this guy Obama put in office? Has anyone seen or met him? We don't know of his contributions to the black gay community here and where he stands on the issues. We need a strong and visible religious advocate for the LGBT community, but specifically the African American community," said Rev. Glen Louis Campbell of Central Congregation, an openly gay African American minister in Boston.

The honorable Mayor E. Denise Simmons of Cambridge, first African American lesbian to hold office doesn't know him. And Cambridge's former mayor, Kenneth Reeves, an African American gay male doesn't know him either. None of Boston's political and religious allies to the African American LGBTQ community knows him.

But most importantly Dubois has never been spotted at events important to the black LGBTQ community here in greater Boston and throughout Massachusetts, like our annual Bayard Rustin Community Breakfast, an HIV / AIDS awareness forum for LGBTQ communities of color and their family and friends. The Breakfast is a staple in our community and has been for seventeen years.

Every time Obama has nodded or winked at our community we have taken his gestures and even his words at face value to tether our hopes to. But we are getting the feeling he's not marching with us in our parade.


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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, the Rev. Irene Monroe, is a religion columnist, theologian, and public speaker. A native of Brooklyn, Rev. Monroe is a graduate from Wellesley College and Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University, and served as a pastor at an African-American church before coming to Harvard Divinity School for her doctorate as a Ford Fellow. Reverend Monroe is the author of [Let Your Light Shine Like a Rainbow Always: Meditations on Bible Prayers for Not-So-Everyday Moments](#). As an African American feminist theologian, she speaks for a sector of society that is frequently invisible. Her website is irenemonroe.com. Click [here](#) to contact the Rev. Monroe.

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