

Faith In America

Religion-Based Bigotry... Let's End It Now And Forever

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Faith In America Founder Sees Important Movement

HICKORY, NC - Faith In America Founder Mitchell Gold today said that comments made at last night's Democratic presidential candidates' forum are further indications that religion-based bigotry is slowly but surely losing its foothold in American politics and he's grateful for the Democratic candidates leading the charge.

Last night's forum was sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign and LOGO and was the first time in American politics that presidential candidates have met during an LGBT forum to discuss LGBT issues.

Gold, who founded Faith In America in 2005 as a platform to educate Americans about the harm caused by religion-based bigotry against gay and lesbian Americans, attended The Visible Vote '08: A Presidential Forum held in Los Angeles, Calif.

"I felt it was an historic moment for the civil rights movement in America, Gold said. "I'd like to thank the Human Rights Campaign and LOGO for putting together this event. It demonstrates to gay and lesbian citizens that their voices, and their votes, really do matter."

In attending the forum, Gold said he was interested in hearing how the candidates would respond to questions about how their religious beliefs intersect with their opposition to full and equal rights.

He praised Edwards for saying that it was wrong to use personal religious beliefs to justify his opposition to gay marriage and Barack Obama for his suggestion that religion shouldn't be a factor in determining who gets the rights that go along with marriage in America.

"I thought Obama's statements about how some in our African-American churches are using religious beliefs to cause division and strife was a very important statement for him to make," Gold said.

Gold said his organization was particularly pleased to hear the comments made by U.S. Sen. Mike Gravel and U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich, both of whom stated unqualified support for full equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender citizens.

"To have these two presidential candidates stand before their opponents with the courage to take a stand for what is the right thing to do – despite some of their opponents who obviously believe it is not the right political thing to do – is extremely encouraging. It shows how far the LGBT community has moved over the last 10 years in gaining support for full and equal rights."

"I think it's pretty safe to say that the reason the Democratic frontrunners believe it would be a political miscalculation to support full equality, including gay marriage, is because the conservative religious/political forces in this country have been so successful in demonizing the GLBT community and the issues that are important to them," he added.

Gold said he would like to ask a question of the Democratic presidential primary race's top contenders, whose responses on the gay marriage issue drew criticism from many LGBT posts in the blogosphere.

"If they were all standing on the stage 40 years ago and the moderator asked them their views on interracial marriage, would their responses sound similar," he asked. "Would they say that civil unions would be best for two people of different races wanting to marry? Would they say the issue is best settled by the states? Would they say their opposition to interracial marriage is a personal matter?"

Gold said his organization believes that misguided religious teaching is the single greatest barrier to full and equal rights for gay and lesbian citizens.

However, Gold said his organization believes there is a monumental shift taking place in America by the fact that more and more Americans are realizing that it is wrong to use religion to justify contempt, hate or prejudice against good, decent Americans simply because of their sexual orientation.

Gold said his organization has been working for more than two years to educate Americans about the immense harm caused by misguided religious teachings that are used to persecute gay and lesbian individuals and he's convinced a majority of Americans are ready to embrace social justice and abandon the injustice of religion-based bigotry.

"From comments heard last night, it's pretty clear U.S. Sen. Gravel and U.S. Rep. Kucinich are already there and the other candidates I believe are moving in the right direction," Gold stated.

Faith in America Inc. is a civil rights advocacy organization whose mission is to end legal and spiritual discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people in America and to gain full and equal rights for those citizens. Faith In America is not a religious organization but works to educate Americans about the harm caused by religion-based bigotry against GLBT individuals. The organization in April announced a series of grassroots campaigns in five cities across America. In June, the organization lead a campaign in Washington, D.C. that included numerous other civil rights advocacy groups in honoring the 40th celebration of the Loving v. Virginia Supreme Court Decision that struck down all remaining bans on interracial marriage. More information can be found at www.faithinamerica.com.

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