Don’t Blame Me For Your Mess!

March 15, 2011 By Angel Mason

(MARRIAGE EQUALITY WILL BECOME A REALITY IN CALIFORNIA)

I am tired of being attacked, robbed, and denied equal rights by heterosexual religious zealots who blame same-gender-loving people for their failed marriages. Last year, on January 27, 2010, I read a statement released by the Associated Press, quoting the founder of a family values think-tank who said (while testifying before the California Supreme Court) that rights of same-sex couples should come second to preserving the cherished social institution of marriage. You may have also noted that this year, President Obama is catching a fair amount of grief from theologically conservative African American pastors for his decision to no longer defend the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which bans the recognition of same-sex marriage. Reverend Anthony Evans, who heads the National Black Church Initiative, recently lashed out at Obama, stating, “The president has harmed himself on this issue... He has openly offended the black church, and he didn’t need to do it.”

Most of my life, I have served in worship centers across America in one capacity or another, and I can tell you that what has eroded heterosexual marriages has nothing to do with a secret gay agenda and/or conspiracy spearheaded by evil men and women dressed in rainbow-hooded robes like the Ku Klux Klan in the ’50 and ’60s. I have decided to remain in the ranks, unlike many same-gender-loving men and women who have left the church because of crazy statements like these (heralded from pulpits across America) and attitudes that demean and demoralize them as individuals. So I know first-hand that the reason Bishop so-and-so and Prophetess so-and-so got divorced had absolutely nothing to do with my attraction to another man. I didn’t live in their house! I did not attend their lavish wedding! I certainly didn’t secretly carry on an illicit sexual affair behind the scenes with either of them. And I was not the confidant they confided in when things began to crumble in their marriages and the erotic flame burned out in their sex lives. Nor was I the person they sought when they made their decision to marry and needed marriage counseling, although after observing the horrific aftermath of their failed marriage, perhaps I should have been!

Melissa Etheridge made a profound statement when she questioned the U.S. government’s right to extract taxes from her (a hard-working same-gender-loving U.S. Citizen), yet deny her the right to marry the person she loves. Well, this is not something that is new to me as an African-American. For years, this same so-called Democratic government has denied people of color across this great nation their equal rights, all the while working them to death to build their mansions, work on their plantations, prosper their businesses by stealing their inventions and creative ideas, and pad their financial portfolios. Then one day, a Black man by the name of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., from Atlanta, Georgia, got fed up and said “Enough”!!! Dr. King radically galvanized a generation in a time when everything was against them!

People took to the streets with signs in hand - much like the LGBT community has done and began to demand what is due them as law-abiding, tax-paying citizens.

It was not an easy battle, change never is! This is something I learned as a Black youth growing up in Southeast Los Angeles. During this very era, many were left bleeding and decapitated as their dead bodies were left swinging from trees side to side, blown by the winds of hatred and discrimination, the result of being horribly disfigured and murdered. Some were maimed, having lost limbs like legs or arms and mothers kicked in the stomach - never again able to bear children after brutal beatings. But something in them kept them from turning back, even in the face of insurmountable odds. They persevered in their struggle until all Americans could enjoy the freedom of which this country proudly boasts.

So no, I won't shut up or go quietly into the night and stop protesting just because certain conservative Evangelical pastors and redneck politicians threaten to withdraw their support from the President of the United States (Barack Obama) in future elections. I appreciate the fact that Obama is working diligently behind the scenes to ensure that one day, I can walk down the aisle in the state that I live in and say "I do" to the man I love; and be able to avail myself to the same healthcare benefits and federal benefits and provisions that heterosexuals who enter a similar union are afforded.

I have one question to ask, especially to the so-called defenders of Civil Rights in the African-American community: What if during the Civil Rights Era, some misguided soul who headed a powerful political organization or government had the gall to stand up and say, "I think that equal rights for African-Americans should come second to preserving the cherished social institution of inequality and discrimination?!" Oops! Well, someone actually did say something similar to that! Governor George Wallace made numerous outlandish statements that were so crazy, until if I shared them with you now it literally would make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. And here is the knock-out punch: When he made these outlandish statements, millions of white Americans across the country cheered him and supported his backward discriminatory way of thinking, the same way many do when spiritual leaders mount the pulpit and bash gay people. Had it not been for President Kennedy intervening by appointing his brother, Robert, as Attorney General to deal with these issues, something that may have ultimately cost him his life, the Civil Rights Movement's stunning achievements may have been stymied and hindered, for who knows how long! Moreover, countless more innocent African-Americans would have been beaten and killed in public view, all to preserve the status quo.

Now because I hate to complain about problems and never offer solutions (something that I will do at the conclusion of this article), I must address another stunning revelation that I discovered just yesterday. Apparently, there are 170,000 inmates in the state of California in a prison system designed to service at the most 100,000. You might ask, "Well, how could we let this happen?" I will never forget the night I sat comfortably in my living room and watched a popular news program that clearly exposed one of the most powerful unions in America attempt to continue to hold hundreds of thousands of inmates across the country in institutions - not because they had committed some extremely hideous, unforgiveable crime, but because it was big business and profitable to do so. Furthermore, I have observed that when any governor or top official tries to combat this injustice and craft new legislation to release non-violent offenders, this same powerful union exerts its powerful financial and political muscle to stymie and obstruct their efforts. And they do this by using well-known law enforcement figures like puppets to frighten the American public by informing them via newscasts, Internet, and infomercials that their children are going to be raped or molested, if these criminals are released. They sound a false alarm, as if your home will be ransacked in the middle of the night by some illiterate Black or Latino man and that

the Police Department will be overwhelmed by increased crime if these horrible people -- by the way, many of them your fathers, mothers, boyfriends, girlfriends, sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, cousins, uncles, and aunts -- are released. Millions, if not billions, are being misappropriated in order to care for incarcerated people yearly, causing severe cutbacks in vital funding such as educational programs, programs that benefit the growing elderly population, AIDS organizations that service an increasingly number of our youth, social security, and many other much needed social programs. This misappropriation of funds now threatens to annihilate even welfare! Year after year, we allow the prison profiteers to entice and even coerce us into believing that it would be better to lay off teachers, caregivers, city employees, and public servants, rather than to release people who most likely shouldn't be there in the first place -- particularly on an extended basis. Is it any wonder why the Bible urges us to "Awake oh thou that sleepest?!"

Yet, where are our pastors, shepherds, and religious leaders whom we hold in high esteem, and cater to, to the point of excess? Unfortunately, they are MIA, and if you do find them, they are in Washington D.C. or in Sacramento California, fighting to deny hard-working people the right to marry the person of their choice. And what is their answer to the AIDS pandemic that is ravaging their ministries and claiming the lives of millions of their parishioners, and the millions of men and women who are being herded like cattle into prison institutions, while unions and the private sector get filthy rich, as a result of their incarceration? Their answer is to channel over $45 million of their parishioners' tithes and offerings to combat Proposition 8 while many churches don't even have a food pantry to feed the poor or a church bus to transport its elderly to and from church, or any effective counseling programs for sexually-active teens to keep them from having children out of wedlock or prevent them from contracting AIDS or STDs. And tragically, no marriage counseling programs that deal with real issues for couples considering marriage.

I have heard it said time and time again by pastors all over America: "We must sound a trumpet in Zion. The very foundation of our Christian faith is under attack because the gays are getting married!" - forgetting that Jesus said, "On this rock I build my church and nothing can prevail against it, not even the gates of hell!" I say that we must sound several trumpets in Zion and tell the pastors, bishops, priests, and spiritual leaders of our flocks to stop acting like Adam and Eve who blamed each other, the tempter, and even the Creator for their transgressions and shortcomings and face up to the facts. The facts are that they have been acting like the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day who criticized Him for feeding His disciples because they were hungry on the Sabbath day because of some distorted legalistic ritual they thought was Biblically correct - all because He allowed them to eat in the cornfields. Yes, by all means, let's sound a trumpet in Zion and send those same pastors packing back to their seminaries and theological educational institutions so that they can learn the true meaning of scripture.

And lastly, someone please inform them that the best way to shore up the institution of marriage is to spend generous amounts of time with their congregations and couples who are considering marriage and not be MIA (missing in action) because they are down at the courthouse protesting. Rather, they should teach couples how to be good husbands and wives and how to walk in love and integrity from the Word of God. Jesus' real message is that we should walk in love and live lives of integrity before people, not misappropriate $45 million fighting a proposition that will ultimately be overturned, which by the way, had it passed, would have generated countless millions of much needed revenue over the next ten years into California's impoverished economy. Wisdom would surely encourage our spiritual leaders to readjust their priorities and start addressing the real issues that plague their congregations and communities and to stop being remiss in their responsibilities as leaders and shepherds.

You may wonder what all of this has to do with the subject of health, but when we think of what wholeness and real health truly means; it is best defined as peace of mind, health of body, and harmonious relationships. It is a proven fact that the joy of possessing a super-abundance of material things can easily be eclipsed by depression and even suicidal thoughts if a person does not have self love, peace of mind and psychological stability. A great majority of gays, lesbians, therapists, liberals and mental health professionals believe that many of the individuals who commit suicide are motivated to end their lives because of internalized self-hatred acquired as a result of being rejected by family, parishioners, pastors and peers which they internalized during their childhood and teenage years. Laws and propositions that deny same-gender-loving people equal rights (including marriage equality) and homophobic sermons preached from pulpits shrouded in dogmatic theology, only reinforce prejudices and negative ideas which sends a message to society that people who are gay and lesbian are freaks of nature and undeserving of any constitutional provision. The result is that countless innocent children and teens buy into this unfounded inhumane idea that they are misfits with no other alternative but to end their lives. This is a needless tragedy that we must do everything in our power to stop!

By Terry Angel Mason, Global Author
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