

The Truth and Obama

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The Rev. Jeremiah Wright Recalls Obama's Fall From Grace

The truth is Obama never fell from anything, he was always a resource of the REAL executive powers, a selectee! NEVER forget the powers offered the US presidency to Colin Powell first, 'community organiser' Obama was a very poor second choice, as duped America is discovering today. Obama ALWAYS served minority elite interests to whom he is COMPLETELY beholden! Nevertheless, Hedges' essay is refreshingly gritty, honest and ACCURATE; his willingness to confront the REALITY of American politics and the servile president separates him from the bought herd of media slaves and commentators that continue to present Obama as some sort of authority figure -- Obama was placed in the presidency to serve the UNREPRESENTATIVE, minority interests that placed him there.



Barack Obama's politically expedient decision to betray and abandon his pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, exposed his cowardice and moral bankruptcy. In that moment, playing the part of Judas, he surrendered the last shreds of his integrity. He became nothing more than a pawn of power, or as Cornel West says, "a black mascot for Wall Street." Obama, once the glitter of power fades, will have to grapple with the fact that he was a traitor not only to his pastor, the man who married him and Michelle, who baptized his children and who kept him spiritually and morally grounded, but to himself. Wright retains what is most precious in life and what Obama has squandered—his soul.

The health of a nation is measured by how it treats its prophets. When these prophets are ignored and reviled, when they become figures of ridicule, when they are labeled by the chattering classes and power elite as fools, then there is no check left on moral decay and the degeneration of the state. Wright, who spent 36 years at the Trinity United Church of Christ on Chicago's South Side, since the 2008 presidential campaign has endured slander and calumny and weathered character assassination, misinterpretation and abuse, and yet he doggedly continues Sunday after Sunday to thunder the word of God from pulpits across the country.

I grew up as a Christian. My father was a pastor. I graduated from a seminary. I can distinguish a Christian pastor from the slick imposters and charlatans, from T.D. Jakes to Joel Osteen. Wright

preaches the radical and unsettling message of the Christian Gospel. He calls us to live the moral life. He knows that the measure of our lives as individuals and as a nation is reflected in how we treat our most vulnerable. And he knows on whose side he stands. Obama, who like Judas took his 30 pieces of silver and betrayed someone who loved him, withers into moral insignificance in Wright's presence.

Obama, although his subservience to the war machine and Wall Street mocks the fundamental values of Dr. Martin Luther King, will preside Oct. 16 over the dedication of the King memorial on the Mall in Washington. He will lend himself to the venal cabal of the corporate and political elites who have hijacked King's image. These political and corporate figures—many of whom donated significant sums to build the \$120 million memorial (General Motors, which gave \$10 million, uses the memorial in a commercial for its vehicles)—seek to silence King's demand for economic justice and an end to racism and militarism. King's vision is grotesquely deformed in Obama's hands. To hear the voice of King we will have to turn from the choreographed and corporate-sponsored dedication ceremony to heed the words of a handful of men and women who are as reviled by the power brokers as King was in his own life, and yet who battle to keep the flame of King's message alive.

"I think it's a wonderful thing that the country would recognize someone as important as Dr. King," Wright said when I reached him by phone in Chicago, "and recognize him in a way that raises his likeness in the Mall along with the presidents. He's not a president like Abraham Lincoln or George Washington. But to have him ranked among them in terms of this nation paying attention to the importance of his work, that's a good thing."

"I read Maya Angelou's piece about the way the quote was put on the monument," Wright said in referring to the editing of a quote by King on the north face of the 30-foot-tall granite statue. The inscription quote reads: "I was a drum major for justice, peace and righteousness." But these are not King's words. They are paraphrased from a sermon he gave in which he said: "If you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter." Angelou said the mangled inscription made King sound "arrogant."

"I read the explanation as to why we couldn't include the whole quote," said Wright, who helped raise \$200,000 for the monument. "Kids a hundred years from now, like our pastor who was born three years after King was killed, they're going to see that and will not get the context. They will not hear the whole speech, and that will be their take-away, which is not a good thing. My bigger problems, however, have to do with all the emphasis on '63 and 'I Have a Dream.' They have swept under the rug the radical justice message that King ended his career repeating over and over and over again, starting with the media coverage of the April 4, 1967, 'A Time to Break Silence' message at the Riverside Church [in New York City]. King had a huge emphasis on capitalism, militarism and racism, the three-headed giant. There is no mention of that, no mention of that King, and absolutely no mention of the importance of his work with the poor. After all, he's at the garbage collectors strike in Memphis, Tenn., when he is assassinated. The whole emphasis on the poor sent him to Memphis. But that gets swept away. It bothers me that we think more about a monument than a movement. He had a movement trying to address poverty. It was for jobs, not I Have a Dream, not Black and White Together, but that gets lost."

"You look at old guys like me that were alive during that time," Wright said. "I'm saying 'wait a minute, you're missing something, you're missing something,' and my grandson—well, my youngest one is 11, he'll not know that King. I'll tell him, but what's going to happen in terms of the curriculum? What's going to happen in terms of the schools? What's going to happen in terms of the

millions of visitors who go to Washington, D.C.? They will miss that King entirely. We have an idealistic portrait. I think that does violence to what the man stood for and what he was trying to do.”

More ominously, Wright warns, the sanitizing of King has been accompanied by the primacy of a selfish, hedonistic and violent culture which has turned away from values, including self-sacrifice, that make possible harmony and the common good. This selfishness and narcissism, Wright argues, is a form of blasphemy.

“We got so focused in on being No. 1, on being the superpower,” he said. “When the Cold War ends we reign supreme. Empire, corporate interest and business interests take over. We got so focused on that and the media hype, media of course being owned by the corporations, that the founding principles, the core principles that I feel should have been our guiding principles, in terms of becoming what King called ‘the beloved community,’ and becoming what Howard Thurman called ‘the search for common ground,’ got completely lost. We substituted the prayer of Jesus with the prayer of Jabez. Increase my territory. Enlarge my territory. If you notice, Jesus taught us to pray, and I speak as a Christian minister—I realize that the country is not all Christian—but just in terms of the principles that I believe cut across interfaith lines and boundaries is in the prayer. The model prayer the Lord taught us as the Lord’s disciples has no first person singular pronoun. It’s ‘our,’ ‘we,’ ‘us.’ That got lost.”

“We became a ‘me’-focused, kind of dog-eat-dog, Ayn Rand, social Darwinist, survival of the fittest, be strong, and with no care, no concern, no compassion for those that are not born above the scratch line,” Wright said. “And no concern to make the communities in which they live and the world in which we live a community which really cares about all of God’s children, regardless of their colors and regardless of their faith.”

Wright has become something of an expert on the commercial media since he was psychologically lynched by them. The media, selecting clips to tar him, have plastered him with derogatory labels and shut his voice out of the national discourse. He has, like all of our greatest intellectual and moral dissidents, from Ralph Nader to Noam Chomsky, been rendered a pariah.

“The media became interested in profits, in selling airtime, in selling newspapers, in selling magazines, in selling ‘if it bleeds it leads,’ whatever will get us a larger market share of the audience, of the viewing audience, of the listening audience,” Wright went on. “That became the focus, rather than sharing factual news with Americans, and the world, in terms of what’s really going on. That’s no longer important. What’s important is profit.”

“Once that media-spun narrative is out there, from that point on all you hear is critiques of the narrative, deconstruction of the narrative, debates concerning the narrative, affirmations of the narrative, attacks on the narrative, with nobody talking about substance, because we don’t even know what substance is,” Wright said.

Wright insists that the church, especially the liberal church that allied itself with the civil rights movement, is alive, although ignored and unheeded as a voice within the larger society.

“The average church in America has 200 members,” he said. “But they get no news coverage. The news covers the mega-churches, Rick Warren, T.D. Jakes. We’re talking big churches, large memberships. But the men and women who are in the trenches, who have not ‘bowed to Baal,’ the 7,000 more that God told Elijah that God had, are ignored. They’re still there. They’re still doing it. They are not, perhaps—and this is spoken from a 70-year-old, and I would say 50 years of that as an

adult looking back—as numerous as they were back in the '60s. They are fewer and less vocal in number, but they remain. The problem is that the media is not going to put out what guys like your dad and my dad were doing and saying Sunday after Sunday, not just in worship but throughout the week as they tried to make ministry meaningful after the benediction. That doesn't get covered. I see them still doing, still trying to do what they did back in the '60s, but not getting the coverage. Let them marry a gay guy, or a gay couple, that's going to make the news. Let them go up against Wal-Mart, especially Wal-Mart's treatment of women or its workers, that doesn't make the news. Because the Waltons, and the corporate giants who control the news, don't see that kind of work by the church as important. What's important is that the Supreme Court sided with the Walton family. So that those churches that are trying, that are dealing with poverty, that are dealing with honest conversations about educational reform, that are not jumping on the 'Waiting for Superman' bandwagon or Bill Gates, but who are really in the schools, are relegated to the shadows. And from what I see talking to local pastors they're trying their best to make a difference in the lives of the poor, they're doing feeding. I just left Fresno and a little small church out there adopted one of the missions [for the needy] in Fresno. They've got a place called Tent City in one of the richest counties in the country. Folks are living in tents as if it was Soweto or Calcutta. The guys from that small church in Fresno are going there, because it's dangerous for the women to go over there, guys are going over there once a week, and they are taking the youth of this church. But that's not making the news. I've seen the church doing all kinds of exciting things around the country, but it's below the radar."

"How many times has there been a debt-ceiling vote these past few years?" he asked. "Eighty-seven times. But what becomes news? Well, first of all, don't mention the number of debt-ceiling votes to the public. The media needs a crisis whether it is the debt-ceiling vote or Obamacare. These are the things we keep in front of the people's faces. What about the important issues? If it is about the defense budget or the fact that major corporations haven't paid a penny in taxes, we get—no, no, no, no, no, no, no—don't put that in front of them. It is 'low information' America. It's 'my mind is made up—don't confuse me with any facts.' I see what the church is really doing, the liberal church, the old-line church, the unpopular churches, the ones that don't get the coverage. I see them in the trenches seven days a week, 52 weeks a year."

"Do you know what successful ministry is?" he asked. "When you change and touch the lives of people, when you make a difference in their lives, when you give them hope, when you help them go back to school and get an education. That's successful ministry. But even seminarians I teach are looking at ministry like it's a "be like Mike" basketball role model they are pursuing. Instead of important and life-changing questions being addressed, the questions one hears are: How many members do we have? How many CDs and DVDs have we produced? How much money do we make? That's not a successful ministry. Too many seminary students aren't interested in making things better. They're interested in becoming like T.D. Jakes, in building a megachurch. They're not interested in being in the hood, with those who have lost hope."

"We don't want our children to have any kind of critical thinking, we just want them to be able to function in a low-paying dead-end job," Wright said. "There is no emphasis on teaching the young African-American male to dream. And teaching him, and the young sisters also, him or her, that, OK, education is more than passing scores, how you perform on a test—it has to do with how you live in community with others. It has to do with nutrition. It has to do with poverty. It has to do with the whole person. We are slashing and burning programs at the preschool level. We start with Head Start and early childhood education, and all the way up through the foundational primary grades. Who is going to teach these kids Langston Hughes' poem 'Mother to Son'? Who is going to repeat Hughes' words to them:

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

"Who is going to tell him or her you can do this, you really can, you can achieve, you are not what society has labeled you?" he said. "And then we have to give them an alternative, some tools where they can get a job, where they can take care of their families, where they can learn to think critically and analyze some of the stuff that they're hearing on television, and deconstruct some of the stuff they're hearing in hip-hop. Because there are some conscious hip-hop artists who have not bought into the corporate model. But you need to know the difference, and be able to tell the difference between the two. That kind of engagement is what I know several churches are doing."

Wright, who perhaps knows Obama better than nearly any other person in the country, sees a man who sold his principles for the chimera and illusion of power. But once Obama achieved power he became its tool, its vassal, its public face, its brand.

"President Obama was selected before he was elected," Wright said, "and he is accountable to those who selected him. Why do you think Wall Street got the break? Why do you think the big three [financial institutions] were bailed out? Those were the ones who selected him. We didn't select him. We don't have enough money to select anybody. You're accountable to those who select you. All politicians are. Given those constraints, he is doing the best he can because he is accountable to the ones that put him where he is. Preachers, pastors, ministers, we are not accountable to these people. I'll never forget one of the most powerful things he said to me in my home, second Saturday in April 2008. He said, 'You know what your problem is?' I said, 'What is that?' He said, 'You have to tell the truth.' I said, 'That's a good problem. That's a good problem.' "

"When he was elected to the United States Senate I was asked what advice I would have for Sen. Obama," Wright said. "I said, 'Please don't change who you are, because of where you are.' Who he was before he got to that position is a very different Barack. Which to me is unfortunate but it's to be expected because that's what you chose, you chose to run, to be in that place. I can give you a glimpse into the kind of person he was, which was mind-blowing to me to see somebody with that kind of integrity. He went to his first Congressional Black Caucus meeting the year before he announced that he was running for the Senate. He came back to Chicago and came into my office asking for an appointment. He was heartbroken. It showed to me that night his naiveté and his

integrity. He was naive because he was down in Washington trying to get audiences with the Congressional Black Caucus in terms of testing the waters about his making a run for the United States Senate. And it was a meat market. That blew his mind. I'm saying Barack, come on, man—name one significant thing that has come out of any Congressional Black Caucus. Come on. [He] was naive. He told me, 'My name should be out there right now, last week in September, but I can't announce.' I said, 'Why can't you announce?' He said, 'I don't know whether or not Carol Moseley Braun is going to run again. I will not run against an African-American woman.' And I'm saying to myself, what manner of man is this? I know guys who would run against their own mama. You will not run against an African-American female? To have that kind of integrity was awesome to me. He changed. That's unfortunate."

"In February 2007 on [a broadcast of] 'Religion & Ethics' I said there will come a time when Obama will have to distance himself from me," Wright said. "Now that's February 2007. So the fact that he had to distance himself from me does not come as a surprise. What did come as a surprise was how he did it. I've heard you describe that your dad laid the foundation upon which you stand. He made you the kind of person you are. I know that when you interview someone and the tears start, you fold up your notepad and put your pen away because you're not that kind of reporter. If there was somebody from your dad's church running for an office, and the media comes up to them and puts a microphone in front of their face and says, did you hear what Pastor Hedges was saying about the war? If you disagree, your response is, 'I disagree with that, next question.' You don't have to chastise Pastor Hedges. I just disagree with him. Next question. But [Obama] was listening to people who are politically minded, people who are counting votes. He was not listening to people with integrity. In November and December of 2008 during the ethnic cleansing of Gaza one of the news media persons put a microphone in front of Barack's face and asked him what do you think about what's going on in Gaza? He said, 'We can't have but one president at a time.' I told my wife he needed to be on 'Dancing With the Stars' the way he danced around that question. That was like a preview of coming attractions in terms of the pragmatist, center-of-the-road, conciliatory, not-speaking-from-principle person the world sees today."

"And for him to have been a community organizer in one of the poorest communities in the city, Altgeld Gardens housing project, and now to be painted into a corner where he can't address health care for the poor," Wright said. "He took the public option off the table. What happened? What happened is politics happened."

"King would be saying to us the same thing today he was saying in 1967 and 1968," Wright said. "He would be condemning our nation's utter disregard for the poor. A strong nation cares about all of its citizens regardless of their color or their race or their religious beliefs. Malcolm, once he broke with the Nation of Islam, and found that God, or Allah, really does have children that don't look like you, would be appalled by our buying into a military option as a way to peace, as a way to finding common ground. The military option is not an option. King and Malcolm would agree with that."

"I was walking through the airport a few weeks ago," Wright said. "I saw on the cover, I think, of Time Magazine, Osama bin Laden's picture. The caption on the cover said 'Justice.' I said, 'How about murder? It was an assassin's hit.' What really bothered me as I read more about it was that Barack and Hillary [Clinton] and the war folk were sitting in the war room watching the hit. There were cameras in the field. It was a hit, two right above the eyebrow. Why, why, why did you murder that man? We have international courts. We have trials like the Nuremberg trials. Why did you murder him? Why not put him on trial? And I sat up in the middle of the night, about 10 days later, with the answer. I said, because you didn't want him to talk. If he starts talking on the stand everything comes unraveled. We will have to look at the Cheney war machine. A trial would rip to shreds the lies we have been telling ourselves and our American public. We can't afford that, so we

murder him. We murder him and call it justice. That one really hurt. I said to myself, this is the Barack you once knew who cared enough about humankind to work in Altgeld Gardens with the poor, to not run against an African-American female, who now calls for a professional Navy SEAL assassination, a hit, and watches it. It's like that story you heard your dad preach and you know from seminary in Acts, where the demons said to the seven sons of Sceva, Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you? Who have you become?"

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