

Meet an Evangelical, meet a brazen Hypocrite

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Mike Jones on Ted Haggard and Hypocrisy

The former escort who blew the whistle on Ted Haggard's homosexuality explains why he felt morally compelled to come forward, what the fallout has been and what he feels is the real tragedy of the situation.

Transcript of interview follows:



Another Evangelical at odds with Christian doctrine

James Harris: This is Truthdig. James Harris here with Josh Scheer. And on the phone we have the former escort and fitness consultant, Mike Jones. He's the author of the new book "I Had to Say Something"—the book outlining and detailing his relationship with Ted Haggard. Since his new book was published, Ted Haggard, the former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, a 30,000-member organization, stepped down. And this book has caused an incredible stir. Mike, usually I would start off a discussion of your book by saying clearly you were in this for the money. But you lost your escort capacity. You were fired from your fitness consultancy. Why did you do it?

Mike Jones: Yes, when I exposed Ted Haggard I exposed myself. There's no doubt about it. I also had death threats, and I risked being arrested, also. But you know, this man was such a hypocrite. This was a man who talked to Bush once a week. This was a man who actively campaigned against gay marriage. And he could not even abide by his own marriage vows. This is so strong for me, and it hurt me so deeply, that I simply reached the point where I had to say something.

Josh Scheer: What about in recent news where he said he has been cured of being a homosexual, he's reformed. Do you believe that, since you spent three years with him?

Jones: Well, first of all, the word cured is disgusting. It's not a disease or a sickness. Listen, this man I had seen for approximately three years ... this man is in denial. It's part of the problem with the evangelical church; it's part of the problem with the Catholic Church. They put such guilt and shame

on being a gay man that you end up with someone like Ted Haggard who has to sneak around. And that's the sad situation about all of this.

Scheer: I read in the book, and in some descriptions, that you call Ted Haggard a gentle man and a nice man. How can he, on one side, be on TV saying all those awful things about other groups, and then change and be so tender with you? How do you think that happened?

Jones: Well, first of all, Ted Haggard, I think, is a gay man, personally. He grew up in the whole evangelical movement, and that's what the problem is so many times with these people that give in to these positions, is they really have their own issues. But they don't know how to deal with it. So, they get into these religious groups where people look to them for guidance and they get money and they get power, and they just can't be themselves, so they almost live this façade. That's what the tragedy of it all is; they're living a lie. And so many people follow them. And, it's a tragedy. Nobody won in the situation; I didn't win; Ted Haggard didn't win. But it's a shame that he can't be honest with himself.

Scheer: In your relationship did you ever know about his views? Watching the TV in the gym, did you ever know his views and did you ever confront him while you guys were together?

Jones: You have to remember that I ... saw him for two and a half years before I found out who he was. So he didn't talk about what he did for work or any of his personal beliefs. I did know he was married and had five kids. I did know that much. So, it was strictly a business situation for me. It was, when he saw me, it was not only for sex, but it was for companionship. It was obviously to be affectionate with a man, that's what he was looking for. It's just unfortunate that he was living a double life.

Scheer: What are your feelings about being an escort? I think it's a very interesting topic, that when I was reading the interviews—. I know you talk about it in the book, and in many of the interviews you've done they've talked about it. Do you find there was anything morally wrong with being an escort, or if you could go back to doing that would you?

Jones: I don't care about going back to doing it. But when the news broke I was called a prostitute. And I really hate that word. Simply because there was so much more that I did than having sex occasionally. Not every man I was with, we had sex. Yet, you have to remember that 80 percent of my clientele were married men, and 15 percent were clergy. You know when I was, as an escort, I would have men that were literally dying and I was holding them in my eyes, they were crying, these are men felt like they were in situations they can't get out of. And, I was there to help them emotionally. It wasn't always about sex. So, I think I was like a counselor, a psychiatrist; I was much more than just a sex partner. So, deep down, I really, the moral part of it, you can decide what you want, on me, if you want to say I'm immoral, that's fine. I just want to say this, I felt like I had to make a moral decision about Ted Haggard. He was hurting millions of gay people, him and the rest like James Dobson and Pat Robertson, all of them ... they hurt people. They divide this country; they don't bring people together. And that's what the shame is.

Harris: When you reflect on this, though, he is a married man, and you were complicit in the relationship as well. Eighty-five or 90 percent of your clientele were married; you must take some of the onus here, you think?

Jones: Now, listen, they called me first. I never contacted them. I was providing this service and they obviously wanted to hire me for that service. You have to remember, relationships are kind of a loose term because I never got emotionally attached to any of these men. Did I care for them? Did I feel

sorry for them? Yes. I never got emotionally attached to them, so there is that wall that I put up and I kept that separate. This was a business for me, and that's what it was.

Scheer: With the writing of the book, now, you've been on a book tour ... do you find that people out there, are they supportive? I heard earlier in the interview you talked about you getting death threats. But have people been supportive, or have people been kind of negative?

Jones: Well, I've gotten it from all sides. I've gotten it from religious people; I've gotten it from gay people. You know, I haven't been the shining star for a lot of people. But I have had a lot of support. At a lot of my book signing tours I'm getting 100 to 200 people at these book signings. And that's pretty large in book-signing terms. And so there is a lot of support for it. I have people who are hugging me and crying, saying "thank you." So, yeah, I've got a lot of support out there, and a lot of the people still give me credit for helping the Democrats win the election last year. Whenever that was, last year, yeah. So, it's amazing. My life has changed so much in the last nine months, it's just... it's been crazy.

Harris: What's been the best improvement for you?

Jones: I don't know if I can say an improvement. What I can say is I'm 50 years old now. My life is, I have no more baggage. My life is so exposed; I literally have no more baggage. I have nothing to hide from anybody. And that's kind of a unique situation to be in. I can kind of start fresh with whatever I decide to do. But it is overpowering because right before Ted Haggard came to life, I had just lost my mom to a horrible death, so I was very depressed about that, and then Ted Haggard came along. And it's been a very emotional last few months for me.

Scheer: Now, I want to ask about sex scandals with the evangelicals, because James is talking about the Catholic Church. ... Now with evangelicals, though, there have been sex scandals, though, but they weren't with homosexuals. Why did your scandal get so much traction? Why do you think it cost [the Republicans] the election?

Jones: The homosexual part?

Scheer: The homosexual part. Do you think the evangelicals?

Jones: They can deal with straight sex, they can deal with drug abuse. They can deal with anything. If you throw in homosexuality in there, that changes everything. They cannot deal with that.

Harris: So Haggard lost credibility because he was gay? And he proclaimed to be somebody else?

Jones: Because of the homosexuality aspect.

Harris: You're saying, had he came out and there was a 30-year-old hot blond women, he would have been fine. But since you weren't the hot blonde, that that ended his career?

Jones: Look at Jimmy Swaggart. He's a prime example. He got caught with a prostitute, you know, he's back doing his thing. Absolutely, absolutely. Haggard, what he would have done, he would have admitted it, he would have asked for forgiveness. He would have cried, and he would have kept going. But you throw the gay aspect in there and that threw him for a loop.

Harris: We talked to a guy by the name of Cyd Ziegler, he's the chief at Outsports.com, and we were talking about the Tim Hardaway incident. I don't know if you remember that earlier this year ...

when he [Hardaway] talked about John Amaechi in such horrible terms. But I asked him, quite frankly, "Don't you think there is a collective fear and loathing of homosexuality in this country?" And [Ziegler] told me: "No, I don't. I think it's much better than it used to be, and people, by and large, accept homosexuality." I'd love to know what you think the general feeling about homosexuality is in this country.

Jones: Yeah, I think it's getting better. I've seen it since, you know; I've been around for a while. So I've seen it during the really rough periods. Is it there where it should be yet? No. But, I would guess that within 10 years every person out there is going to know someone, or have a family member, that is gay. And that's where the real change comes into ... when it's so close to you, definite changes. I think it's going to get better, I think it's better. But is it perfect? No. Will it ever be perfect? Probably not.

Scheer: Are you glad this came out ... the book has been written, and Ted Haggard has been exposed? Do you think it made a big dent in the evangelicals? Maybe they have to take a look at themselves?

Jones: Yeah. I can tell you about New Life Church [Haggard's former church]. Their attendance is down 25 percent right now, and during the election last election, when this story broke, 8 percent of the evangelicals did not vote. That's huge. And I think they are having to take a look at themselves because, you know what, this can't continue. You know what, the way the church [Christianity] deals with homosexuality is they don't deal with it. They want to brush it to the side as quickly as possible. And then you know what we get? We get more Ted Haggards down the road. I mean, how many times do we want to go through this? This is ridiculous. There are so many more important issues to deal with in this country than gay marriage. So, I think they are taking a look at it; it's going to be slow coming, but sooner or later they're going to have to come to terms.

Harris: Do you really think the church is going to come to terms with homosexuality?

Jones: You know, it's starting to wear on people. People are getting tired. How many more times do we have to hear about pedophilia in the Catholic Church? How many more times do we have to hear about, you know, affairs, you know, with priests crumbling down, or pastors falling from the pedestal? People are getting weary, and that's what is going to make a change. People are going to go, "God, is this worth all the aggravation?" You know ... I really think it's going to get better, and I can tell you that I know from behind the scenes, people in the evangelical church are talking. They're saying, "We have to modify our positions. This is ridiculous." So, it will be slow coming, but I firmly believe it will be changing.

Scheer: And also, I think, to kind of counter James' point, I think the hard-liners are going to start having to go away. I mean lots of people are lapsed religious people or they go to church once a week. I think the hard-liners, maybe that Ted Haggard is part of, they will say, "This is obviously an issue that we are going to lose on."

Jones: Well, and you know what, look at the age of people like James Dobson and Pat Robertson.

Scheer: They'll be dead soon.

Jones: And we just got Jerry Falwell who just went on. So that old era is going to be leaving us pretty soon. And are there a few people waiting in line to take over? Yes, but there will never be people quite like these guys. And that's where I think the change is really going to happen once they're gone.

Harris: Mike Jones is his name. Be sure to pick up a copy of "I Had to Say Something," the new book by Mike Jones. Mike, thanks for spending time with us.

Jones: I appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Harris: For Josh Scheer, this is James Harris. And this has been Truthdig.

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Pope Ratzinger: not an Evangelical, but close

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