

‘Raw Sex’ and Rev. Evans

by Richard J. Rosendall

Bay Windows

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There was no suspense at the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics hearing on Jan. 27, which concerned the proposed referendum on the recently passed marriage-equality bill. Two similar ballot measures were already tossed out by the Board and the Superior Court. My fellow defenders of equality and I were there to testify again that D.C. law bars measures that put people's rights up to a popular vote, but first we had to listen to dozens of anti-gay witnesses.

The referendum proponents' attorneys were preparing the ground for an eventual appearance before the Court of Appeals, but most of their acolytes were just venting. Their indignation did little to conceal the desperation of people out of arguments but unwilling to concede.

One witness warned, "These are the End Times," which made me wonder why she wasn't off preparing for the Rapture. Another offered some peculiar numerology. Several called out biblical references as if they were casting spells. But the day's highlight was by Rev. Anthony Evans, one of the leading opponents of D.C. marriage equality.

Evans demanded of the Board members, "Are you homosexual? Are any of your family members or friends homosexuals? Do you have any hatred in your heart towards the church? Do you have any hatred in your heart towards clergy? If you have answered yes to any of these questions, then you should excuse yourself from these proceedings..."

A few days later, Evans sent me a link to an open letter he had written criticizing NAACP chairman Julian Bond for supporting marriage equality. "For the NAACP to take up this cause is an abomination and an affront for all African Americans who died for human and civil rights." Purporting to speak for 99 percent of black clergy, Evans wrote, "You have ignored our voice and have the audacity to suggest that two men having sex with one another is a legitimate civil rights issue."

Have you ever seen someone walk down the street talking, and you thought he was on the phone but then realized he was just talking to himself? Evans's ranting letter reminds me of that. He copied it to several prominent ministers around the country, including TD Jakes and the president of the National Baptist Convention -- a gesture that appeared designed to exaggerate the reach and influence of Evans and his so-called National Black Church Initiative.

Evans declared that the issue of gay equality is theological, ignoring our constitutional separation of church and state. He accused Bond of prostituting himself and the NAACP "for a contribution from the white, gay community." Evans simply ignores the prominent participation by African Americans in every aspect of D.C.'s marriage equality effort, from canvassers to witnesses at legislative hearings to affirming clergy. Those facts are inconvenient to his effort to sow divisions by race and class.

Evans claimed to love his gay brothers and sisters, but called us "a small minority with a selfish end," and said our relationships are all about "raw sex," echoing a witness at a hearing last October who held up a copy of the children's book *King & King* and called it a sex book. It is no more a sex book than *Sleeping Beauty* or *Cinderella*. The relentless effort to reduce gay people's love to sex illustrates the prejudice that we have had to overcome to reach this moment.

Evans wrote to Bond, "As you well know, we have more pressing issues to deal with such as education, health, the economy, unemployment, and foreclosure." But Evans is the one trying to divert churches' attention from those concerns in his obsession over gay sex.

Sunday morning, Evans told me via E-mail, "My word is the only word, Let the people vote!" So now he's a prophet. As Mark Levine, counsel for the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, pointed out at the hearing, the U.S. Constitution (Article IV, Section 4) specifies a republican form of government, not government by plebiscite. Evans can repeat his mantra all he likes, it will avail him nothing.

By demanding that the Board of Elections members establish their heterosexual credentials, Evans invited questions about his own. But never mind. Evans has displayed enough of himself already.

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