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Cover Story **Ted Haggard's Issues with his Homosexuality** **Inclusion**

By The Reverend Irene Monroe
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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After a publicity junket promoting the HBO documentary, *The Trials of Ted Haggard*, which landed him on *Oprah* and *Larry King Live*, fallen evangelical star Haggard has risen from public obscurity to tell us he's not gay. He's "heterosexual with issues." And the issues Haggard is referring to are his "sexual thoughts about men, but they're not compulsive any more." But Haggard same-sex thoughts haven't been nearly as compulsive and destructive as his trysts with gay men.

First denying allegations about dalliances with gay men, Haggard was shamed into confessing "his sexual immorality" when his gay male prostitute, Mike Jones, went public about their affair. Haggard, we find out, was soliciting homosexual sex and methamphetamine from Jones off and on for three years.

The founder of the 14,000-member New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Haggard was once a national bigwig. *Time* magazine in 2005 listed Haggard as one of the top 25 most influential evangelicals in America. And he wielded influence on Capitol Hill as part of a cadre of men who participated in conservative Christian leadership conference calls with the White House during the Bush administration.

Now banished from the GOP inner sanctum and the Christian Right's hallowed sanctuary, Haggard has lost his political platform and bully pulpit. Haggard traces his sexual struggles to allegedly being molested as a child. But Haggard's road to perdition is not about his sexual orientation; rather it is about the lies he tells about it.

"I do believe I don't fit into the normal boxes," Haggard said. "I do think there are complexities associated with some people's sexuality, but it just wasn't as simple as I wanted it to be, because I was so deeply in love with my life." However, truth be told, Haggard is deeply in love with heterosexual privilege and homosexual sex.

In feeding Haggard internalized homophobia and the Christian Right's politically and religiously Biased Agenda-Driven (aptly abbreviated "B.A.D.") science like "reparative therapies," which attempts to prove that LGBTQ people as genetically flawed, an ex-gay reparative therapist depicted Haggard's sexual proclivity as "heterosexual with homosexual attachments." But the real troubling attachment to Haggard's downfall is how the revelation of his furtive gay sex life exposes the broader hypocrisy of his church.

Long before Haggard's sex scandal was publicly disclosed, church officials and friends knew of his homosexual trysts. Lou Sheldon, a friend and chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition told *The Jewish Week* that "he and a lot of other people had been aware of Pastor Haggard's same-sex behavior for a while... but we weren't sure just how to deal with it.... Ted and I had a discussion. He said homosexuality is genetic. I said, 'yes it is'."

Younger evangelical Christians find the struggle Christian conservative churches are having with LGBTQ people is a culture war they don't want to engage in because the emphasis is political rather than focused on "the ethic of Jesus." And fighting against same-sex marriage is not on the top of their list of social concerns for the country.

When asked about same-sex marriage, Diana Smith, 27, an evangelical Christian from upstate New York said, "opposing [same-sex marriage] would not be at the top of Jesus' priority list. Jesus never mentioned homosexuals at all."

As a matter of fact, the top three social issues for this coming of age of evangelical Christians are the environment, children orphaned by AIDS, poverty and health care, all social issues they view as matters of faith and family values.

Older evangelical Christians, on the other hand, use homosexuality and sex scandals like Haggard's as a way to politicize their theological presence and control within the Republican Party. But the church knows, as many of its fallen disciples like Haggard, that it can neither get rid of or completely closet its LGBTQ people. The church, however, can be complicit in the deception.

Case in point: While on his publicity junket, new allegations of a homosexual relationship surfaced concerning Haggard. This time Haggard's church got involved by paying the 20-year-old male church volunteer hush-money to keep silent. In a settlement reached by the man's lawyer to not go public, the church is providing the young man money to pay his college tuition, moving expenses and counseling.

Rev. Brady Boyd, the new senior pastor at New Life, since Haggard's excommunication, doesn't see the exchange as bribery. "This was compassionate assistance. It was to help him move forward, not a settlement to keep him quiet," Boyd told CNN.

Many feel that Haggard should be held accountable for his actions. And they are right. But so, too, should the church.

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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, the Rev. Irene Monroe, is a religion columnist, theologian, and public speaker. A native of Brooklyn, Rev. Monroe is a graduate from Wellesley College and Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University, and served as a pastor at an African-American church before coming to Harvard Divinity School for her doctorate as a Ford Fellow. Reverend Monroe is the author of [Let Your Light Shine Like a Rainbow Always: Meditations on Bible Prayers for Not-So-Everyday Moments](#) . As an African American feminist theologian, she speaks for a sector of society that is frequently invisible. Her website is irenemonroe.com. Click [here](#) to contact the Rev. Monroe.

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