

Donnie McClurkin's Inclusion in Obama Campaign Sparks Controversy

Gay rights activists call for Barack Obama to remove singer and pastor Donnie McClurkin from campaign tour.



Gay rights activists have called for Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama to remove gospel singer and pastor Donnie McClurkin from this weekend's three-day gospel tour in Charleston, S.C., the Associated Press (AP) reported. "Embrace the Change" which was intended to unite the African-American faith community in support of Obama's campaign, has brought on a firestorm of criticism from the gay community for its inclusion of McClurkin—a former homosexual who now preaches a message of restoration from the gay lifestyle. Because McClurkin believes that sexuality is a choice, Obama sought to immediately distance himself from the singer, but has not indicated he would cancel McClurkin's scheduled appearance. "I strongly disagree with Reverend McClurkin's views and will continue to fight for these [gay] rights as president of the United States to ensure that America is a country that spreads tolerance instead of division," Obama said in a statement Tuesday, Reuters reported. On Wednesday, Obama added an openly gay minister to speak the same night McClurkin performs during the concert series. McClurkin, in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*, said his focus is not on the controversy but rather on helping further Obama's campaign for presidency. "I believe in [Obama's] stance. I believe in his platform and his agenda. So when they asked me if I would be a part of it, there was no problem," said the 47-year-old Grammy-winning musician, who identifies himself as a Democrat. "We don't have to agree on everything, but we do have to agree on the main thing: that there needs to be change and I believe he is the candidate to bring it."