

Cindy Trimm Speaks Out on Donald Trump After Black Pastors Meeting

Donald Trump's meeting on Monday (Nov. 30) with African-American Christian leaders appeared to suggest he has the ear of an influential segment of the population that actively encourages its followers to vote.

Ohio Pastor Darrell Scott, who arranged Monday's meeting and was present at a similar gathering with evangelical Christian leaders in September, insisted that Trump "is not the person that the media has depicted him to be."

"Everybody in that room likes Donald Trump," said Scott, who stood next to the Republican presidential front-runner and real estate mogul at an impromptu press conference afterward.

In addition to Scott's backing, Trump got an endorsement from Richmond, Virginia, pastor Stephen A. Parson Sr., though Parson has been embroiled in a lawsuit over his bankrupt church. And Durham, North Carolina, Bishop George G. Bloomer appeared to have endorsed Trump at an October rally, though he denied having given an endorsement Monday.

For his part, Trump said the closed-door meeting at his Trump Tower building in New York City was "amazing."

"I met some fantastic people," he told reporters.

But the Trump campaign declined to offer a list of either the ministers who attended or those who had endorsed him. And while 100 black pastors were invited to the meeting, it appeared that far fewer showed up. Those who did said the private discussion was tough.

Cindy Trimm, one of the pastors who appeared on camera after

the meeting, suggested that Trump's racially tinged comments were "addressed head-on." An NBC reporter who covered the news conference was told the candidate "got an earful for his rhetoric."

Trump, who has shrugged off allegations of racism, maintained that his tone was not an issue in the meeting.

Earlier, the announcement of the gathering, which his campaign called an "endorsement," drew a backlash from many other African-American scholars and clergy. One group wrote an open letter in *Ebony* magazine reminding Trump's potential guests of his "racially inaccurate, insensitive and incendiary rhetoric."

Georgia pastor E. Dewey Smith Jr. was not at Monday's meeting and said he was "very disturbed" by the "ecclesiastical grandstanding" that surrounded it.

Smith explained that he declined the first invitation to meet with Trump because the Republican front-runner's "political incorrectness" about women, immigration and other issues represents "qualities and attributes and values that I don't share."

Thabiti Anyabwile, a Washington, D.C., pastor, said he is concerned that Trump's "style of acerbic directness" clashes with the Christian message.

He acknowledged that "as citizens, clergy have all the same rights of other citizens" and "can endorse or vote for whomever they like as individual Americans." But, Anyabwile added, the Bible discourages pastors from getting "entangled in civilian affairs."

"At best, endorsing Trump or any candidate as pastors is unwise. At its worst it entangles the church in the worldly affairs of politics and with a candidate who is more caustic and uncharitable as any I can remember," Anyabwile said.

Although Trump has expressed confidence that he can woo black voters, a majority of whom are registered Democrats, a Quinnipiac University poll released in August showed that he is far from a hit with African-Americans. Pitted against Democratic favorite Hillary Rodham Clinton in the general election, Trump received just 3 percent of the black vote.
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