

Tongue-Talking Pentecostal Politician Shares Her Journey

Leah Daughtry was Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management in the U.S. Department of Labor before joining the Democratic National Committee as then-Chairman Howard Dean's chief of staff.

She served as CEO of the 2008 Democratic National Convention and made history last fall when she became the first person to ever serve in that capacity a second time. She is currently working on the preparations for this summer's convention in Philadelphia.

But what a lot of people don't know is she is a Pentecostal Christian.

Daughtry is the daughter of famed pastor and civil rights leader Rev. Herbert Daughtry of House of the Lord in Brooklyn. And, in an interview with *Philly Voice*, she talked about the impact her upbringing has had on her as an adult:

Meanwhile, Daughtry also pastors a small Pentecostal congregation in Washington, continuing her family's calling through the fifth generation. It's a role her family has long combined with political activism. And it's essential to her politics.

"Part of our faith system is that we are encouraged—we think mandated—to be engaged in the community around us," Daughtry said. "One of the ways that we chose to do that is through community activism on social justice issues. Part of that was an understanding that who is in office affects the quality of people's lives."

As a Pentecostal Christian, Daughtry believes that God's spirit dwells within everyone, connecting everyone to the

divine. Therefore, she said, it is paramount to treat people's needs as holy. That includes everything from safe communities to clean air and drinking water.

"All of that is part of the social structure in this country that allows you to lead a life where you can be all God intends you to be," Daughtry said. "For me, working in (politics) is a way to ensure that we treat people's needs as holy and that we lift up their needs and ensure that the needs of the divine are honored and met."

In addition to her duties with the National Convention, Daughtry also directs the Democratic Party's Faith in Action initiative to reach out to Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim voters. In that capacity, she made headlines by denying access to the convention's "interfaith service" to non-religious groups.

Even Dean, arguably one of the most secular politicians in modern history, praised her faith to the *Philly Voice*: "She is what I would call a real Christian. The principles of Jesus guide her life in this sense—she is always thinking about how would I want to be treated in this circumstance and how do I treat the least among us. ... She's incredibly grounded in her faith. It makes her a joy to be around."