

Christian Persecution? New Orleans Mayor Attacks Lauren Daigle for Joining 'Let Us Worship' Event

New Orleans, Louisiana's mayor, Latoya Cantrell, called for Christian artist Lauren Daigle's removal from ABC's *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve* special program. The mayor's outcry, she said, was based on the singer placing people at risk when participating at Sean Feucht's Louisiana Let Us Worship event.

The November worship service in the French Quarter was conducted without a permit, Cantrell said in a letter to Dick Clark Productions.

"The event was unpermitted, and in violation of critical health guidelines my administration has put in place to save lives in our city," the mayor said, noting that having Daigle as a guest at the New Year's Eve event would be an unwarranted "reward."

A Louisiana native, Daigle serves as an ambassador for promoting Louisiana tourism.

"Lauren is also the state's voice of the Sunshine Tourism Recovery Plan. Tourism is the 4th largest industry in our state generating over \$19 billion in revenue for our economy," Louisiana Lt. Gov. Bill Nungesser wrote, criticizing the mayor's actions.

"The last four years, the state of Louisiana and Louisiana Office of Tourism has sponsored ABC's *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve* broadcast to millions of viewers from the iconic Jackson Square at midnight CST after the ball drops in New

York, promoting the City of New Orleans and our state,” Nungesser told WDSU. “After four years of record-breaking tourism welcoming over 53 million people to Louisiana, we thought it was important that we highlight our state and our ambassador, two-time Grammy Award-winning singer, Lauren Daigle. We were also planning to honor health care and essential workers.”

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry came to Daigle’s defense, saying the mayor “appears to be targeting you due to your recent expression of your faith.”

He continued, vowing “to do everything in my power to protect” Daigle’s, and all those who share her faith, First Amendment right to worship.

Several others also came to Daigle’s defense:

The mayor of Lafayette, Daigle’s childhood hometown, Josh Guillory released a statement to WGN0tv, saying, “We would be honored to host Lauren Daigle in Lafayette to ring in 2021. It would be a truly great way to safely say goodbye to 2020.”

We would be honored to host @Lauren_Daigle to ring in 2021. It would be a truly great way to safely say goodbye to 2020! #WelcomeLauren #HappyNewYear #Goodbye2020

– Josh Guillory (@JoshGuilloryUSA) December 15, 2020

A Daigle fan tweeted:

Apparently @ABCNetwork is going to give the @mayorcantrell what she demanded, that #LaurenDaigle not appear on the @dickclarkprod #RockingNewYearsEve. Actually they said, we just won’t do anything in New Orleans. Thanks Mayor. 10’s of millions in greatly needed advertising gone

– Kaare Johnson (@KaareJohnson) December 15, 2020

While Cantrell is political by position, and possibly nature, Daigle generally avoids politics. She shares her faith whether performing in Christian or mainstream pop circles.

As a state native, she has earned a reputation for supporting people and nonprofit organizations.

During three sold-out Christmas concerts at the Saenger Theatre in December, she donated \$60,000 to the Roots of Music, the New Orleans marching band that functions as an immersive after-school program for disadvantaged youth, reports.

In October she taped a concert—with no audience present—at the Orpheum Theater to raise money for southwest Louisiana victims of Hurricane Laura.

Nungesser said Cantrell's request "cost not just New Orleans the opportunity at invaluable, worldwide promotion at a time when it's needed most, they also cost every city in Louisiana that had a chance at hosting the event."

"When Mayor Cantrell's personal feelings toward Lauren Daigle being tapped to promote her city came to light, we attempted to move the safe, and socially distanced, celebration to a location outside of New Orleans and Orleans Parish, even offering to hold the event on a riverboat in Gretna with New Orleans still serving as the backdrop," Nungesser said. "It was then Mayor Cantrell took the issue to the next level, writing letters and making phone calls to Dick Clark Productions and ABC. The result of her actions was a decision by Dick Clark Productions to pull Lauren Daigle from the lineup and any celebration from Louisiana to be broadcast worldwide. In the long run, this action will not only hamper any efforts for New Orleans to recover from the pandemic, but also every city in the state which offered to host the event, and the state as a whole." {eo}