

# Sho Baraka: Why I Can't Vote for Either Trump or Clinton

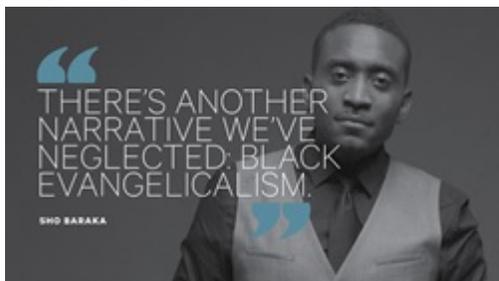
Both candidates fail to address the heart concerns of black evangelicals like me.

**Sho Baraka/ SEPTEMBER 23, 2016**

# A

As a black Christian in an urban environment, I consciously struggle to give my allegiance to either political party. In this way, this election gives many white evangelicals a sense of what it's like to be a black believer in America today.

As an African American, I'm marginalized by the lack of compassion on the Right. As a Christian, I'm ostracized by the secularism of the Left. As a man, I'm greatly concerned by subversive attempts to deconstruct all "classical" definitions of manhood.



I fraternize with a remnant of people who have the cultural and theological aptitude to engage both Carter G. Woodson and G. K. Chesterton. We walk the tightrope between conservatives and progressives. We share an anxiety and sense of displacement in the current sociopolitical landscape.

I have had zero interest in either candidate this election. Many people are fearful about the next president, as they should be. Our newly appointed chief will likely nominate Supreme Court justices. The thought of either candidate appointing justices scares me. Many Clinton supporters seek a secular utopia that progresses past logic. Many Trump supporters want to resurrect bigoted ideologies. Neither of these Americas is great to me.

## True Liberation

Ideally, fellow black Christians and I could thrive at the table with conservatives because we agree on a moral code. But it has been shocking to see some conservatives perform verbal gymnastics to support a candidate who has questionable character and vacillates on basic conservative principles.

Further, many of our conservative brothers and sisters have justified or ignored the deaths of Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and other young black men. Many claim their Republican values align with their faith, but are supporting someone who looks more like Bull Connor than Billy Graham. Yet both Republicans and Democrats have supported policies that have only increased the plight of minority communities. In the War on Drugs, leaders from both parties supported draconian penalties for nonviolent drug offenses. Those leaders have financially benefited from disproportionately sending folks to prison for crimes that carry far fewer consequences in affluent communities. Only recently has America witnessed what could be called the “gentrification of the drug crisis,” wherein opioid addiction among whites is reaching epidemic levels. Bill Clinton’s

Crime Bill of 1994 escalated the arrests of people of color for nonviolent crimes. He later admitted that signing the bill was a mistake. Although I'm grateful for this revelation, some of us have carried the burdens of its implications all our lives.

I live in a part of Atlanta where African Americans make up 79 percent of the population, according to census data. If you live in a community with these demographics, you're most likely grappling with underperforming schools, anemic business districts, scarce home ownership, and nihilistic behaviors.

**Many Clinton supporters seek a secular utopia that progresses past logic. Many Trump supporters want to resurrect bigoted ideologies. Neither of these Americas is great to me.**

If I'm sensitive to this plight, then I'm compelled to partner with those who have a burden to fix these broken policies and systems. When it comes to addressing those issues, it appears that Democrats show the most compassion and desire to try to fix these problems. Yet I fear that many of our liberal pundits and activists apply wrong means that lead to a calamitous end. I often wonder if they truly want to see these communities restored and liberated. I'm even more concerned about what type of restoration and liberty they desire.

There is a distinct difference between the restoration and liberation we need and what we want. If secular humanism and all of its tenets are at the end of the liberation rope, then I refuse to grab hold. I will die a slower, more humiliating death once I'm pulled into that boat. I'd rather face my opposition knowing I never

sacrificed my dignity and beliefs. I am made in the image of God. I will not forfeit that for pseudo-liberation. And liberation absent of God is no liberation at all.

If the black Christian doesn't rise up with a distinct political vision, then we will find our communities under the authority of secularism. As Reformed Theological Seminary scholar Carl Ellis Jr. has noted, "Ethical content could have saved the Black Power movement. But the leaders had already swallowed secular humanism. Thus all moral decisions were left up to the individual." Individualism in a postmodern society has destructive intentions aimed at the foundations of Christian orthodoxy and natural law. Is there any doubt that our allegiance is with the Democratic Party when the black vote has been no less than 84 percent Democrat in the past 20 years? We can discard our platitudes about keeping politicians honest when they know they have us in their pockets. Why should they submit to accountability when they know we will return to them no matter what they do? (This is not a new problem in the black community. Malcolm X's speech "The Ballot or the Bullet" addressed this blind loyalty, labeling "political chumps" those fellow blacks who support white politicians who nonetheless put black communities' needs last.) I believe there is a third way. Urban Christians are determined to reassert ourselves into the political arena. We refuse to settle for civic engagement that forces us to either neglect our compassion or surrender our convictions. From mass incarceration to the right to life for the unborn, it's time to engage in advocacy that better reflects the love and truth of the gospel.

## Compassion and Conviction

Allow me to quote Ellis once more:

I believe that if we are going to move forward as a community who has distinctive concerns in America, we need to evaluate political and social ideas as they stand on their own, without regard to their ideological association.

I believe that soon there will be a movement of folks who protest both police brutality and abortions without feeling disloyal to one party or the other. These Christians comprehend an unabridged concept of life, that it is to be protected from the cradle to the grave. This is a comprehensive outlook that seeks justice in community development, education, prison reform, and job creation. These people recognize honoring humanity is a service to God and not a partisan policy.

It would be naïve to think that urban Christians are the only people who feel this disconnect. Not all Republicans are callous legalists; not all Democrats are immoral despots. I find great utility on both sides. However, who better than Christians, who have experienced persecution of all kinds, to display both compassion and conviction? Out of that experience comes the capacity to love recklessly while inviting people to a new standard.

Christ is our model of compassion and conviction. He loved Zacchaeus enough to sup with him, knowing the social stigma attached to his occupation. Zacchaeus adopted a new worldview in response to his encounter with Jesus. This worldview taught that exploiting citizens and perpetuating a system that hurt the poor was no longer an option.

Christ loved the adulterous woman enough to save her from execution. He not only cared for her immediate need but loved so perfectly that he invited her to leave a life of sexual exploitation. This is the ever-elusive balance we must try to occupy. We must show great compassion while holding to our firm convictions. We believe that the Lord can change both our hearts and our circumstances.

[See our new election book, How to Pick a President](#)

Instead of encouraging urban Christians to vote for a false choice this election season, my hope is that we will build a strong base, similar to the Tea Party and the LGBTQ community, that will garner attention from lobbyists, lawmakers, and pundits. The goal

is to transcend political parties so that they will no longer be an obstacle. This was the posture of the civil rights movement. This will mean *endurance* to cause political disruption. We have been silenced by liberal lobbying and frustrated with conservative complacency. Do we have the endurance of our predecessors to campaign for 384 dreadful days until we see political change, as did the Montgomery Bus boycotts?

This will mean *empathy*. Though we have a heart for the truth of God, we must not divorce our ethical leanings from compassion for others.

This will mean *education* for our communities on the policies that will bring substantive change and liberty. Governance and policymaking are not results of the Fall but part of what God intended for humans all along. So sin does not negate our responsibility to be cultivators, as artists, pastors, jurists, teachers, parents, cashiers, or students. We are a city on the hill that can no longer lease our lot and escape to a quieter place.

Sho Baraka is a hip-hop artist with Humble Beast Records and a founding member of the [AND Campaign](#).

# Ron Sider: Why I Am Voting for Hillary Clinton

This election, there are only two meaningful choices for president. Why one is the far wiser choice.

**Ron Sider/ SEPTEMBER 23, 2016**

# I

have not publicly endorsed a presidential candidate in 44 years. But this year—the most important presidential election in my lifetime—I feel compelled to do so.

For decades I have advocated a completely pro-life agenda: pro-life and pro-poor; pro-family and pro-racial justice; pro-sexual integrity and pro-peacemaking and pro-creation care. This agenda is expressed in the National Association of Evangelicals' public policy document "[For the Health of the Nation](#)."

For decades, as I applied this agenda, I regularly concluded that Republican presidential candidates were better on issues like abortion, marriage and family, and religious freedom, while Democratic candidates were better on racial justice, economic justice, and the environment. So I have voted for both Republicans (George W. Bush) and Democrats (Barack Obama).

But 2016 is astonishingly different from other election years. Hillary Clinton is bad and good in the usual ways. But Donald Trump is not only bad in many of the usual ways—he is also bad in the ways in which I have usually preferred Republicans.

See our new election book, [How to Pick a President](#)

Trump's recent pro-life stand is not credible. Historically he has supported abortion access, even to partial-birth abortion, and still supports Planned Parenthood, the country's largest supplier of abortions. Trump's personal marriage record is horrendous. He humiliated his first wife by publicly flaunting an affair. He is now in his third marriage, while Clinton has remained with her husband in spite of his despicable behavior.

Trump's call to ban all Muslims from immigrating to the United States was a fundamental violation of the constitutional protection of religious freedom.

So what about Clinton?

I have major disagreements with her. She and the Democratic platform are wrong on abortion—period. And I disagree with Clinton on gay marriage.

Further, I fear that Clinton will not retain the longstanding right (protected by Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama) of faith-based organizations that receive government funding to hire on the basis of their beliefs. She is too close to Wall Street billionaires and made a serious mistake using private email servers as Secretary of State. But there is also much to like about Clinton. She has a decades-long history of working hard for racial and economic justice. One of her earliest jobs was working as a lawyer at the black-led Children's Defense Fund to improve the lives of poor children. At a time when racial injustice and mistrust threaten to tear the nation apart, her experience and trust in minority communities is invaluable.

**There is much to like about Clinton. She has a decades-long history of working hard for racial and economic justice.**

Clinton realizes that lower-income Americans have lost ground in the past 30 years, and has advocated concrete policies to alleviate the growing divide between rich and poor. Her \$350 billion college affordability program would help lower-income students afford higher education. Raising the minimum wage to \$12 and tax cuts (15%) for companies that share profits with workers would help. Her proposed expansion of health insurance to cover all Americans is surely pro-life. Clinton has a realistic and just way to pay for these programs. The middle class would get a modest tax cut, while those with annual incomes over \$5 million would have a 4-percent tax increase. She has promised to close tax loopholes that allow corporations to avoid their fair share of taxes. Warren Buffett supports Clinton, saying she would help poor working Americans. The independent, bipartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget says Clinton's plan would not add significantly to the national debt.

Clinton also endorses serious proposals to protect the environment. And in foreign affairs, the former senator and Secretary of State is probably the most knowledgeable and experienced presidential candidate in decades. Global peace urgently requires a US president who is thoroughly familiar with geopolitics and has a judicious track record. How does Trump compare? Since the only meaningful choice this fall is Clinton or Trump, my evaluation of Trump is an appropriate part of my decision.

## Unjust and Destructive

Major parts of Trump's economic agenda are both morally unjust and economically destructive. Trump proposed lowering the top income tax rate from 39.6 percent to 25 percent—an annual tax cut of \$275,000 for the richest 1 percent, including Trump. That is blatant injustice since today, more than 90 percent of all the increase in income in the total US economy goes to the richest 1 percent.

Trump's economic plans would also be *economically* disastrous, adding \$9.5 trillion to the national debt over ten years. More recent modifications would still add trillions to the national debt. The pro-business US Chamber of Commerce has predicted a recession “within the first year” of a Trump presidency.

Trump promised to expel the approximately 11.3 million undocumented immigrants, millions of whom have children born in this country—who are therefore US citizens. This plan would tear apart millions of families and defies the biblical command to love and care for the “sojourner” (i.e., non-citizen). Deporting 11 million people would cost \$400 billion to \$600 billion. And because there are not enough workers here to replace the roughly 6.8 million employed undocumented workers, the economy would decline by an estimated \$1 trillion.

Trump grossly distorts facts and makes ridiculous promises. He said the United States is “the highest taxed nation in the world.” Economists show the United States is nearly the least-taxed (32nd out of 34th) of all industrialized nations. His repeated promise to make Mexico pay for his border wall is flatly absurd.

Trump [said the judge](#) in charge of the legal case against Trump

University should be disqualified because he is “Mexican”—a “textbook” case of racism, said Republican Speaker of the House Paul Ryan. Trump has called Mexican immigrants “rapists” and “criminals.” Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s public policy commission, has sharply condemned Trump’s “not-so-coded messages denouncing African Americans and immigrants.”

Trump has said that “torture works” and that he would “bring back waterboarding and a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding.” He has called for killing the families, even children, of terrorists—which is a war crime under both US and international law.

Prominent evangelicals condemn Trump. [Max Lucado](#) has never before publicly commented on presidential candidates but this year wrote of Trump: “He ridiculed a war hero. He made a mockery of a reporter’s menstrual cycle. He made fun of a disabled reporter.” “His attitude toward women is that of a Bronze Age warlord,” says Moore. Peter Wehner, who served in the past three Republican administrations, denounces Trump as a “moral degenerate” and “comprehensive and unrepentant liar.”

## **Do we evangelical Christians trust Donald Trump to be a wise statesman leading the world to avoid conflict and war?**

Trump’s boasting is breathtaking. Some of his recent comments: “Nobody’s ever been more successful than me.” He said he had studied the Iran deal “in great detail, greater by far than anyone else.” “Nobody knows more about taxes than I do, maybe in the history of the world.” “No one reads the Bible more than me.” One final example: “Nobody is better on humility than me.” Yet Trump has said he has never asked God for forgiveness because he doesn’t need it.

### **We Need a Wise Statesman**

Do we evangelical Christians trust Donald Trump to be a wise statesman leading the world to avoid conflict and war? The US president is the leader of the democratic world and the commander of the world’s largest

military. A wise, thoughtful president who listens carefully to the best-informed advisers is essential if the United States and China are to avoid catastrophic conflict in the next decade or two.

Trump has absolutely no experience in foreign affairs or global diplomacy. He has repeatedly demonstrated arrogant, impulsive decision making. I can't trust him to control the nuclear trigger. In August, 50 of the nation's most senior Republican national security officials issued a public [letter](#) saying Trump "lacks the character, values, and experience" to be president, and added that Trump "would be the most reckless president in American history" and would "put at risk our country's national security."

Voting for one candidate rather than the other does not mean that one endorses all that candidate supports. It simply means that one believes the other candidate would lead to worse results.

And in 2016, there are only two meaningful choices: Trump and Clinton. One could vote for the Libertarian or Green Party candidate, but they have no chance of winning. Voting for them, or writing in someone else, will only help elect Trump.

In this unprecedented, astonishing presidential election, I have no doubt that voting for Hillary Clinton is the right choice.

*Ron Sider is founder and president emeritus of [Evangelicals for Social Action](#) and a distinguished professor at Palmer Seminary at Eastern University. Title and institutional affiliation are only supplied for identification purposes and do not represent the views of Eastern University.*

# James Dobson: Why I Am Voting for Donald Trump

The founder and president of Family Talk explains why his decision centers on the future of the Supreme Court.

**Interview by CT Editors/ SEPTEMBER 23, 2016**

**What are the strongest arguments for a Christian to support Donald Trump for the US presidency?**

First, let me say that I will respond to your questions as a private individual and not as a representative of the organization I lead. I don't vote for candidates or political parties. I support those who will lead the country righteously, honorably, and wisely. In many ways, this is a single-issue election because it will affect every dimension of American life: the makeup of the Supreme Court. Antonin Scalia's sudden death made this election the most significant of our lifetime. The next president will nominate perhaps three or more justices whose judicial philosophy will shape our country for generations to come.

Unelected, unaccountable, and imperialistic justices have a history of imposing horrendous decisions on the nation. One decision that still plagues us is *Roe v. Wade*, imposed on America in 1973. It divided the nation and has led to the murders of 54 million innocent babies. This killing goes on every day.

That leads us to ask what the judiciary will look like in a Trump administration. I attended a June 2016 [event](#) called "A Conversation with Donald Trump" in New York, with more than 1,000 other religious leaders. Before the meeting, 30 of us met Trump in a private session in Trump Tower. Most were evangelicals or conservative Catholics. I asked the candidate about his concerns regarding religious liberty.

I liked that he promised us emphatically that he will work to protect our religious liberties. He has since released a list of potential Supreme Court nominees that is stellar. We must pray that, if elected, he will keep his word.

Trump's selection of Governor Mike Pence as his running mate was a hugely encouraging decision. I've been a personal friend of Gov. Pence for more than 30 years. He is pro-life, pro-traditional marriage, a godly family man, a solid conservative, and a competent leader. There is no politician whom I respect more.

**Many supporters of Trump believe that Clinton would be a disaster for the country. What are your concerns about Clinton?**

My greatest concern is related again to the judiciary. Clinton has said she will seek to overturn religious liberty and bring the power of government against people of faith. She has made this clear on many occasions, including a comment she made during the Women in the World Summit in 2015.

Laws about "reproductive health care" and safe childbirth "have to be backed up with resources and political will," Clinton said. "And deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases have to be changed."

"Reproductive health care" is a euphemism for abortion, so that threat should send chills down the backs of every true believer in Jesus. It blatantly contradicts guarantees of the US Constitution. We dare not give ultimate power to anyone who does not respect or feel limited by this historic document. It is the basis for all the freedoms handed to us by the founding fathers.

I'm convinced that with the wrong president, we will soon see a massive assault on religious liberty. Certain powerful groups and organizations seek to weaken the church of Jesus Christ and limit what pastors and ministers can say and do publicly. They believe some of our teachings represent "hate speech" and must be stifled. They seek to severely restrict the freedoms of Christian schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, hospitals, charities, and seminaries. With Christian colleges and universities, they want to limit whom their leaders choose as professors and what their students will be taught. Government funding and

accreditation will be in the crosshairs, and you can be sure that home schools will be targeted.

We at Family Talk have experienced this tyranny firsthand. The Department of Health and Human Services has mandated that Family Talk and many other Christian nonprofits cover contraceptives known as abortifacients in their healthcare plans. They include the morning-after pill and other medications that are known to prevent embryos from implanting in the uterus. They can be baby killers, and we consider them immoral. The Feds have forced us to sue to find relief. We are now in a federal lawsuit that may be decided by the Supreme Court. If we lose our case and refuse to comply, we'll face ruinous fines and will be forced to close our doors. It all will depend on five attorneys who sit on the Court.

There are many other concerns about Clinton's candidacy. She has proposed to pay for abortions in countries around the world, including generous funding for Planned Parenthood; and she is committed to the most radical demands of the LGBTQ agenda, to name but two.

**Many Christians are deeply troubled by Trump's rhetoric, especially his comments about Hispanics, women, and Muslims in particular; they characterize his comments as bigoted.**

Trump speaks in hyperbole, clearly. His rhetoric has been inexcusable, and I don't defend it. I hope that the criticism he has received from the public will have an influence on his speech. I think it already has.

**If Trump turns out to be an incorrigible demagogue, we can hope he will be reined in by the political process.**

I serve on a faith committee of 22 conservative Christian leaders, and we are working to help Trump make the right choices. I know that Franklin Graham, Jerry Falwell Jr., Robert Jeffress, James Robison, and many other respected leaders have direct access to him. If Trump turns out to be an incorrigible demagogue, we can hope he will be reined in by the political process. There are checks and balances in our system of government.

**So you don't think this a reason not to support Trump.**

I don't believe for a second that Hillary Clinton isn't using equally incendiary rhetoric behind the scenes about many people, especially conservatives. Policy is what matters.

Last week, I had an appointment with an ophthalmologist for a routine eye exam. A technician pressed a metal device against my face. I looked through two holes and saw a short line of type. She then asked, "Is this good?" Then, after changing the lens, she asked, "Is this better?" I was given only two choices: number one or number two.

This is where we are as a nation during this election. Is it one or is it two? There is no viable third choice.

There are obviously characteristics of Trump that I wish I could change. However, I believe he is the best candidate available, period.

**Many evangelicals are critical of Trump's lifestyle, such as his pride in sleeping with many women and his investments in gambling, to name two. Do these behaviors concern you?**

Of course they concern me. In an ideal world, I would want a godly man or woman for president, but there doesn't appear to be any such person on the ballot. And some of those characterizations appear to reflect Trump's past. As a Christian, I love it when people change, and [I pray that he has](#). Evangelist Paula White says that she led him to Christ. I don't know what his commitment to Christ is—that's for God to decide. I'm not under any illusions that he is an outstanding moral example, but I do

think he's a good father.

As I said in my endorsement, "Without a doubt, my decision to recommend Trump has been influenced by the way his children speak of him as a dad." As a psychologist and a family counselor, I have spent my life equipping families. I have observed that you cannot make a child talk about his or her parents the way Trump's children speak of him.

I do know that Trump has surrounded himself with many Christian leaders. Apparently, he was doing this long before he decided to run for president. He has engaged in the hard work of building relationships with the faith community and has vowed to uphold our values with his legislative and judicial priorities. It's a cliché but true: We are electing a commander-in-chief, not a theologian-in-chief.

**How would you summarize your view on Trump's candidacy?**

I believe this great country is hanging by a thread. If we make another tragic mistake after putting Barack Obama in office for eight years, we will never recover from it. Trump may disappoint and embarrass us repeatedly in office. But Hillary Clinton, given her lawless behavior and what she has promised to do, would be a disaster. She will build on Obama's policies to redefine marriage, expand abortion policies, assault gender identities, tax and spend our resources, appoint liberal judges and justices, and on it goes. There has to be a better person to lead us out of the wilderness. Is it Donald Trump? I pray that it is. If he turns out to be a failure, then our grandkids and future generations are the ones who will suffer. If Clinton is elected, that suffering will begin much sooner.

*James Dobson is founder and president of Family Talk, a ministry that promotes principles that support marriage, family, and child development. His most recent book is [Your Legacy: The Greatest Gift](#).*