

Pastor and author Louie Giglio withdraws from Obama inauguration

Written by Eric Tiansay

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Pastor and author Louie Giglio has withdrawn from participating in President Barack Obama's inauguration ceremony later this month because of backlash from gay rights activists over his stance on homosexuality from a sermon in the mid-1990s.

Giglio, whose latest book, *I Am Not, But I Know I Am: Welcome to the Story of God*, was released last month by Multnomah Books, was selected by President Obama

to give the benediction at the inauguration ceremony for his second term on Jan. 21—the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation—because of Giglio's campaign to end slavery worldwide.

In a statement Jan. 10, Giglio said he feels the benediction he was invited to deliver will be "dwarfed by those seeking to make their agenda the focal point of the inauguration."

"Clearly, speaking on this issue [homosexuality] has not been in the range of my priorities in the past 15 years," said Giglio, the pastor of Passion City Church in Atlanta and leader of the Passion Conferences. "Instead, my aim has been to call people to ultimate significance as we make much of Jesus Christ.

"Neither I, nor our team, feel it best serves the core message and goals we are seeking to accomplish to be in a fight on an issue not of our choosing, thus I respectfully withdraw my acceptance of the president's invitation," he added. "Our nation is deeply divided and hurting, and more than ever need God's grace and mercy in our time of need."

There was similar protest against Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., and author of *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan), participating in Obama's 2009 presidential inauguration over his conservative stance on homosexuality and abortion.

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A source on the inaugural committee said that it was Giglio's choice to remove himself from the inauguration and that his replacement has not yet been picked, *The Huffington Post* reported.

CNN reported that Giglio "was chosen because he's a "powerful voice for ending human trafficking and global sex slavery" along with his efforts in mobilizing young people to also become involved with these issues.