

An investigation of the Black Church's contribution to the creation of
Nihilism in Black Communities

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Abstract

Nihilism in the black communities of the South, in North America is the outcome of black folk's journey from slavery to the "Black Bourgeoise" of the twenty first century. The church during some of the darkest eras in the history of the black experience in America, stood strong. From the Hush houses on the Holocaust that began in Jamestown Virginia in 1619 until 1865, through the civil rights fight in the 1960's, when the black church was relevant. The paradigm shift of the once present Social gospel to a personal gain focused prosperity Gospel preceded the movement of the Church from a central role within the black communities of the south. This movement created a downward spiral into the moral deuteration, of the once community focused close environment to an environment that was perfect to cultivate nihilism.

Purpose: This paper will seek to investigate if a return to social gospel will reestablish the Black church as a relevant entity with the authority and influence to lead the Black communities out of the darkness of nihilism.

Question: Is there a positive correlation between the Black church move from a social gospel to a prosperity gospel, the loss of its authority and influence, the decline from its pinnacle a contributing factor to Nihilism in the Black communities in North America.

Why: The Black community has continued to suffer in North America, it is under siege from within the community itself as well on every side. The hope is that this research will produce a structural base to confront this problem, and create dialogue that will lead to active change, it is time. The Black community has been given a story, the time has come for a retelling of that story.

"Human experience must have meaning it can be storied, or arranged in sequences that gives coherent account to the experience... these stories, narratives and mythologies not only give coherent accounts of personal experience but also help give meaning to marital, family and caregiving life." ¹

¹ Wimberly, Edward P. *Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers*, (Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1997) pg. xii

Direction: This research will look at the history of the Black church and its importance to the Black community, it will attempt to outline a positive correlation between the church's move from a social gospel to a prosperity gospel, and the development of Nihilism in the Black communities. This paper will set out to construct a picture of how the church played a pivotal role in creating the nourishing environment that has led to Nihilism within the Black community today.

Key Terms

African American

Which will refer to second generation—or even further removed—persons of African descent. An American that has African especially black African ancestors.

(Merriam-Webster 2016)

Black Youth

For the purpose of this research the definition will be used to refer to persons between ages eighteen and twenty-nine years' old.

Individualistic Attitude

characterized of individualism, independent and self-reliant. - a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior. (Merriam -Webster 2016)

For the purpose of this paper this is the modified definition - the manifested behavior of an individual's belief that one is or should be independent and self-reliant, being in a community but not a part of the community.

Bifurcation

The division of something into two branches or parts. (Merriam-Webster2016)

Moral Dilemma

characterized of individualism, independent and self -reliant. A settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior. (Merriam -Webster 2016)

For the purpose of this paper this is a modified definition - the inability to determine communal acceptable behaviors when dealing with difficult situations or problems, due Nihilism, which is manifested in behavior such as murders, rape, drug use, and sexual promiscuity.

Nihilism

the rejection of all religious and moral principles, often in the belief that life is meaningless -moral values are abstractly contrived, morality doesn't exist as something inherent to objective reality: preferable to any other. (J.L Mackie 1977)

Black experience

The combined historical, social, political events that have defined and oppressed the Blackamerican-a practical contact with events, that include slavery, the fight for civil rights, the fight for judicial justice, and the daily struggles of the Blackamerican against prejudices and presuppositions.

African American church

refers to Protestant Christian churches that currently or historically have ministered to predominantly black congregations in the United States. (Merriam- Webster 2016)

Pragmatic Spirituality

Christian faith through an Africentric lens. (Wilmore 2004)

Africentric Lens

Is the view of the Christian faith that is closely related to what is perceptible to an African – centered gaze. (Wilmore 2004)

African American social elite/Black Bourgeoisie

The upper – echelon (class) of African American that represents 1% of that population.

Dynamics

The forces or properties that stimulates change or progress within a system or process. (Merriam-Webster 2016)

Social Gospel

The application of Christian principles to social problems -a movement in American Protestant Christianity especially in the first part of the 20th century to bring the social order into conformity with Christian principles. (Merriam-Webster 2016)

Prosperity Theology

Sometimes referred to as the prosperity gospel, the health and wealth gospel, or the gospel of success is a religious belief among some Christians that financial blessing is the will of G-d for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations will increase one's material wealth. (Free Encyclopedia 2016)

Black Sacred Cosmos

The religious worldview of the African American is related both to their African heritage, which envisaged the whole world as sacred, and to their conversation to Christianity.

Perception

the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses.

the normal limits to human perception - the state of being or process of becoming aware of something through the senses, a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression. (Free Encyclopedia 2016)

Paradigm shift

an important change that happens when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is replaced by a new and different way- fundamental change in approach or underlying assumption. (Merriam – Webster)