



Final Paper
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UR 714/PMN321/SOC321 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE URBAN
CHURCH

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Final Paper

Introduction

This paper encompasses notes from my Sankofa Journey and reflections from a *Testament of Hope*. In addition, it will be a “fusion” of biblical principles, the Sankofa journey, discussions, and related texts. This class emotionally and spiritually moved me. I was involved and was gripped by the experience of traveling through the South and visiting places that I had heard about and some that I didn't know that they existed.

In Atlanta, I was struck by the solemnness of visiting the tombs of Dr. Martin Luther King and his wife, Coretta. I was brought to tears in Montgomery by visits to Legacy Museum and the Nation Museum for Peace and Justice; the walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge was like walking through history; it was as if I were there on "Bloody Sunday." The visit to Kelly Ingram Park and the National Civil Rights Museum made me angry. The legacy of Jim Crow Can still be felt in the South.

Biblical Theology of Justice

The Church should have a seat at the table when it comes to addressing racial and social injustices. The Church should not take a back seat to letting its voice be heard when politicians and their followers discriminate against Blacks, migrants, and refugees. We must never that Jesus and His parents were refugees. The angel told Joseph to take his family to Egypt to prevent the baby Jesus from being executed. If this message was preached from White and bigoted Churches maybe acts of racist violence would decrease.

"Large segments of the American Church have lost all moral authority to speak prophetically against racism because they continue to practice it."¹ Both the Old and New Testaments speak out against injustice and the mistreatment of large segments of the population, refugees, the homeless, the outcast, the sick, and the poor, all have been supported by scripture.

Galatians 3:28 states that There is no longer Jew or Gentile,^[a] enslaved person or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. The Sankofa's Participants' guide states that this verse is often misinterpreted and can be used to hinder the mission of the Church. Therefore, I interpret the verse as We are one in Christ; we are commanded to treat each other justly.

When social justice is applied to a community, everyone should have an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their social, economic, or political background. Social Justice is advocated for throughout the bible. According to Rae, "this demand for Justice can be consistent with the New Testament emphasis on showing mercy and forgiveness and on vengeance belonging to God."²

The following verses from the Old and New Testaments support the call for men to be just and merciful.

Isaiah 58:6 says, "*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to lose the chains of injustice, to break the yoke of the oppressor, and to let the oppressed go free?*"

Hosea 12:6 *But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice and wait for your God always.*

¹ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Purpose: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Michigan: Zondervan reflective, 2019), 211.

² Scott B. Rae, *Moral choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 273.

Amos 5:24 But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. masterfully and with a commanding voice echoed the verse. In his historic “I Have a Dream ” speech during the 1963 March on Washington, King declared: “We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

Psalms 37: 27-29 Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever.

28 For the LORD loves them and will not forsake his faithful ones. Therefore, wrongdoers will be destroyed; the offspring of the wicked will perish. 29 The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.

James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Luke 4:18-19¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”^[a]

The Bible does not discriminate. Jesus and His disciples provided for the needs of the people they encountered. Those that were hungry were fed, those in need of healing were healed. The bible on multiple occasions supported the disinherited, the refugees, the outcasts. On multiple occasions the Hebrews had to take refuge in foreign lands.

Christians must be just and equitable when dealing with others. White Christians should be especially careful that they are inclusive and regularly speak out against injustice.

Sociological Analysis of the Civil Rights Movement

Please present the history and context of the Civil Rights Movement and how it is directly connected to the experience of injustice in contemporary life.

According to Thurman, "There is one overmastering problem that the socially and politically disinherited always face: Under what terms is survival possible?"³ That is still the question that confronts Black today. In the age of the Black Lives Matter Movement, there is still the need to get an answer to the question. The civil rights movement was a dark period for blacks freed from slavery. Black people were faced with Jim Crow laws that confronted them daily. The Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local laws that Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation; The laws existed from the end of the civil war until 1968.

The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1865 after the Civil War, abolished slavery in the United States. The 13th Amendment states: Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for the crime of which the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Southern Whites did not want to give up slavery and found a workaround with the Jim Crow laws. Due to the pressure from whites and the fear that existed, God-fearing Christians did not publicly support pastors and ministers at the forefront of the civil rights movement." In reality, precious few Christians publicly aligned themselves with the struggle for Black freedom in the 1950s and 1960s⁴." Tisby 132.

³ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1976). 10.

⁴ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Purpose: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Michigan: Zondervan reflective 2019), 132.

The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868. This Amendment all United States citizens, either born or naturalized in the United States, were to be given equal protection under the law. States were told they could not make laws or enforce laws that would go against the 14th Amendment. The Amendment guaranteed that all citizens should be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. Unfortunately, whites in the South and some Northerners worked around the process by creating racist and bigoted Jim Crow laws. As a result, southern politicians and even supreme court justices disregard the 14th Amendment. The Civil Rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King and his faithful followers led nonviolent marches to bring the nation to its knees and forced President John F. Kennedy to sign the Civil Rights Act of 1960. Dr. King knew that the law would take time to bring change. Dr. King realized that the Justice Department required the justice department to intervene with court-appointed referees to ensure that Black people exercised their right to vote was guaranteed to them⁵.

Dr. King's nonviolent strategy was the impetus for bringing the end to the racist laws and practices of the south. Dr. King said "nonviolent active resistance to social evils, including massive civil disobedience when there is a need for it, can unite a new action-synthesis."⁶⁴⁶. Dr. King followed the teachings of Mohandas K. Gandhi. Dr. King observed how successful Mr. Gandhi's tactics were in freeing India from the rule of the England. Dr. King noted five points that from nonviolence actions to bring racial justice.

First, it's only for the brave

Second, nonviolence is not to humiliate or defeat the oppressor.

Third, nonviolent actions should be directed against the evil forces not persons.

Fourth, nonviolence is not only against external violence but also internal violence of the spirit.

⁵ Martin Luther King jr. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches* edited by James M. Washington. (New York Harper Collings 1986), 104.

Fifth, we must believe that the just will win.⁶

Application

I need help to apply what I have learned in this course to my current or future religious context. They are options that I can look into

Currently, I am the past treasurer at the Alliance Tabernacle Church. In that Role, applying what I learned to that ministry was challenging. But unfortunately, there is no apparent correlation.

I am praying for God's direction for future ministry. I am open to God's leading as it comes to ministering in the field of racial justice. According to Sankofa's Participants Guide, "Sankofa is an invitation to understand racial righteousness as a critical component of our Christian discipleship. This immersive discipleship experience equips believers to seek the kingdom's coming, participate in the multiethnic mosaic, and pursue biblical justice" ⁷p.

I am challenged by men such as Dominique Gillard, David W. Swanson, Lula Joe Williams, and J.T Johnson, who live and are fully engaged in the justice movement.

I envision that my future ministry will involve working with minority males. My entire professional career has demonstrated that my gift is to work with minority males.

In my ministry as an educator, I must remember the separation of the Church and the state. However, this research is significant because many colleges, including Kingsborough Community, are grappling with the issue of retaining African American

⁶ Martin Luther King jr. *A testament of Hope: The Essentials Writings and Speeches* edited by James M. Washington. (New York Harper Collings 1986), 8-9.

⁷ *Sankofa Participants Guide*, The Evangelical Covenant Church, 2023. 2.

men. Kingsborough Community College recently formed an equity task force to address the low retention issue of African American males on campus.

The findings from this study will contribute to understanding the growing area of African American retention. Additionally, it will provide insights to college administrators at community colleges on how to provide student support services to this population.

I would be open to a ministry working with minorities in a college setting to keep them engaged to the completion of their degrees. There are injustices and racism on many college campuses. Many White faculty are afraid of Black males. The White faculty are intimidated by the size, hair, and or dress of Black males. Some stereotypes cause conflict within the class.

Strayhorn reported the following as complex and unique challenges facing Black Men.

1. Black men do not have access to or are discouraged from engaging in college prep courses and activities.
2. Parents of Black males generally lack a college education or the desire to encourage their sons to attend college.
3. Black boys are often described as being at risk, uneducable, dangerous, lazy, and dysfunctional.

Strayhorn's research suggested "that supportive relationships are associated with higher levels of satisfaction, but not academic achievement as measured by grades."⁸ (p.26)

I am open to working with social justice regarding minority males in higher education.

A second option is to work with I am currently with Dr. Charles O. Galbreath, a not-for-profit organization. The HEAL Center (Hope, Empowerment, Advocacy &

⁸ T. L. Strayhorn, The Role of supportive relationships in Facilitating African American Males' Success in College. *NASPA Journal*, 45(1), (2008) 26-48.

Learning) Our mission is to The H.E.A.L. at the Community Development Corporation. This faith-based nonprofit seeks to foster holistic change in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY. We aim to facilitate holistic change by providing essential services to affected populations. We strive to empower the community to become productive citizens by providing programs such as educational enrichment, immigration, job training, housing, emergency food services, and other services that empower the community to obtain self-sufficiency. Our vision is to actualize the potential of our great community. We want to partner with local businesses, churches, and nonprofits to transform our neighborhood for social and societal revitalization. Working more closely with this non-profit is how I can have the most significant impact on social justice issues. I am open to creating good trouble, I am open to marches and sittings if the need calls for. I am open to what God has for me; please pray for me as I walk down this path, I am aged but if the need calls for it, I am ready I am ready to assume leadership in a nonviolent social justice movement.

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