

Wells Fargo and T.D. Jakes Group
An Unlikely Alliance to Help Communities

A Paper Presented to:
Dr. Nathaniel B. Perez

by
Tiffany L. Smith

CD770/UR770/ICS205/PMN205/SOC206
Introduction to Racial Reconciliation

Alliance Theological Seminary

May 1, 2023

Big News

Early on the morning of Friday, April 28, 2023, Bishop T.D. Jakes, internationally acclaimed mega-church pastor, New York Times best-selling author, entrepreneur, movie producer and a long list of other impressive titles, entered the New York City television studios of the “CBS Mornings” show.

“I have some big news I can’t wait to share with you!” he posted to his 5.8 million followers on Instagram before heading to the show where he would be interviewed by Gayle King—one of the show’s co-hosts. (@bishopjakes, April 28, 2023)

Would it be another new book? Another movie? A new church plant?

While all would be impressive, Jakes was on the show to announce a new, 10-year partnership between his company, T.J. Jakes Group, and Wells Fargo. It could result in up to \$1 billion in financing and capital to revitalize neighborhoods, provide economic opportunities and help communities in need. Grants from the Wells Fargo Foundation are also part of the partnership. King noted that the partnership is not affiliated with the church over which Jakes presides—the Potter’s House Church in Dallas, Texas. When King asked Jakes why he wanted to partner with Wells Fargo, he mentioned that the future looked bleak for minorities, particularly Black and brown people, in addition to poor White people.¹

According to a press release about the partnership, the T.D. Jakes Group consists of T..D. Jakes Real Estate Ventures, LLC (TDJREV), TDJ Enterprises (TDJE) and T.D. Jakes Foundation (TDJF).²

1 Wells Fargo and T.D. Jakes Group Announce Ten-Year Strategic Partnership to Build Inclusive Communities
<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/wells-fargo-and-td-jakes-group-announce-ten-year-strategic-partnership-to-build-inclusive-communities-301809619.html> (Accessed April 29, 2023.)

2 T.D. Jakes, Wells Fargo partnership could mean up to \$1 billion to build inclusive communities

"We are excited to collaborate with the T.D. Jakes Group as they play a key role in the transformation of communities that will have a lasting impact for generations to come," said Charlie Scharf, CEO of Wells Fargo, in the release. "This strategic partnership goes beyond a one-off capital investment and underscores our continued commitment to diverse and inclusive communities. We look forward to seeing the meaningful difference we'll make together in communities across the country."³

Bishop Jakes, Chairman and CEO of the T.D. Jakes Group, stated in the release that, "This alliance with our organization allows us to further our four decades-long work to provide economic justice, eradicate food deserts, construct desirable workplaces and affordable housing, closing the digital divide and ultimately help families leave a rich and lasting legacy for the next generation. We recognize the need for CEOs like Charlie Scharf bending the arc and aim of Wells Fargo toward correcting systemic inequalities. We are committed to ensuring additional opportunities actually reach as many areas of need that we can influence. Disruptive partnerships like this create a paradigm shift in how we can collectively bring long overdue transformation, particularly to Black and Brown communities and other marginalized groups around our nation."⁴

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqkx696yrAI>, (Accessed April 29, 2023).

3 Wells Fargo and T.D. Jakes Group Announce Ten-Year Strategic Partnership to Build Inclusive Communities <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/wells-fargo-and-td-jakes-group-announce-ten-year-strategic-partnership-to-build-inclusive-communities-301809619.html> (Accessed April 29, 2023.)

4 Wells Fargo and T.D. Jakes Group Announce Ten-Year Strategic Partnership to Build Inclusive Communities <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/wells-fargo-and-td-jakes-group-announce-ten-year-strategic-partnership-to-build-inclusive-communities-301809619.html> (Accessed April 29, 2023.)

A Troubled Past

During the CBS Mornings interview, one of the show's other co-hosts, Tony Dokoupli, asked Jakes whether he was comfortable partnering with Wells Fargo, considering that in December 2022, the bank settled a \$3.7 billion dollar fine due to accusations of illegal overdraft fees tied to car loans and mortgages. Additionally, Dokoupli asked Jakes about whether this is money the bank had taken out of the pockets of low-income people that Jakes was actually trying to help now.⁵

Jakes responded that when Wells Fargo approached him previously about working together, he would not do business with them because of settlements such as the one in December. He added that the company is now under new leadership, and the settlement was part of the previous administration.⁶

"They're beginning to right some of the wrongs," said Jakes. "This is not gonna right it all at once, but it is a start toward justifying and rectifying some of the mistakes that had been made previously."⁷

The December 2022 settlement was indeed not a new crisis for Wells Fargo. The bank has previously faced a number of law-suits and fines tied to illegal banking practices, and people of color were often the victims. As reported in The Crusader Newspaper Group, a Bloomberg

5 T.D. Jakes, Wells Fargo partnership could mean up to \$1 billion to build inclusive communities
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqkx696yrAI>, (Accessed April 29, 2023).

6 T.D. Jakes, Wells Fargo partnership could mean up to \$1 billion to build inclusive communities
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqkx696yrAI>, (Accessed April 29, 2023).

7 T.D. Jakes, Wells Fargo partnership could mean up to \$1 billion to build inclusive communities
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqkx696yrAI>, (Accessed April 29, 2023).

report found that Wells Fargo denied more than half of the Black applicants who tried to refinance their mortgages during the pandemic when mortgage rates were low.⁸

The article highlighted that the Bloomberg report found Wells Fargo approved 47 percent of iBlack applicants and 72 percent of White applicants. It also found that Wells Fargo's refinance approvals for Blacks were lower compared to other major banks during that time.⁹

Specifically, J.P. Morgan Chase had approved 81 percent of Black applicants and 90 percent of White applicants, and Bank of America approved 66 percent of Black applicants and 78 percent of White applicants. Rocket Mortgage, previously Quicken Loans, approved 79 percent of Black applicants who were seeking to refinance and 89 percent of White applicants.¹⁰

Racial Reconciliation

Although Bishop Jakes said Wells Fargo was trying to right the wrongs they had committed, can their wrongs of the past really be corrected by the new partnership? While Bishop Jakes said it was a start, will it work? Can their inequitable practices towards Blacks and other minorities be corrected through racial reconciliation?

In her book, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*, author Brenda Salter McNeil provides a roadmap, tools and best practices for ways that communities can achieve such reconciliation. It can also serve as a guide to answer this question.

8 Wells Fargo rejected over half of Black applicants for refinance mortgages
<https://chicagocrusader.com/wells-fargo-rejected-half-of-black-applicants/> (Accessed April 30, 2023)

9 Wells Fargo rejected over half of Black applicants for refinance mortgages
<https://chicagocrusader.com/wells-fargo-rejected-half-of-black-applicants/> (Accessed April 30, 2023)

10 Wells Fargo rejected over half of Black applicants for refinance mortgages
<https://chicagocrusader.com/wells-fargo-rejected-half-of-black-applicants/> (Accessed April 30, 2023)

In the book, Salter McNeil defines racial reconciliation as “an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish.”¹¹ The roadmap is prompted by the catalyst events which are then followed by four steps: realization, identification, preparation and activation.¹²

A major premise of Salter McNeil’s book is that racial reconciliation takes much more than bringing diverse groups of people together. Instead, she says, it must be much more intentional.¹³ Wells Fargo is recognizing such intentionalities as they are looking to align with one of the nation’s most influential pastors..

Yet racial reconciliation is difficult. It takes work and sacrifice to be effective.

As Salter McNeil said, “The Reconciliation Roadmap guides the process of reconciling communities with racial, ethnic and other societal differences. It helps individuals and groups navigate the arduous path to enduring systemic change. Ongoing interaction in a collaborative environment is inherent in every phrase, and a foundational commitment to forgiveness, humility and the pursuit of justice woven throughout the models.”¹⁴

Wells Fargo and the Racial Reconciliation Map

As explained in the road map, Salter McNeil defines catalytic events as the “primary vehicles for moving people out of old patterns, assumptions and perceptions and into

11 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 26.

12 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 40.

13 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 40.

14 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 41.

transformative cycles of change.”¹⁵ This is where Wells Fargo is on the roadmap with the catalytic event being the \$3.7 billion settlement. The new leadership recognized that they had to do things differently.

Bishop Jakes said the partnership was a “very unique alliance.” In other words, it is not the norm and is different. He noted how he has written a book called “Disruptive Thinking” and that the disruptive alliance between him and Wells Fargo is “designed to lift up underserved, underrepresented communities.”¹⁶

In the realization phase of the roadmap, people begin to understand each other beyond simply being aware, but becoming “contextually connected.”¹⁷

One of the first projects that Wells Fargo and the T.D. Jakes Group will partner on is a mixed- income housing and retail development project outside of Atlanta, Georgia. It will feature housing, healthcare and wraparound services. Unlike low-income housing, it will feature residents with various income levels.¹⁸ Although the Wells Fargo and T.D. Jakes Group collaboration is not yet at the realization phase, it should be the next step as they move forward.

15 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 40.

16 T.D. Jakes, Wells Fargo partnership could mean up to \$1 billion to build inclusive communities
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqkx696yrAI>, (Accessed April 29, 2023).

17 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 60.

18 T.D. Jakes, Wells Fargo partnership could mean up to \$1 billion to build inclusive communities
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqkx696yrAI>, (Accessed April 29, 2023).

The next step of the roadmap for racial reconciliation is the preparation phase. Salter McNeil noted that this is the phase of the roadmap where all involved consider what they have to lose before moving forward, similar to the man in Mark 10:17-22.¹⁹

In some ways, Wells Fargo and T.D. Jakes Group have done that already. Both the credibility of the new leadership and the T.D. Jakes Group's reputation, influence and brand are at stake.

The final stage of the racial reconciliation roadmap is activation. Salter McNeil said the goal for this stage is to "activate" the skills and competencies learned in the preparation phase by actively getting involved."²⁰ It involves four steps that are summarized by the acronym CARE: Communicate what was learned about a reconciliation or justice issue; Advocate for change; relate—be around a supportive community; and educate, learn as much as we can about issues.²¹

As Wells Fargo and the T.D. Jakes Group moves forward with their projects over the next 10 years, they would be wise to use the CARE approach when moving forward. As can be seen in the CBS Mornings interview, they are already involved in the communication phase.

In terms of methods of reconciliation that have already occurred, Wells Fargo has made an initial offering by its partnership with T.J. Jakes Group. By taking such a unique approach, which Bishop Jakes described as disruptive, they are making progress forward. Most definitely, Wells Fargo's new leadership is trying to distance themselves from their predecessors.

"I feel like it's my destiny to help people reach theirs," said Jakes.²²

19 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 90-91.

20 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 66.

21 Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 100, 103, 105.

Recommendations

In terms of next steps in integrating reconciliation at Alliance University, perhaps the University could offer a class on racial reconciliation for the community, starting with churches. It would be a good way to educate pastors and their congregations who in turn could share what they learn with others.

22 T.D. Jakes, Wells Fargo partnership could mean up to \$1 billion to build inclusive communities
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqkx696yrAI>, (Accessed April 29, 2023).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Salter McNeil, Brenda. *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

Wells Fargo and T.D. Jakes Group Announce Ten-Year Strategic Partnership to Build Inclusive Communities <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/wells-fargo-and-td-jakes-group-announce-ten-year-strategic-partnership-to-build-inclusive-communities-301809619.html>

(Accessed April 29, 2023.)

T.D. Jakes, Wells Fargo partnership could mean up to \$1 billion to build inclusive communities <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqkx696yrAI>, (Accessed April 29, 2023).

Wells Fargo rejected over half of Black applicants for refinance mortgages <https://chicagocrusader.com/wells-fargo-rejected-half-of-black-applicants/> (Accessed April 30, 2023)