



Interdenominational Theological Center

**Awakening a Community for Such a Time as This: Conscientizing the African  
American Church Leaders in Jasper County, South Carolina**

Doctor of Ministry Dissertation

Submitted to the faculties of Interdenominational Theological Center

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

Cleveland E. Stokes Jr.

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American Church Leaders in Jasper County, South Carolina

by

Cleveland E. Stokes Jr.

Approved by the Examining Committee

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Charles E. Thomas Jr., PhD  
Chairperson

---

Dr. Henry A. Whelchel  
First Reader

---

Dr. Andrew W. Thomas  
Second Reader

---

Date

Accepted:

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Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

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Date

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Cleveland E. Stokes

## **Abstract**

### **Awakening a Community for Such a Time as This: Conscientizing the African American Church Leaders in Jasper County, South Carolina**

by  
Cleveland E. Stokes Jr.  
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Amid the toxic atmosphere of injustice that permeates twenty-first century America, loomed the stifling air of racism and the struggle for power in Jasper County, South Carolina. This oppressive air formed spirits of complacency and apathy that lulled African Americans of this county to sleep and caused pastors to become detached from their pews and leaders to become disconnected from the community. Yet, pastors and community leaders play not only significant roles in fostering thriving churches and communities but are also vital in shaping the conscience of African Americans of this county. Therefore, this project proposed the application of the Theory of African American Communal Identity Formation (TAACIF), introduced by Lee H. Butler, Jr., Ph.D., to conscientize leaders about the importance of discovering and/or rediscovering “who they are” as it relates to self, the community, and the American society. This project also proposed social media strategies, such as those employed by President Barack Obama’s media specialist team that awakened and galvanized America, to equip pastors and leaders with tools to awaken and galvanize African Americans of Jasper County. Thus, the goal of this project was the employment of TAACIF and effective social media strategies to

empowered pastors to reattach themselves to their pews and leaders to reconnect to their communities.

## **Dedication**

To the Glory of God

This dissertation is dedicated to the marginalized African American living in Jasper County, South Carolina. It is also dedicated to my father, Sargent Cleveland Eddie Stokes, Sr. and to my mother, Katie Cain Stokes, both of whom nurtured my passion for education and love.

*“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”*

Romans 8:28 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)



## **Acknowledgements**

This project would not have been possible without the support and guidance of others. I offer my sincere gratitude to Dr. Charles E. Thomas Jr., chairman of my dissertation committee, whose guidance, direction and calming presence made my journey stress free. I give special acknowledgement to Dr. Andrew Thomas, Dr. Love H. Welchel, Dr. Marsha Snulligan Haney, and Dr. Gale Saunders: Dr. Andrew Thomas effectively used his academic insight to challenge me to take deeper looks into myself and for rendering his spiritual insight during times of spiritual lows; Dr. Welchel provided moral support and nourished my mind; Dr. Snulligan Haney believed in me and challenged me to explore self and not to be afraid to embrace change; Dr. Saunders challenged me to think out-of-the-box, to remain committed to my research, to face my negative emotion, and to present a work that is informative, meaningful, and doable. I also acknowledge my wife, Patricia Stokes, for her brutal honesty as she read my text, for her patience and consideration throughout the research process, and for the many prayers she prayed for me to produce a project that brings God glory.



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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Key Terms**

1. An Anthropological Model is the in-depth qualitative process of exploring the whys and hows of human culture, behavior, and expression.
2. Black Church: referred to Protestant Christian churches that currently or historically have ministered to predominantly African American (with African ancestry) congregations in the United States.
3. Black Theology: referred to theology of black liberation that seeks to plumb the black condition so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the activities of black humanity.
4. Communal Identity: refers to the overarching sense of who the individual is by attending to the affective and cognitive operations in the self-transcending subject.
5. Conscientize: referred to making people aware of a social or a political issue, or an ideal.
6. Contextualization: refers to attempts to answer the question of how cultures influence the social and historical processes of interpreting and experiencing religion. (Terminologies like “enculturation” or “indigenization” are often synonymous with contextualization.)

7. Dominant Culture: referred to the most powerful, widespread, and influential culture within a social or political entity in which multiple cultures are present.
8. Low Country: referred to a geographic and cultural region along South Carolina's coast, including the Sea Islands, that was once known for its slave-based agricultural wealth in rice and indigo but is now known for its historic cities and communities, natural beauty, cultural heritage, and tourism industry.
9. Personal Identity: referred to that which is uniquely an individual's distinctiveness as s/he interacts and holistically engages her/his environment.
10. Practical Theology: referred to an academic discipline that examines and reflects religious practices to understand the theology that is enacted in those practices and to recognize how theological theory and theological practices can be more fully aligned, changed, or improved.
11. Snowbirds: referred to people from Canada and the northern United States who spend winter months in warmer climates of the southern United States.
12. Victimology: referred to an adoption of victimhood as the core of one's identity.

### **Introduction of the Project**

Twenty-first century America continually radiates an atmosphere of disharmony, prejudice, and racism, and from that atmosphere loomed a suffocating air of apathy and complacency in Jasper County, South Carolina. It was that air which lulled far too many Jasper County African American pastors to sleep. Subsequently, some became detached from their pews, causing some African American leaders to become disconnected from the community. Yet, pastors play significant roles in fostering thriving churches and communities and are vital in shaping the conscience of the people. Therefore, there was a

need for them to wake from their slumber and act. Just as the civil rights leaders of the 50s and 60s worked to implement political freedom and the expansion of personal civil rights, so was there a need for African American pastors in Jasper County to work together to stimulate, to inform, and to propel its residents into action—actively participating in the economic, political, and social development and growth.

In a critique of Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Cornel West, an African American philosopher, political activist, and social critic, writes, “This book is a grand wake-up call in the midst of a long slumber of indifference to the poor and vulnerable.”<sup>1</sup> Just as Alexander’s book was a “grand wake-up call” in the midst of a long slumber, so were the economic, political, and social challenges in Jasper County a “grand wake-up call” in the midst of a long slumber of apathy and complacency. Therefore, a clarion call went forth for conscientizing African American pastors.

In brief, there was a need for African American pastors in Jasper County to think critically about issues of power in relationship to the oppressor and the oppressed; there was a need for them to speak with clarity and be opened to the exploration of systematic approaches to dismantling the corrupt power structure; there was a need for them to be conscious about the needs of the Black Church and the African American community; there was a need for them to empower African American residents to take positive and productive action, economically, politically, and socially, and there was a need for them to be committed to educating all residents to the struggles of African Americans from slavery

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<sup>1</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press 2012), Forward

to the twenty-first century because this knowledge is critical in tackling the challenges of Jasper County.

### **Intent of the Project**

With the suffering of widespread apathy and rampant complacency, African American pastors needed to stand in solidarity, using the people's shared history and experiences as footing. However, what impeded progress in addressing problems in Jasper County was limited research and slow translation of research into practice, including issues between those who created the evidence base and those in Black churches and communities who were positioned to implement research findings. Therefore, the aim of this project was not only to research but to also translate the research into practice.

There was a need for African American residents to become keenly aware of Jasper County's economic, political, and social challenges, and there was a need for the conscientization of African American pastors to critically look at each challenge, reflect on each, and then take necessary action, which was a process that unites the people.<sup>2</sup> In "Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism," Joseph M. Webb focuses on crucial issues that must be addressed during the initial phase of conscientizing, suggesting that people must move beyond what is initially perceived to be a realistic view to critical and analytical lenses.<sup>3</sup> In other words, African American pastors of Jasper County could not depend on perceived notions about the challenges but rather seriously and realistically address them. Webb admits that one issue is that people are surrounded by new cultures and mixtures of

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur S. Lloyd, "Freire, Conscientization, and Adult Education." *Adult Education Quarterly*, 23 (1972): 3-20, accessed November 5, 2016. doi:10.1177/07471367202300101.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph M. Webb, *Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1998), 121.



people.<sup>4</sup> These cultures and mixtures can be positive experiences, but they can also be interruptions to the normal flow of everyday living. An example of this is Jasper County's massive influx of Snowbirds migrating there to escape the blustery winter climate of the North. They bring with them different beliefs, various customs, and distinct habits that can be positive, yet disrupt everyday living.

All and all, there was a need for the Black Church to reclaim its role and responsibility as a place of worship, and a place for social, civic, and political gatherings; there was a need for pastors to consciously guide and serve and critically think about challenges in relationship to the privileged and the oppressed; there was a need for community leaders to balance the needs of individuals and the needs of the community as a whole, and it was from these premises that this research emerged. It was the belief that if pastors, along with community leaders, came together and rallied the community to embrace their strength, challenges would be resolved, and positive change would be inevitable. Thus, the intent of this project was that of exploring conscientizing African American pastors of Jasper County, South Carolina for positive change employing the Theory of the African-American Communal Identity Formation (TAACIF).

### **Emergence of the Theory of African American Communal Identity Formation and Black Psychology**

The Theory of African-American Communal Identity Formation (TAACIF) is an approach to what it means to be African American. According to Lee H. Butler, Jr. in *Liberating Our Dignity: A New Theory of African American Identity Formation*, it is a theoretical framework that attempts to describe the circumstances in which African

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Americans find themselves.<sup>5</sup> Butler believes TAACIF helps people see the true nature of the African American identity and is a developmental theory that purports a healthier way to understand the African American identity formation, relationships, and worldview.<sup>6</sup> However, some African Americans have embraced the identities given to them based on Western culture that argued for a universal identity development, suggesting individual identity can be developed and be healthy in the absence of the individual's culture and experience. However, Butler argues that no personal past can be extracted independently of a cultural history because personality and identity develop within a context.<sup>7</sup>

The discussion of African American identity has been an ongoing conversation. For example, in the twentieth century, William Edward Burghardt (W.E. B.) Du Bois, who was an American sociologist, historian, and civil rights activist, contributed to the conversation by speaking in favor of African Americans embracing their individual identities and the perception perceived by the dominant culture. Yet, it was his belief that both stress and depression come with the determination to plan and to work for better conditions. According to DuBois, a spiritual awakening becomes a reality, but it is apt to be condemned by the ignorant as radicalism.<sup>8</sup>

Later, Dwight Hopkins joined the conversation in the twenty-first century by asserting that “the awakening of God’s Spirit is given through Jesus Christ which discloses

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<sup>5</sup> Lee H. Butler, *Liberating Our Dignity: A New Theory of African American Identity Formation*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 173.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 150

<sup>8</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, “Behold the Land.” *Freedom Way*, First Quarter (October 20, 1946), 14.

itself when we persist in times of crisis, and the challenge of hardship offers the possibility of a new creative order.”<sup>9</sup> According to Hopkins, a “New Dream” emerged out of the African American experience and crisis, and he asserts:

“Crisis is a time of extreme vulnerability, as well as a time of heightened possibility. This means our vulnerabilities push us to regress, while our possibilities promote growth. Unfortunately, a state of crisis has a strong tendency to reactivate former defense mechanisms due to the strong desire for security and stability.”<sup>10</sup>

This hypothesis seems to have played out in Jasper County, causing far too many African-Americans to accept the status quo and not take risks, even if they could be highly beneficial.

Hence, a new dream of hope came in the form of Black psychology of which Black psychologists branched off from Western identity theories and developed TAACIF that deals uniquely with the Black experience in America. Wade Noble, a pioneer of the African American psychology movement, asserts that Black psychology works to understand life by focusing on the struggles, the pleasures, the interests, the desires, the habits, the aims, the drives, the motivations, the feelings, the actions, and the wants of Black people, which molded them into complex and unique living beings. Black psychology not only attempts to understand behavior but also strives to disseminate its scientific findings to the community in a manner that lends itself to the application.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *The Shoes That Fit Our Feet: Source for a Constructive Black Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books), 168.

<sup>10</sup> Lee H. Butler, *Liberating Our Dignity: A New Theory of African American Identity Formation*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 28.

<sup>11</sup> Wade Noble, *African Philosophy: Foundations of Black Psychology*, 3rd Ed, edited by Reginald L. Jones. (New York: Harper Row. 1991), 23.

Yet, African Americans are expected to embrace the American dream, and this is achieved when they pursue justice and equality through the lenses of our communal and individual struggles. Butler believes that liberty, equality, justice, and survival are all important expressions of the African American identity, just as each one is vital to what it means to be American. However, the African American culture is a resistant culture dynamically constructed around the thematic ideas of freedom and justice.<sup>12</sup> It is Butler's belief that spirituality stemmed from African roots. According to him, it "was and is the force that empowered [African American] to resist, while trusting God for liberation and freedom."<sup>13</sup>

On the topic of African traditional religion and its spirituality, Temba L. J. Mafico, Distinguished Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament at the Interdenominational Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, attributes them to being rooted in how that culture was internalized in African people, giving them the power to withstand adapting and assimilating into the culture of the early missionaries who were sent to convert them.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, African Americans have a cultural foundation established on those same values. However, that foundation must be reclaimed in the lives of the African Americans in Jasper County.

Howard Thurman, who was an African-American author, philosopher, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader, illuminates how African slaves were uprooted from their

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<sup>12</sup> Lee H. Butler, *Liberating Our Dignity: A New Theory of African American Identity Formation*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>14</sup> Temba L. J. Mafico, *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center: Volume 37 Issue 1 and 2.* (Atlanta: ITC Press, 2011), 58.

land and territory and brought forcibly to another land completely unfamiliar to their spirit and their gods. Ties that gave the African a sense of belonging were abruptly severed. According to Thurman, African's access to the sources of nourishment for the community no longer existed—not even the status of being a human being.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, Butler believes that if African Americans see themselves from the backdrop of their African roots and their enslavement in America, they can, then, see their identity in America—seeing themselves with a heritage to be proud of, thus fortifies their identity, which will become the force, that will give them commitment and a strong voice against the oppressor. Butler suggests that when individuals observe “the person in the mirror,” they will be in position to act, which is the same energy that fueled the ancestors of African American to survive slavery and the civil rights movement. This same energy will empower African Americans to stand against their oppressors. In other words, confronting “the person in the mirror” is a starting point for transformation; nevertheless, that same mirror is often the last place to look when there is a desire for a new way of being, when there has been pain and struggle in developing.<sup>16</sup> Winthrop Jordan, who was a writer on the history of slavery and the origins of racism in the United States, shares an example of this reversal by explaining, “The psychology of oppression is a look at the dynamic relationship within and between the oppressor and the oppressed. Oppression is a burden to all who participate, and everyone is affected and/or participates at some level.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>17</sup> Winthrop Jordan, *The White Man's Burden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 34.

Therefore, TAACIF is rooted in the fact that once African Americans begin to see “self,” the hidden reality of psychological oppression becomes clear. When African-American pastors in Jasper County understand this truth, it becomes a tool to manipulate the status quo into listening attentively and genuinely to their concerns. Although the dynamics between the oppressor and the oppressed are hierarchical, the psychology of oppression is that everyone experiences pain and suffering, regardless of whether one is the oppressor or the oppressed.<sup>18</sup> Thus, TAACIF, an approach to what it means to be an African-American, and Black psychology, which is present in both the African American and the dominant White cultures, was used by African-American pastors in changing the “landscape” of Jasper County, South Carolina economically, politically, and socially.

### **Methodology**

The research method was qualitative, identifying crucial issues affecting African American residents in Jasper County and how conscientizing pastors was crucial. Also, it confirmed the need for solidarity amongst pastors and community leaders. The research utilized the ethnographic design that included interviews and observation, and the strength of this research method was that it produced textual descriptions of the “human” side of African Americans of Jasper County. However, one limitation was that it was not a neutral activity because the researcher brought biases and values, and those were the lenses through which the researcher interpreted the world of the participants.<sup>19</sup>

The data collection allowed the researcher the opportunity to gather and measure facts, beliefs, and concerns in an established systemic method making it possible for

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Louis Cohen et. al. *Research Methods in Education*, 7th Edition. (New York: Routledge, 2010). 225.

questions to be answered with the objective of generating understanding of reasons for challenges experienced by Jasper County's African Americans and why conscientizing pastors was essential. Rather than crunching numbers, this method provided authentic information that told the story of the residents of Jasper County.

Thus, research was conducted and evaluated for the use of African American pastors, community leaders, and residents of Jasper County with the goal of stimulating 7g, equipping, and empowering them to bring about positive change. The research study included interviews and observations.

## Chapter II

### Framing the Issue

#### Motivation for the Research

African Americans continue to face a series of problems in the twenty-first century. Despite the eradication of Jim Crow laws—state and local laws that enforced racial segregation in the Southern United States—serious economic, political, and social challenges persist. Specifically, in Jasper County, South Carolina where this research was conducted, there was a disconnect between pastors and the mission of the church as it related to the African American community. There was evidence of involvement of African Americans in the local political arena, but it was questioned whether it was fueled by selfish desires to promote “self.” Others believe that through the process of advancing academically, some lost their identities during this metamorphosis.<sup>1</sup> Yet, at the grassroots level, where the church could have made an immediate positive difference, spirits of apathy and complacency pointed to attitudes that included jealousy and detachment. Robert Bedford, author of *An Urban Toolkit for Those Who Won’t be Sold Out, Brought Out or Scared Out*, believes that “when the church is sold out, it has no viable alternative to offer.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carter Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Chicago: The Associated Publishers, 1933), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Beckford, *God and the Gangs: An Urban Toolkit for Those Who Won’t be Sold Out, Brought Out or Scared Out* (London: Longman & Todd Ltd. 2004), 8.



In other words, when the church buys into societal ills, it has no sustainable option to offer people inside or outside the walls of the church edifice.

Consequently, challenges continue to plague the Black Church. In Larry A. Whitman's *Who Shall Lead Them?: The Future of Ministry in America*, Eugene Rivers, an American activist and Pentecostal minister, explains that "the church is losing a lot of young Black men and prefers to get high on the Holy Ghost."<sup>3</sup> Some believe the Black Church does not effectively address their issues and challenges. There is a growing megachurch phenomenon which is not, in too many cases, connected to the lived reality of poor Blacks.<sup>4</sup> In his book, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American*, Dale P. Andrew makes clear that "the Black Church is out of touch with Black urban youth."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, he challenges the Black Church to re-examine itself so as not to dismiss its past and hinder its future growth.<sup>6</sup> His concern and his challenge are relevant in Jasper County.

There have been far too many tragedies in African American communities in which the Black Church has been silent. In 2012, where was the Black Church when Trayvon Martin, a Sanford, Florida sixteen-year-old African American male, was killed by a neighborhood watch member, George Zimmerman, as he walked to his father's home in a gated community? What did the Black Church do when, on July 17, 2014, Eric Garner died in the New York City borough of Staten Island after Daniel Pantaleo, a New York City

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<sup>3</sup> Larry A. Whitman, *Who Shall Lead Them?: The Future of Ministry in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 104.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African Americans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 48.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Police Department officer, put him in a chokehold while arresting him? The Black Church in Ferguson, Missouri did rise as one voice organized to force political change after August 9, 2014, when Michael Brown Jr., an 18-year-old African American man, was fatally shot by a 28-year-old white Ferguson police officer, Darren Wilson, in the city of Ferguson. However, the Black Church cannot pick and choose when to speak but rather consistently use its voice to address issues and challenges that plague its communities. The events that took place in each of those cities are similar to what the African American community faces in Jasper County.

Therefore, the motivation for this project was rooted in the fact that the Black Church is called to be an effective church in Jasper County. Pastors needed to foster thriving churches that empowers people into positive action for constructive change. The goal of this research was not only to call for the conscientizing of African American pastors in Jasper County but also was to expose some of the subliminal themes that created the spirits of apathy and complacency that led detachment of pastors from their pews and the disconnection of leaders to the community.

### **Historical Context**

The Black Church has been the foundation of the African American culture since the first African slave was brought to America and worshiped in the bush arbor. Later the Black Church became a stable and coherent institution. It is stated in *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, that Black churches were not only dominant in their communities, but they became the womb of the Black culture.<sup>7</sup> Beginning in the late eighteenth century, it served as a place of

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<sup>7</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press. 1970), 17.

worship and a place for social, civic, and political gatherings.<sup>8</sup> Historically, it has been a place for creating transformation and political change within the community, and it was also a source of hope, inspiration, education, and liberation.

In Dwight Hopkins's *Shoes That Fit Our Feet: Source for a Black Constructive Theology*, he asserts that starting with the invisible institution, the foundation of the African American community's heart, before emancipation, comes from the Black Church.<sup>9</sup> He continues by pointing out that though God moves in diverse ways within the African American freedom journey, the Black Church is the oldest, most organized, and most influential gathering of justice-loving folk among Black people.<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah Wright, pastor emeritus of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois, writes in *What Does it Mean to be Black and Christian* that "during the 60s and 70s, many Blacks wanted to be recognized as African, so they changed their dress, language, and physical appearance."<sup>11</sup> Yet, they can never change the essence of who they are and neither can the Black Church.

Ultimately, the Black Church has been the mouthpiece for the African American community through the organization of civil groups, voter registration drives, and candidate endorsements. It was active during the civil rights movement with preachers like Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., Joseph Echols

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<sup>8</sup> Love Henry Welchel, Jr., *The Black Consciousness Movement: The Black Church, Politics and Civil Rights*, Lecture at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia, April 9, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *Shoes That Fit Our Feet: Source for a Black Constructive Theology*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 48.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Forrest E. Harris, *What Does it Mean to be Black and "Christian:"* Pew, and Academy in Dialogue, Volume 2, (Nashville: Townsend Press, 1998), 16.

Lowery, and Frederick Lee Shuttlesworth whose commitment brought about positive change. Yet, in

The Negro Revolution in America: What Negroes Want, Why and How They Are Fighting, Whom They Support, What Whites Think of Them and Their Demands, William Brink and Louis Harris points out only 10% of Black clergy were active in the civil rights movement and that during the 1963 Birmingham march, only 20 of the city's 250 Black preachers participated."<sup>12</sup>

These numbers are alarming but understandable because the fear African Americans experienced left unforgettable stains that cannot be washed away overnight.

Fear can be a toxic pollutant with the potential to paralyze the mind and the thought processes. Jean-Marc Ela, who was a Cameroonian sociologist and theologian, emphasized the importance of not allowing fear to paralyze thought and reason.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, African Americans in Jasper County cannot operate in fear but rather logically think rationally so they can be contributing members of the economic, political, and social structures. In fact, Ela stressed the need for African Americans to be revived from fear, to grasp an understanding, and to develop the ability to speak the language of the dominant culture in order to voice their destinies.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, African Americans in Jasper County, whose voices have been paralyzed by fear, must not only recognize the power of words but also understand and speak the language of the dominant power structure. Ela claims:

“Ignorance...extends to the functioning of political institutions, to the mechanics of economics, to the laws of society. In the face of the manifold harassment and blind bullying

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<sup>12</sup> William Brink and Louis Harris, *The Negro Revolution in America: What Negroes Want, Why and How They Are Fighting; Whom They Support, What Whites Think of Them and Their Demands Based on The Nationwide Survey by Newsweek Magazine* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964), 249.

<sup>13</sup> R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 251.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

of which [African] are victims, the illiterate African rural masses are ignorant to the very law designed to protect them even when they know they are in the right...”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in Jasper County many African American are politically and economically uninformed, even to the laws designed to protect them.

Specifically, in Jasper County, far too many African American voices had not been completely heard, and the pervading spirits of apathy and complacency pointed to their failure to come together as a united force of unified voices before the dominant power structure. They had far too little input in how Jasper County operates despite the fact that the “so called” minority are, in fact, the majority of the populace—60%: Black Non-Hispanic Alone—45.6%; Hispanic or Latin—15.1%, and White Non-Hispanic—37.4%.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, voices must be united with clarity, without fear, because clarity has the power to create explicit responses and affective results.

There was a need for Jasper County’s African American residents to become aware of their economic, political, and social challenges; there was a need for them to reflect and implement necessary action against the oppressor and the power structure, all of which is a process that unite people,<sup>17</sup> and there was a need to conscientize pastors. In *Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism*,” Joseph M. Webb focuses on crucial issues that must be addressed during the initial phase of conscientizing, suggesting that people must move

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> DP03 SELECTED ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS – 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates." United States Census Bureau accessed March 11, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur S. Lloyd. “Freire, Conscientization, and Adult Education.” *Adult Education Quarterly*, 23 (1972): 3-20, accessed November 5, 2016. doi:10.1177/07471367202300101.

beyond what is initially perceived to be a realistic view of others by observing them through critical and analytical lenses, considering others' experiences.<sup>18</sup>

In short, African Americans of Jasper County cannot afford to depend on perceived notions but rather critically and realistically address them. Pastors, community leaders, and residents need not live with muted voices and crippled abilities. It has long been time to act, which was addressed in this research.

## **Ministry Context**

### **Larger Parish**

Jasper County is the southernmost county in South Carolina and was formed in 1912 from portions of Hampton and Beaufort counties and is included in the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton-Beaufort, South Carolina Metropolitan Statistical Area.<sup>19</sup> It is in the Low Country region of the state. For several decades, in contrast to neighboring Beaufort County, Jasper was one of the poorest counties in the state; the income for the county in 2014 was \$17,997 per capita. About 14.2% of families and 21.5% of the population were below the poverty line, including 32.2% of those under age 18, and 14.5% of those were age 65 or over.”<sup>20</sup>

Outside of the metropolitan statistical area, Jasper County is one of the most polarized counties in South Carolina. This polarization is due to what appears to be the existing poverty, illiteracy, and a deep-seated racial stance, where white supremacy is the

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph M. Webb, *Preaching and the Challenge of Pluralism* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1998), 121.

<sup>19</sup> Jasper County, South Carolina. National Association of Counties. Archived from the original on 2011-05-31, accessed January 04, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Jasper County, South Carolina “Jasper County, South Carolina detailed profile- house, real estate, cost of living, wages, work, agriculture, ancestries, and more,” accessed February 17, 2017. [http://www.city-data.com/county/Jasper\\_County-SC.html#ixzz45XLr2Mge](http://www.city-data.com/county/Jasper_County-SC.html#ixzz45XLr2Mge)

mindset of many of the indigenous Whites. Today, it seems many African Americans in Jasper County still suffer from psychological oppression. If the prophetic words of Willie Lynch, who was a British slave owner in the West Indies, in the form of a letter, describes of how whites-maintained control, and if the lingering words of segregationists such as Governor George Wallace, who served as the forty-fifth Governor of Alabama for four terms, have come true, and if the minorities of Jasper County have internalized these messages, the psychological footprint could be so deeply ingrained that it becomes invisible. This may be why so many African Americans' and other minorities' attitudes in this county have become apathetic toward their economic, political, and social plights.

### **Local Parish**

The local parish has no gainful employment to offer, and there are no major industries, factories, colleges, universities, or distribution centers. Nevertheless, there are thriving logging businesses in the county but are predominantly White owned. African-Americans are being bused to Hilton Head, and Bluffton, South Carolina for minimum wages and menial jobs, which is a 50 to 60-mile one-way trip. They are abused by privately owned White companies, which are strategically and economically interconnected with the merchants in these cities. This apparent business proposition suggests that the African American community is still simply a commodity. Having so few job options in their immediate areas appears to have led to a dependency on what Whites can provide. This dependency seems to be the foremost mindset of many African-Americans who did not migrate North in the 50s, 60s, and early 70s, but were born and raised under these conditions.

Also, there seems to be a correlation between the absence of gainful employment and crime. Gangs and violence have been steadily on the rise as Jasper County's sheriff, Gregory Jenkins, declared:

We have a gang problem, and we would like the community to be able to identify gang 'tagging,' markings, language, and colors. Gangs have gone throughout various areas of Jasper County defacing buildings, state property, road, signs and even the heavy equipment of a logging company in southern Jasper County with gang signs. A recent fight at the Ridgeland-Hardeeville High School was gang-related.<sup>21</sup>

Although there is no direct connection between violent crime and unemployment, empirical evidence does reveal that unemployment tends to increase property crime.

### **Ministry Issues**

The African-American pastors of Jasper County needed to acknowledge and to address its economic, political, and social challenges, and the Black Church needed to continue to evolve and be committed to being an affirming and an accessible place of worship, working to be a place for civic, political, and social gatherings. However, the world in which the Black Church of Jasper County exists and serves had challenges; therefore, opportunities needed to be created for positive change even though population shifts, geographic ethos, and economic, political, and social factors have affected its mission, its leadership, and its community.

While striving to provide authentic and faithful leadership, Jasper County African American pastors faced the following challenges:

- There is not a consensus on the effects of racism in Jasper County.

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<sup>21</sup> Gangs a concern for Jasper County law enforcement, <http://savannahnow.com/hardeeville/2013-12-07/gangs-concern-jasper-county-law-enforcement>, accessed January 04, 2017.



- There is a lack of clarity about economic, political, and social problems facing the community.
- There has been a failure to address why the dominant culture is succeeding.
- There has been a lack of authentic conversation on the importance of land management that include farming, leasing, and/or the selling of land (heir property).
- There have not been constructive conversations on the pros and cons of charter schools versus public schools and the impact on African American students.
- There is a lack of concern about African American workers having menial paying jobs, including in the thriving resort areas of Hilton Head and Bluffton, South Carolina.

These challenges have gone largely unnoticed by the African American community partly because of apathetic and complacent attitudes. This apathy and complacency may be partly due to psychological oppression imposed on African Americans by the dominant culture. It has been widely recognized that these challenges must be addressed so that African American pastors, along with community leaders, can be effective and useful in this time and into the future. This recognition led to a series of conversations. Conscientizing pastors about the state of the African American condition in Jasper County was crucial with the goal of unifying the community through involvement, enlightenment, and empowerment.

## Chapter III

### Literature Review

#### Empirical Literature

According to C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, the Black sacred cosmos and religious worldview of African Americans is related to their African heritage that envisioned the whole universe and their conversion to Christianity sacred.<sup>1</sup> However, it has only been in the past two decades that scholars of African American history, culture, and religion began to realize that enslaved Africans created their own individual and distinctive forms of worldview to resemble, rather than duplicate, the culture in which they involuntarily lived.<sup>2</sup> Although they were forced to live in America and to create their own worldview, their contributions and cultural influences were assets; yet, they have been undermined and undervalued in America.

Their contributions and cultural influences began during the colonial days in America's history. For example, during that time, African Americans began a tradition of philanthropy.<sup>3</sup> Established black churches brought social services and education to the African American community. Through the nineteenth century, they became the bedrock

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<sup>1</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1960), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Emmett D. Carson, *A Hand Up*. Black Philanthropy and Self-Help in America, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Inc, 1993.

of the community in terms of spiritual support, and economic and social elevation. The African American Episcopal Church and the African American Episcopal Zion Church, which was founded in 1816 and 1820, were among the earliest Black denominations. Then, in the mid-1800s, African American educational institutions began to emerge, beginning with Tuskegee and Bethune Cookman, and in 1800 and 1900 the African American Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) founded twenty colleges and universities and allocated more than one million dollars to maintain them.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Black Church, through the leadership of its pastors, has not only had a strong spiritual presence but also an educational, economic, and a social presence in the African American community.

Economically, the Black Church played an essential role since the time of slavery. Gil B. Lloyd asserts, in “The Black Church and Economic Development:” “Historically, the Black church has played an important role in the social and economic life of the Black community. Currently, the church, often in partnership with the federal government, provides both moral and economic impetus for the economic redevelopment of urban areas.”<sup>5</sup>

However, Wylin D. Wilson argues in *Economics Ethics and the Black Church* that if the economic ethic of the Black Church remains accommodationist, it will continue to become more irrelevant to African American communities that experience unrelenting poverty.<sup>6</sup> According to Wilson, despite the Black Church’s role in battling racial

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Gil B. Lloyd, *The Black Church and Economic Development*, *Western Journal of Black Studies*, v.1, no.4 (December 1977): 270-275.

<sup>6</sup> Wylin D. Wilson, *Economic Ethics and the Black Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan; 2017), 57-70.6.

oppression and social injustice, as accommodationists, it perpetuates ideologies that justify social injustice.<sup>7</sup> Thus, there is a clear need for pastoral leadership and authentic conversations about poverty and about the Black Church being the leader in empowering the African American community with liberating ethics.<sup>8</sup> All in all, as an institution, the Black Church was rooted in the economic development of the African American community—from pulling financial resources together to purchasing “the church building” to creating mutual funds societies that provided social services for free Africans and African Americans and setting up businesses for economic development.<sup>9</sup>

Politically, the Black Church, through the leadership of its pastors, has been active since the years leading to the Civil War. It found a political voice in the cause of abolition, using the pulpit to speak against slavery. During the Reconstruction period in American history, African American communities established their own churches, primarily Baptist, throughout the South. Many of those who emerged as African American political leaders were pastors, empowered by their literacy and by their prominent role in building the Black churches that served as the first forums for collective political organizing.<sup>10</sup> Later, its political voice rang loud during the civil rights movement when the Black churches opened their doors for political rallies. African American clergy, like Martin Luther King, Jr, Ralph

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Maulana Karenga. Introduction to Black Studies. (Timbuktu; University of Sankore Publisher, 1993), 24.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Dianne Savage, *The Myth of the Black Church* (excerpt). *Religion and Politics: For Polite Company*. 2 June 2012. <https://religionandpolitics.org/2012/06/07/the-myth-of-the-black-church/>

David Abernathy, Bernard Lee, and Fred Shuttlesworth, became political voices. In addition, Black churches played the role of not only preserving African and African American heritages but also that of acting as the cultural broker of the values of the larger society.<sup>11</sup> Used as a tool for change, the Black Church, because of the leadership of its pastors, was the center of the civil rights movement. For example, political activism by African American clergy and Black churches was evident in Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in the 1980s.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the Black Church was central to the political world of African Americans.

Socially, the Black Church, because of its pastoral leadership, was the steadfast institution in the African American community from aiding new urban migrants to serving as the African American social conscience.<sup>13</sup> It provided an organizational infrastructure by serving as a community gathering place and by encouraging social progress.<sup>15</sup> Throughout African American history, the Black Church served as a place to worship, as the community support group, and as the place to solve disputes. It was the place for social activities because it was a space free of racism. It offered powerful youth programs and activities and was rooted in community outreach. In fact, its historic role in providing African Americans with social services and a safe gathering place prefigured its historic

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<sup>11</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Maymiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 214.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel E. Walker, *The Black Church Next: Challenges and Opportunities Facing African American Congregations in 21st Century Los Angeles*. 15 May 2011 accessed September 15, 2016. [https://crcc.usc.edu/files/2015/02/NEXTPTMbrochure2011\\_finalSP.pdf](https://crcc.usc.edu/files/2015/02/NEXTPTMbrochure2011_finalSP.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda M. Chatters, and Jeff Levin, *Religion in the Lives of African American: Social, Psychological, and Health Perspectives*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2004), 21.

role in the civil rights movement.<sup>16</sup> In *Church Administration in the Black Perspective*, Floyd Massey asserts “the Black Church was concerned with nurturing values and norms in the individual, the family, and the peer groups, as well as affecting the total life of the community.”<sup>17</sup>

Hence, the Black Church, through the leadership of its pastors, has had a history of sustaining the African American community, and it not only stood as an institution built on worship but also on community, family, justice, and freedom. It was “formed in hush harbors of plantations—secret gathering places for the enslaved to engage in their religious and spiritual practices—which over generations, emerged into a valuable and pivotal place of community, protest, and worship.”<sup>18</sup> And because of its history, its power, and its influence, despite generations of ill treatment and racism, “the Black Church must thrive, continuing to speak truth to power and to serve African American communities beyond the sanctuary.”<sup>19</sup>

Yet, the Black Church and the African American communities existed under a dominant culture—European American culture—of which the majority of its peoples originally emigrated from countries in western, central, northern, or southern Europe and of which each part of Europe contributed variations to the cultural milieu.<sup>20</sup> And with the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Floyd Massey, Jr. and Samuel B. McKinney, *Church Administration in the Black Perspective* (Valley Forge, Judson Press, 1991), 130.

<sup>18</sup> Jamar A Boyd, II. “The Importance of a Thriving Black Church.” Sojourners. 2 July 2017 accessed July 3, 2017. <https://sojo.net/articles/importance-thriving-black-church>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Diane McDermott. “Parenting and Ethnicity.” *Handbook of Diversity* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001), 73-96.

cultural milieu came some central themes which characterize the dominant culture that include individualism that was founded on ideals of rugged individualism and concepts that include: people are responsible for their own lives and achievements; people are expected to speak Standard English, people are able to pull themselves up by their own “bootstraps,” and in the fact that hard work will pay off.<sup>21</sup> This culture is one that is powerful and influential and was achieved through different means that include economic power and political force.

Cornel West proposes that African American leadership explores the underlying causes behind the agenda of the dominant force, suggesting that King’s prophetic description of America as a “sick country” is accurate. West suggests there are forces that oppose African Americans of which the dominant culture has interwoven major issues as a means of control, reinforcing day-to-day validation of their activities through the media, which need to be exposed.<sup>22</sup> He points out what King considered to be the four major issues in America: militarism, materialism, racism, and poverty, believing the military-industrial complex, the role of the Pentagon, the national budget, the way in which militarism has been routinized and institutionalized and recently outsourced, and the production of weapon of mass destruction seem to pacify and to render citizens sleepwalking through the means of stimulation and titillation.<sup>23</sup>

Specifically, the oppression being perpetrated upon African Americans in Jasper County must be exposed if the African American community is to combat this oppressive

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Cornel West, *Black Prophetic Fire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 66.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

force that attempts to keep it subservient and unaware of the depths of depravity surrounding it. Only by exposing who the real enemy is can residents be reintroduced into the consciousness of how important they are, what they are entitled to, and what they contribute to Jasper County. If they focus only on fixing themselves and not on the bigger picture of where they stand as people in Jasper County, they may not understand how to meet the challenges that are before them. In West's "Race Matters" he states, "To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of [African American] people but the flaws of American society—flaws rooted in historical inequalities and long-standing cultural stereotypes."<sup>24</sup> Also, African American pastors, community leaders, and residents of Jasper county must face the reality that the redevelopment of any community is hard work. It requires vision, leadership, strategy, and persistence. This process is arguably much more difficult within the African American community in Jasper County given its historical social and economic fracturing which limited its capacity to develop solutions to mitigate systemic social and economic challenges.<sup>25</sup>

### **Black Theology**

Black theology seeks to plumb the black condition in light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ so that the black community can see that the gospel is equal with the activities of black humanity. Theology of "blackness," is the affirmation of Black humanity that emancipates Black people from White racism, thus, providing authentic freedom for both

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<sup>24</sup> Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Eric Anthony Johnson, *Economic Empowerment and Black Church Urban Regeneration*. 26 October 2015 accessed February 26, 2016.  
[drericanthonyjohnson.com/urban-regeneration/economic-empowerment-and-the-black-church/](http://drericanthonyjohnson.com/urban-regeneration/economic-empowerment-and-the-black-church/)



White and Black people. It affirms the humanity of White people in that it says “No” to the encroachment of White oppression.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, Anthony Bradley, a Black theologian, emphatically argues that Black theology is dead and has no relevance for the African American in today’s society. In his book, *Liberating Black Theology*, he suggests Black theology is not a holistic approach to formulating theology. He also suggests one of the major flaws in Black theology is its focus being more on the social and political oppressions, which affect marginalized people, opposed to the love that Jesus spoke of during many of His messages. Bradley suggests, according to Black theology, if there were no oppression in the world, there would be no need for Jesus. Black theology, then, would be limited to a sociopolitical religion. He cites James Cone’s book, *Speaking the Truth* saying, “language is about God’s liberating activity in the world on behalf of the freedom of the oppressed,”<sup>27</sup> as the basis for his argument.

Nevertheless, Cone states, “Socio-political oppression is the core problem with the human community and is the central imperative theme for all Black theology. The whole of the biblical story is, in fact, focused on God’s liberation of slaves from socio-political bondage.”<sup>28</sup> It appears that Cone sees the gospel as the motivating force that causes individuals to address the socio-political oppressions of the day. He models the words of the apostle Paul that faith without works is dead. Yet, Bradley suggests the works of Cone

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<sup>26</sup> Anthony Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America* (Wheaton: Crossway 2010), 18.

<sup>27</sup> Cone, James H, *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology* (Grand Rapid: Eardman 1986), 45.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

are works absent of faith, which would imply the works are void of the presence of Christ. But, Dwight Hopkins, a proponent of Cone's, states one of the byproducts of these various forms of oppression is poverty and that "people are poor because they are victims of others."<sup>29</sup> This poverty is a direct result of socio-political oppression.

Additionally, Cone admits there is a disparity in many of the African-American churches today when it comes to addressing the issue of socio-political oppression within our communities. He questions whether these churches are mentally and spiritually prepared for change. However, he points out that even within these churches there are committed pastors who fight against the odds to bring change and liberation to their communities. He challenges such pastors and leaders to continue their fight and be aware of the fact that there will only be a few willing to take the journey. Cone asserts:

I am still not convinced that all major Black denominational churches are ready for renewal, but I do believe that there were and still are many genuine, committed Black pastors and lay persons who transcend the limitations of their denominational identity by becoming identified with Christ through a commitment to the poor. They are found in all denominations (Black as well as White) and they seemed determined to build more humane church structures that serve the communities. They are feeding the hungry, holding workshops on economic and politics as well as Black Church history and theology, building alternative schools for Black children, and working at many of the creative projects of freedom. These pastors and members refused to withdraw from the world by engaging in internal church politics. They are concrete examples that the Black Church is not an opaque of the people but a liberating force on behalf of victims of the land.<sup>30</sup>

In essence, Black theology in Jasper County can awaken the residents' conscience to not only the forces and systems that oppress and dehumanize them but also to the forces that isolates them from the opportunities and privileges in society.

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<sup>29</sup> Dwight N. Hopkin, *Heart and Head: Black Theology Past, Present, and Future* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002), 56.

<sup>30</sup> James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 114.

## Practical Theology

Practical theology is an essential lens with which to view the Black Church in Jasper County because it provides clarity on how religious practices have the power to improve its economic, political, and social issues. This theology is vital in that it equips pastors with not only theological knowledge but also with important professional skills needed to effectively minister and successfully pastor. Preaching and Christian education are just a few practices that they can use to prepare community leaders and residents of Jasper County.

In addition, Practical theology aids pastors in interpreting critical questions. This can be done by gathering information that helps to discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts which challenges leaders to examine the causes and effects of a scenario, utilizing the theories of arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring. Practical theology also allows for the discovery of past and present practices of the Christian tradition within a setting that offer normative guidance in shaping patterns of a crisis. Through this lens leaders can get clarity of individual and communal behavior, causes and effects, gather information, and incorporate past and present events that aid in charting paths. There are four (4) core tasks of practical theological interpretation that provides pastors with the ability to interpret and respond to various situations that arise in the community: descriptive-empirical task, interpretive task, normative task, and pragmatic task.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (William Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2008), 4.

Foremost, the descriptive-empirical task—priestly listening—responds to the question: “What is going on?” According to Richard Osmer of Princeton Theological Seminary, “it involves gathering information that helps in discerning patterns and dynamics in episodes, situations, or contexts, interpreting scripts of contemporary lives and practices, grounding the descriptive task in terms of “a spirituality of presence.”<sup>32</sup> Its focus is on what is going on in the lives of individuals, families, and congregations which Osmer refers to as “priestly listening” which can be formal, informal, or semiformal.<sup>33</sup> For example, Lender Earl Keck, an American theological educator, writes in *The Bible in the Pulpit* that the pastor is a priest when a prayer articulates the situation of the congregation; the priest listens to people and establishes a critical identity with them enabling her/him to feel what they feel.<sup>34</sup> The empirical research, an ongoing work of congregational leaders, focuses on facilitating dialogue between congregations’ shared life and mission and the normative sources of the Christian faith that is useful in allowing interpretive guides to understand the people who participate in this dialogue. Also, it helps in the recognition of social trends that impact people’s lives in shaping the context of ministry.<sup>35</sup>

The interpretive task—sage wisdom—that draws on theories of arts and sciences to better understand and explain why patterns and dynamics are occurring, responds to the question: “Why is it going on?”<sup>36</sup> According to Osmer, this task works to find reasons for

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Lender Keck, *The Bible in the Pulpit: The Renewal of Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 62.

<sup>35</sup> Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 41.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 83.

the phenomena that are observed in the descriptive task and guide the identification of issues. Osmer refers to this process as applying “sagely wisdom” which requires the interaction of three key characteristics: thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretation, and wise judgement. This task requires church leaders to be thoughtful and committed to reflecting on life’s questions, especially when experiences challenge the congregation’s pre understandings.<sup>37</sup> In the words of Osmer, “it involves discerning the right course of action in particular circumstances, through understanding the circumstances rightly, the moral ends of action, and the effective means to achieve these ends.”<sup>38</sup> When it comes to sage wisdom, Alyce McKenzie explains sage wisdom in her book *Preaching Proverbs: Wisdom for the Pulpit*:

Sage wisdom is based on three corollaries of theology of creation. First, all wisdom comes from God. When sages gain insight by observing and reflecting on life, they are not constructing this wisdom on their own. They are discerning the model structure that is built into creation itself. Creation speaks to people wise enough to listen. Second, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, reverse repeated more often in Proverbs than any other. This does not mean being frightened of God. Rather, it is an attitude of reverence and humility toward God, which acknowledges the fundamental distinction between the creator and creation. It underscores the limited nature of human understanding.<sup>39</sup>

Normative task—prophetic discernment—responds to the question: “What’s going on?” Its pursuit is to the discernment of God’s will for present realities. Osmer refers to this task as prophetic discernment because its goal is to capture the relationship of divine disclosure and human shaping as prophetic discernment; its focus is the discernment of God’s Word to people in a particular time and place; it involves both divine disclosure and

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>39</sup> Alyce McKenzie, *Preaching Proverbs: Wisdom for the Pulpit* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 35-37.

the human shaping of God's word, and it employs three (3) methods to discover God's word for the present" theological interpretation, ethical reflection, and good practice.<sup>40</sup>

John Bright, who was an American biblical scholar, proposes in his *Covenant and Promise*:

*The Prophetic Understanding of Future in Pre-exile Israel that:*

The prophetic office in ancient Israel is best understood in terms of this community's covenant with God. When Israel strayed from covenant fidelity, the prophets announced God's word to the people, reminding them of God's gracious actions in the past and their promise to live as God's people. The prophetic word articulates two features: the immediate future in which Israel faces the judgment of God and imminent disaster and the furthest future when God will turn to Israel in mercy, renewing the covenant and delivering it from disaster that has befallen it.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, this task is grounded in divine disclosure, is rooted in drawing on particular theological traditions in Israel, and addresses specific social conditions, events, and decisions before this community at a given point in history.<sup>42</sup>

The pragmatic task—servant leadership—works to answer the question: “How might we respond?” It provides church leaders with guidance for leading congregations through the process of change.<sup>43</sup> Robert Quinn writes in his book, *Deep Change*:

*Discovering the Leader Within:*

Transforming leadership involves deep change....It is leading an organization through a process in which its identity, mission, culture, and operating procedures are fundamentally altered. In a congregation, this may involve change in its worship, fellowship, outreach, and openness to new members who are different. It involves projecting a vision of what the congregation might become and mobilizing followers who are committed to this vision. Leading the change is costly and risky.

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<sup>40</sup> Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 133-135.

<sup>41</sup> John Bright, *Covenant and Promise: The Prophetic Understanding of Future in Pre-exile Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1926), 15.

<sup>42</sup> Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 113.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 116.

Leaders must carry out internal work of discerning their own core values, as well as the inner voice of the organization they are leading.<sup>44</sup>

In brief, leaders in the Black churches of Jasper County must be equipped not only with theological knowledge but also with the necessary professional skills to minister effectively to African American residents. Thus, practical theology is not just about preaching but is also about using Christian education, Christian counseling, and Christian clinical settings to provide opportunities to equip and prepare people in communities.

### **Biblical Reflection**

#### **Esther 4:1-16**

A theological reflection concerning the leaders and how they may approach this crisis in Jasper County is found in the book of Esther:

1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; 2 he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 3 In every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4 When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. 6 Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, 7 and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. 8 Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people. 9 Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—all alike are to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone, may that person live. I myself have not been called to come into the king for thirty days." 12 When they told

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* (San Francisco: Josie-Bass, 1996), 201.

Mordecai what Esther had said, 13 Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” 15 Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, 16 “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.”<sup>45</sup>

This narrative portrays a great woman leader’s role of liberation after the 70- year captivity of the Israelites in Babylon. Her rise to become a Queen was a rag-to-riches story that is brought about through the favor of God. She is challenged, much like the African American leaders and residents in Jasper County are being challenged, with racism as well as a decision whether or not to act. Just like Esther, leaders have been elevated to positions of leadership, and their communities respect them.

However, the difference seems to be after Esther was made aware of the urgency of the crisis by her uncle, Mordecai. She is compelled to action even in the midst of possible death, and she accepts the challenge. The text suggests God’s general plan, for those whom God has elevated and shown favor, requires action. Because Mordecai is a man of conviction and allegiance to God, he stands out from the crowd with a reverent fear. He refuses to bow down before any man, and in this act of civil disobedience, he risks his life for his convictions. Similarly, the African-American leaders in Jasper County must adopt this dedicated and committed attitude toward the liberating work of Christ, if they are to be faithful to their callings. Mordecai paints a picture that can easily be understood by Esther. The message speaks truth into power and action. African-American pastors must also communicate in ways and terms that can be easily understood and tailored to the

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/> NRSV, Esther 4:1-16, accessed 2-28-1.



people and even to the individual. They must convey a sense of empathy that has the potential to allow them to meet the people where they are.

Mordecai reminds Esther that she is a Jew and neither she nor her family will survive, which can be seen as a metaphor of the condition of African Americans in Jasper County who are struggling to survive. The fact is, a title, a position, a financial status, and skin color should not matter; it doesn't matter if people have “good” hair or “bad” hair. Not even people’s personal living situations matter. Every time one falls; every time one is killed; every time one is incarcerated; every time there is a divorce behind foolishness; every time African Americans do not vote; every time African Americans do not encourage their youth to pursue post-secondary education; every time African Americans do not take the time to listen to one another in constructive ways, the African American race dies.

Also, Mordecai reminds Esther that her fate is intertwined with the other Jews, despite her status. Once Esther receives this word from Mordecai, she makes the decision to step out in faith and to trust God to work everything out. However, before Esther acts, she understands the importance of ensuring that God is involved; therefore, she fasts and requests the people to fast. Like Ester, pastors in Jasper County must be able to break tradition, step out of their comfort zones, and allow the Holy Spirit to speak truth to power and help the people in their churches and their communities. Furthermore, the church needs to engage in communal and individual fasting and prayer on behalf of pastors.

Equally, pastors must be willing to trust God and examine themselves to find out where and to whom their allegiance lies. If God has allowed pastors to see the issues and has placed them in positions of leadership, perhaps they were made leaders “for just such

a time as this.” Therefore, the question becomes: “Are pastors willing to make the commitment and the sacrifice needed to help bring about change?”

### **Matthew 9:35-38**

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”.<sup>46</sup>

This text suggests church leaders must understand the condition of their congregations and constituents by seeing them where they are. As Jesus went to cities, synagogues, and villages, he saw that people were lost, confused, and hopeless because they had no leadership. Pastors must view the condition of their people not only with the physical eye but also with the spiritual eye. Seeing the situation in real time for what it is will move the sincere pastor into an attitude of compassion, which in turn can lead to action on behalf of the lost and destitute.

### **Nehemiah 6:1-9**

Now when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had built the wall and that there was no gap left in it (though up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come and let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.” But they intended to do me harm. 3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to you?” 4 They sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. 5 In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written, “It is reported among the nations—and Geshem also says it—that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall; and according to this report you wish to become their king. 7 You have also set up prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, ‘There is a king in Judah!’ And now it will be reported to the king according to these words. So come, therefore, and let us confer together.” 8 Then I sent to him, saying, “No such things as you say have been done;

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid NRSV, Matthew 9:35-38, (accessed 2-2-17).

you are inventing them out of your own mind” 9 for they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands.<sup>47</sup>

Here, Nehemiah is possibly remembering the error of his predecessor Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begins a massive campaign to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem at the end of the Babylonian captivity. After years of work and opposition from outsiders, the people became complacent, and the work came to an abrupt halt for 15 years. In this narrative, Nehemiah is confronted with opposition to get him and his workers to stop building the wall around the temple. However, instead of Nehemiah falling to pieces like Zerubbabel, he fell on his knees. He prays, “Lord, strengthen my hand.” He did not want to become complacent no matter how his opposition came at him; he led his people to complete the task of building the wall. Likewise, pastors in Jasper County cannot afford to listen to naysayers or feel inferior to anyone. They must embrace their spiritual roots, knowing God is the source of their strength, and it is within this knowledge that the task of bringing awareness to the people of Jasper County of the necessity of coming together as a united voice, can be achieved.

Hence, pastors of Jasper County must not overlook the determination and wisdom of Nehemiah but rather, like Nehemiah, acknowledge the failures and the mistakes of the past in order to minimize the risk of making the same errors. They must come to an understanding that if God has called them “for such a time as this,” then God has equipped them to complete the task. Pastors must understand that opposition aimed toward them is God’s way of getting them to call for assistance through prayer.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid NRSV, Nehemiah 6:1-9, (access 2-2-17).

## **Chapter IV**

### **Ministry Model**

The issues of Jasper County have burdened my heart as a pastor. This context forced me to reevaluate my model of ministry when it came to dealing with opposition, complacency, threats, and church folk who appear to simply not care. In the past, I would have aggressively attacked the issues head on. However, I moved slowly in my approach because I am an “outsider,” and what I have learned is that moving slowly is not always negative. Nevertheless, I am firm on all my positions, but attempting to force-feed any ideas of drastic change could cause more harm than good. The rural mindset of complacency that exists can be seen in the parable Jesus told about the wheat and the tares growing together.

In Matthew 13:22-32, Jesus put before them another parable:

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 27 And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ 28 He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ 29 But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 30 Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.biblegateway.com/NRSV Matthew 13:24-30](https://www.biblegateway.com/NRSV/Matthew/13/24-30)

This Scripture suggests there are some mindsets that are so deeply rooted in the status quo that it would take a calculated and systematic approach for the dismantling of these mindsets. Moving too fast would uproot and destroy the good that is being achieved because these two mindsets are so intertwined. The text does not suggest nothing should be done but rather that of moving forward and utilizing all the informational tools that are available to achieve the goal by applying patience and wisdom.

From 1955 until 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. 's leadership model was more instrumental in African Americans achieving advancement toward racial equality in America than the previous 350 years had produced. His advocacy of nonviolence made him a great world leader. With inspiration from his Christian faith and the peaceful teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, King made great strides in the civil rights movement. Although some leaders were advocating for freedom by violence, King employed nonviolent resistance campaigns against poverty and racial injustices, always maintaining commitment to his principles that men and women everywhere, regardless of color or creed, are equal.

James Hal Cone's advocacy was that of Black theology and Black liberation theology. Beginning with *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) and continuing with *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970) and *God of the Oppressed* (1975), Cone used the Bible to bring to the forefront the moral issues in American history of which far too many theologians had gotten wrong: the sin and idolatry of White supremacy.<sup>2</sup> The oppression of the poor and the plight of African Americans in America were the core of his work.

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<sup>2</sup> Jim Wallis, *Why James Cone Was The Most Important Theologian of His Time*, Sojourners. 2 May 2017.

Huey P. Newton, along with Bobby Seals, was a revolutionist who emerged in the 1960s through the Black Panthers, a revolutionary political organization. To the White establishment, Newton and the Black Panthers were armed menaces to the established social order, but to African Americans in the communities served, Newton and the Panthers were positive forces—the purveyors of free breakfasts for school children, furnishers of protection for would-be victims of police brutality, and a source of hope and heightened consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, I extracted elements from King’s model of nonviolence, James Cone’s model of liberation through Black theology, and Huey Newton’s model of revolution. I delicately and strategically blended these three models, along with utilizing the advancements in technology, mainly social media, to bring awareness to pastors and leaders in the community

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/300589/revolutionary-suicide-by-huey-p-newton/9780143105329/readers-guide/>

## **Chapter V**

### **Previous Efforts to Address the Issue**

In 1950, members of the Topeka, Kansas Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) challenged the “separate but equal” doctrine of public education through a class action suit when they were denied the opportunity to enroll their children in the White-only school. Once the Topeka case made its way to the United States Supreme Court, it was combined with other NAACP cases from Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina, and Washington DC. The combined cases became known as *Oliver L. Brown et. al. versus the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision overturning “separate but equal” as unconstitutional, stating that separation in public schools was a violation of the 14th amendment.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph A. Delaine, a Methodist minister and civil rights leader, led the way in the Low Country of South Carolina to ensure that South Carolina was represented in this monumental class-action suit. In South Carolina, especially the rural Low Country, “separate but equal” was enforced vigorously. Champions, such as Delaine, spearheaded various movements to bring awareness to the overall plight of the African American in Clarendon County, while living in the low-country, himself. He became the voice for a

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online\\_documents/civil\\_right](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/civil_right), accessed 1-7-17.

voiceless people, despite threats of imprisonment, bombings, fines, and constant harassment. He continued to unify African-Americans through the NAACP. This model of leadership seems to be forgotten by the African American leaders of today in Jasper County.

Just as it was in the 1940s through the 1960s, today, African American still struggles with racism and discrimination. Successful battles such as Brown versus Board of Education must be continually waged if African Americans are to have a decision-making voice in their communities. Injustice today presents itself in public schools versus charter schools, racial profiling, job discrimination, the targeting of African American neighborhoods with advance payday loans/title loans companies, liquor stores, the infusing of drugs in African American neighborhoods, the disproportionate number of African Americans imprisoned, and racist comments and actions perpetrated by the President of the United States.

Church leaders, who are committed to the cause of fighting injustice, must address the reality of these forms of discrimination. There must be a willingness to sacrifice all for the sake of the voiceless African Americans in Jasper County. The leadership, in general, appears to be divided. Unlike the voices of the Civil Rights era in the United States, the voice of the African American in Jasper County seems silenced. The responses to this crisis today are not the same because the leadership appears to lack the tenacity and the fortitude to rally themselves or the African American people.

Hopefully, this research will challenge African-American church and community leaders to examine the past efforts to bring about successful change through real leadership and organization. If the challenge is not met, there may be a continually downward spiral



of the African Americans toward an increasingly emotional and intellectual slavery. If church and community leaders are awakened, they may come to see that there is no alternative except to come together to preserve dignity, heritage, and culture.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Results and Analysis**

A qualitative research method was used for this study, utilizing individual interviews. The discussions were noted, recorded, transcribed, and led to an awareness of the crisis. A formulation of relevant ways to address these issues, and suggestions to take the necessary actions, were a direct result of this awareness. The information gained will serve to stimulate, equip, and empower pastors, and community leaders to bring about positive change within the African-American community of Jasper County, South Carolina.

The study surveyed six individuals: three African American men, one White man, and three African American women who represent education, social sciences, government, clergy and young adults. All participants were given pseudonyms beginning with participant one through six.

**Table 1: Summary of Participants Data**

1. James	68-72	Government	Black	Man
2. Mike	65-69	Pastor	Black	Man
3. Scott	61-67	Social Worker	White	Man
4. Kesha	45-51	Attorney	Black	Woman
5. Pam	19-25	Student	Black	Woman
6. Marnie	40-50	Administrator	Black	Woman

The participants ranged from 17 to 75 years of age. Their careers represent a cross-section of the community leadership. The researcher used direct quotations to connect the reader with the voices of the participants; thus, allowing their stories to emerge in the text. The researcher uses direct quotes to avoid filtering the words of the participants through the researcher's understanding and subjectivity and to avoid inserting another layer of interpretation. The participants spoke for themselves. This technique best allowed readers to gain insight into the participants' thoughts, observations, and perceptions without being guided by the researcher.

### **Research Questions**

The questions were a tool for uncovering common themes that surfaced from this inductive analysis of the issues. The researcher used this information to explore how pastors can come to a greater awareness of these matters: Is there a crisis occurring in Jasper County? Does racism exist in Jasper County? Are there strategic plans or an agenda for the advancement of Jasper County, being promoted by either the dominant or minority culture or do you see a joint effort? Is the current political machine working for the interests of all their constituents in Jasper County? What moral responsibility if any does the minority, and dominant cultures have toward each other, as it relates to empowering Jasper County? What can the minority community leaders do to bring awareness of injustice to the communities and articulate the communities concerns to the dominant culture in ways, which could lead to empowerment for all in the county? What role does the Palmetto Breeze Transit play in the hospitality industry?

### **Overarching Reoccurring Themes within the Interviews**

(Complete transcriptions of the interviews are in the appendix.)

**Question:** Is there a spirit of apathy and complacency?

**James:** “In the political climate, apathy is high because of the lack of understanding of the power that they have at the ballot box. They lack the knowledge of the absolute difference that they could make if they came together and pooled their efforts politically.”

**Keshia:** “Yes, there is apathy, especially among the young African American because of lack of jobs, lack of opportunities, and a sense of hopelessness.”

**Pam:** “Yes, there is a spirit of apathy. I feel this apathy in the African American community in Jasper County is because the current officials and laws do not reflect the African American community positively.”

**Marnie:** “The voice of the community seems to say we do not want to get involved; we are just not interested; we are just so far removed from what is going on.”

**Question:** Does racism exist in Jasper County?

**Pam:** “Racism does exist. African Americans are being bused to Hilton Head by the hundreds. When you think about it, they are busing people to slavery. Parents do not get to see or spend quality time with their child, which breeds another generation of undisciplined and uninformed young people. I believe this is a part of the overall plan by Whites.”

**Mike:** “African-Americans must endure, from employment to racial profiling.”

**Scott:** “You have a low graduation rate among African American high school students. They are dropping out and not migrating from the county. They are dropping out and staying here, but they are not engaged in anything. They are not involved in school; they do not participate in work and cannot find a job because they dropped out. If they cannot

find a job, they are going to Hilton Head working in the tourist service industry.” This seems to be the pattern of many of the African- American youth in Jasper County.

**Question:** How would you rate the leader's response to the crisis?

**Keshia:** “I would rate them a 3 because I have been at community meetings, and I see the level of involvement, and it is the same few people. When there is a council or school district meeting, you see the same individuals. They are labeled as troublemakers with a negative reputation. However, they are allowed on the agenda to speak because they are unable to mount a viable threat against the system.”

**James:** “Because it appears that the religious leaders seem to be so heavenly minded until they are no earthly good. I think they forget the fact that while they are the spiritual leaders, their parishioners must and will live here until they die. So why not provide the absolute best quality of life for your parishioners while they are here so that they will continue and enjoy a meaningful life. The leaders are not blending the gospel with the current events of the African-American community.”

**Keshia:** “I see no difference in the leaders because they seem to share the same mindset, community leaders' response to the overall crisis is poor. I think that it has to be some real concerted effort to do outreach and engagement of the average citizen, the youth, senior professionals, and the law enforcement. I think it has to be some coordinated plan and effort to do outreach so that people can have some ownership in the County concerning decisions and what African Americans think matters. Most African Americans feel that what they think does not matter.”

**Question:** In your opinion would you say there is a strategic plan that is an agenda for the advancement of Jasper County being promoted by either the dominant culture or the minority culture?

**James:** “Oh, there is a plan. Unfortunately, that plan does not include the majority, which is the minority. That is so unfortunate, and it appears as though we will not come together to understand that plan that does not include us.”

Mike: “I believe there is a plan. Just how strategic it is, I am not sure. There are plans in place to get Jasper County where it needs to go but there are a lot of obstacles in the way because of racism, or people do not want certain people to advance. No, the minorities do not have a plan per-say we operate mostly on reaction rather than being proactive we are reactive. No, there is no plan to advance anything in Jasper County. To get a plan, first we have to come together. Leaders have to give direction for people to follow. If not, it is like a ragtag assembly of people when nothing gets done. I think the apathy of the community is a result of not having a plan.”

**Question:** What do the minority leaders need to do to bring this awareness to the community?

**Kesha:** “I think African-American leaders need to reach the people who are voting age, the young people because they are the future. The role of young leaders should be to come together and spark change. I know a lot of young people do not vote. They should vote for the people they think should be in charge. They need to be able to spark conversations as to why things are the way they are. Why there is poverty in the county, why unemployment is the way it is, why they are so complacent, and refuse to engage in conversation about these issues.”

**Mike:** “Definitely, we need to stand up for our rights and voice our opinions with respect, courtesy, and love. Most of all we should do it in love, which would suggest we return to our ancestral roots. If we would look at the common denominator and work on that commonality, instead of the differences, there would be no threat coming from either side. First, you have to identify the moral issues and the factual problems. I think the pastors of these churches black and white need to sit down and look at some issues collectively and talk about interracial concerns.”

**James:** “The very first thing, it is imperative that leaders come together and get on one accord. So, they will be in a position to lead the people more efficiently. You cannot lead and follow at the same time. There is no such thing.”

**Question:** What are the moral responsibilities, if any, that the minority and dominant cultures have toward each other?

**James:** “Yes, there is a moral responsibility, and that moral responsibility is for the spiritual leaders and others who are concerned in the community to come together and help others to understand that we are brothers and sisters and each other’s, keeper.”

**Mike:** “All have a responsibility to look out for those who are misfortunate. We have a responsibility to help those who are less fortunate. If we do not think about those individuals how can we assist them? You cannot help if you do not consider their plight, to me that is what made the M.L.King Jr. so powerful because he appealed to the moral conscience of the nation. He knew he did not have the power to make them do anything but when he attacked their moral conscience that moved them into action.”

**Question:** What role does Palmetto Breeze transit play in the hospitality industry?

**Mike:** “When it comes to the industry in Jasper County, why is there no industry? The first thing, most of the industry in South Carolina goes to where Columbia says it is going. Then the question becomes why not Jasper County, maybe it is because we have got more pine trees down here than people. Hilton Head does not want Jasper County to have industry because it takes away from their workforce. Jasper County has been labeled as a hospitality industry county.”

**Marnie:** “They bus African-Americans mainly to cleaning positions, which have no means for any advancement per se, and it doesn't require a lot of education, and it's almost as though whites are trying to keep the African-American suppressed in Jasper County.”

**Scott:** “Simply because whites do not want it, they want to keep things the way they are, and this keeps the black people down while they thrive. That is how they stay wealthy by keeping the African-American so-called “in his place.”

**Keshia:** “Well, I think it is more like a slave ship. You know, pick the cargo up, take them to Hilton Head and bring the cargo back.”

**Question:** Does the current political machine work for all of his constituents?

**Mike:** “No. When we talk about a political machine we are talking about the elected officials. I think they use a broad brush to specify the needs and desires that affect the African-American community.”

**James:** “Absolutely not! We are too fragmented, and that is the major problem. Fragmentation will never bring about the desired positive results to make a significant difference or a measurable positive difference, because of this fragmentation, the dominant culture feels they do not have to address our issues.”



In regard to the participants' responses to the questions, the consensus was unanimous in all categories, suggesting racism exists: there is a strategic plan for Jasper County created by the dominant culture, and the current political machine favors the dominant culture's agenda. All participants stated both the dominant and the minority culture have obligations to each other, and they agreed that industries are intentionally being diverted to other counties to ensure workers for the tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore, based on this limited survey, there are disparities and racism at play in Jasper County, which possibly led to spirits of apathy, depression, complacency, hopelessness, and despair.

## **Chapter VII**

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In the twenty-first century, the suffocating air of apathy and complacency no longer has a place in the atmosphere of Jasper County, South Carolina. The air that lulled its African American pastors to sleep must dissipate so that pastors are reattached to their pews and leaders to their communities. Pastors play significant roles in cultivating successful churches and communities and are essential in shaping the conscience of the people. Thus, when pastors of Jasper County are consciously and spiritually awakened, they are better able to implement political freedom by stimulating, informing, and propelling its residents into actively participating in the economic, political, and social development and growth of its county.

### **Gaps in the Research**

#### **First Gap: The Acknowledgement of Racism**

There were two gaps in this research in addressing issues in Jasper County. One gap was African Americans' acknowledgement of racism and an understanding of the reality of the psychological impact of White supremacy that is ingrained in the White culture. Unbeknownst to many African Americans, there is an ingrained feeling of inferiority that is a direct result of White supremacist past tactics. However, understanding these hidden entrenched tactics and mindsets aids in African Americans' ability to navigate through the obstacles and fight to establish their voice. The statement "being aware of

racism in America” may sound trite; yet, it has eluded many African Americans because the system of racism has become so entrenched in the psyche. It has become the norm in everyday living, rendering many African Americans blind to what is happening before their eyes.

### **Reality of Racism: The Dominant Over the Oppressed**

There was a gap in the reality of the dominant culture over the oppressed. Some scholars and theologians may suggest that Black theology is not relevant to African Americans and marginalized individuals in the United States. They may believe that it leans too much toward liberation and not love, and they may argue that Black theology is not biblically or scripturally sound. Nevertheless, one of the core beliefs of Black theology is that of victimology which is an adoption of victimhood as the core of one’s identity and is a direct result of poverty, low self-esteem, complacency, discrimination, and all forms of oppression from racism. Victimology is a present reality that must never be downplayed as being irrelevant in today’s society. Black theology can be compared to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that has its share of flaws, with room for improvements, as with any endeavor. Yet, by no means does it need to be totally gutted or abandoned. The concept of both Black theology and the ACA are built on the solid foundations of truth, liberation, and a genuine concern for humanity.

James Cone argues:

What deepens my anger today is the appalling silence of white theologians on racism in the United States and the modern world.” Whereas this silence has been partly broken in secular disciplines, theology remains virtually mute. From Jonathan Edwards to Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr to the present, progressive white theologians, with few exceptions, write and teach as if they do not need to address the radical contradiction that racism creates for Christian theology. White supremacy is so widespread that it becomes a “natural” way of viewing the world. We must ask, therefore: is racism so deeply embedded in your

own American history and culture that it is impossible to do theology without being anti- black? <sup>1</sup>

In other words, White supremacy exists in every facet of American life and calls on all African American leaders to develop an enduring race critique that is so comprehensively woven into the Christian understanding that no one will be able to project the horrible crimes of White supremacy in the modern world.<sup>2</sup> This may sound radical and demanding, but both are necessary in their rawest forms to make an impact on the seriousness of this issue. An early example of the White supremacist movement was the reversal of the gains made by African Americans during the Reconstruction era. The backlash against the gains were swift and severe. As African Americans obtained political power and began the long march toward greater social and economic equality, White people responded with panic and outrage. Southern conservatives vowed to reverse the reconstruction and “abolition the Freedmen's Bureau and all political instrumentalities designed to secure Negro supremacy.”<sup>3</sup>

The White's campaign to redeem the South was reinforced by a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, who fought a terrorist campaign against reconstructing governments, was complete with bombing, lynching, and mob violence. The terrorist campaign proved extraordinarily successful. “Redemption” resulted in the withdrawal of federal troops from the South and the effective abandonment of African Americans and all those who had

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<sup>1</sup> James H. Cone, *Risk of Faith: The Emergence of Black Theology of Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, Boston), 130- 131.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>3</sup> John H. Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Africans Americans*, 8th ed., (New York: Longman Publisher, 2000), 82.

fought for or supported an egalitarian racial order.<sup>4</sup> Today, there has been a massive resurgence of hate groups that include the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nation, the Christian Identity, the National Socialist Party, the American Freedom Party, the White Patriot Party, and the National Association for the Advancement of White People. In fact, it is estimated that there are over 800 White hate groups in America; therefore, it is incumbent upon African American leaders, especially in Jasper County, to be aware of them and their covert activities because these organizations are flourishing and thriving and moving forward unconstrained with their agendas.

Also, there needs to be an assessment of White Christianity. The first generation of Black theologians that includes James H. Cone, J. Deotis Roberts, S. Gayraud Wilmore, Major J. Jones, and Albert Cleage, Jr. established a broad base for a critique of White Christian institutions and religions. They declared their independence from their White Christian counterparts and made the establishment of a theology that was accountable to the Black experience. It became the task of the second generation of Black theologians like Dwight N. Hopkins, Joshua Young, Kelly D. Brown-Douglas, Willie E. Coleman, and George C. L. Cummings, to further elaborate on the specific characteristics of a Black theology.

### **Racism and the Media: A Textual Analysis of the Power of Deception**

In recent years new voices have arisen to continue the work begun by the earlier pioneers and to further elaborate on the specific contours of a contemporary Black

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<sup>4</sup> Mitchell Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 30-31.

theology.<sup>5</sup> African American leaders in Jasper County must, as Nehemiah, learn from the mistakes of earlier Black theologians and build on the strengths that they introduced into the African American culture. Pastors have a God ordained responsibility to be the voice for the oppressed and must become aware of their communal identities in order to understand the essence of African Americans. From these understandings, pastors are then able to empathize with the marginalized and oppressed. This understanding can be revealed to them as they struggle to find their communal and individual identities. However, before church leaders of this study can be effective in conscientizing others of the reality of White supremacy and racism, they, themselves, must have a working knowledge of these terms. Christine Smith, a White theologian, acknowledges the importance of recognizing White supremacy for what it is. She gives a brief description of its dynamics and its appearance to equip leaders with the raw knowledge of White supremacy and the dangers of its definition:

As an ideology, supremacy is the philosophy and belief individuals are superior. White racism is the systematic denial, oppression, and domination of persons on the basis of race. To focus on white racism is to locate the problems and responsibility of racist domination and exploitation with white people... To describe more fully the complex violations of white supremacy and white racism, the reality of cultural imperialism must be addressed. White supremacy seeks to suppress, control, and annihilate the cultural values, symbols, languages, and social mores of persons and communities that are not white. Cultural imperialism and ethnocentrism can be viciously blatant and can also be insidiously quiet.<sup>6</sup>

Then, there is the media. In the twenty-first century, America, the media has power to subliminally promote racism. Understanding the power of this medium, as President

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<sup>5</sup> George C. L. Cumming, James H. Cone, and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History* Volume II. (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 71.

<sup>6</sup> Christine M. Smith. *Preaching as Weeping, Concessions and Resistance: Racial Response to Racial Evil*, Encountering Handicapism, Ageism, Heterosexism, Sexism, White Racism, Classism, (Louisville: Westminster-Knox Press, 1992), 111-121.

Donald Trump has, can prove to be fruitful and highly beneficial, even if the messages make no sense or are false. According to “Racism and the Media: A Textual Analysis:”

In one form or another, the media influences the majority of the population in the United States. With the advancement of technology, the impacts of mass media are profound. Most people utilize some form of media in their lives every day. Media affects our beliefs, assumptions, public ideology, as well as our experiences. Their study found a relationship between the prior exposure to information, often related to the strength of attitude, on the subject and the degree to which the information affects our beliefs and opinions. Those who had been least exposed to either subject were most open to adjusting their views, and conversely, those who arrived at the groups with most exposure were least likely to have their opinions changed by the new information. This was the case even if the information they had been exposed to was polarized or inaccurate.<sup>7</sup>

This analysis suggests people who have never been exposed to the new information were more likely to change their opinions, while individuals that did have knowledge or an opinion about information given to them would be less liable to change their views, even if the information is incorrect or false. This dynamic has been played out in the Trump election of 2016. Trump’s media strategist subliminally appealed to the ingrained White supremacist culture that exists in White Americans. Despite the overtness of this tactic, it proved to be highly effective, even though many White Americans would deny the fact that this ingrained belief or feeling is real. The analysis suggests that their reactions, unbeknown to them, have been hardwired in them from their culture.

### **The Second Gap: The Media’s Role**

An advisory board for race relations in the Clinton Administration found that White Americans are oblivious to the racism that is ingrained in them. They concluded that, “racial inequality is so deeply ingrained in the American society that they are nearly

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<sup>7</sup> Racism and the Media: A Textual Analysis - SOPHIA,  
[http://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1478&context=msw\\_papers](http://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1478&context=msw_papers) (accessed January 02, 2017).

invisible, and White Americans are unaware of the advantages that they enjoy in the society, and how their attitudes and actions unintentionally discriminate against persons of color.”<sup>8</sup> This report states that racial inequality is a reality, whether intentional or unintentional. But despite the intentionality, when racism is displayed in the media, it stirs up ingrained emotions on both sides. Therefore, when the reality of racism is exposed through social media, it stirs up the deep-rooted pain of struggle and inequality for African Americans. However, this awareness should become a catalyst to motivate African Americans into action as they wake up and begin to feel the pain that they naïvely thought was gone. The future of African Americans in the United States hinges on leadership, awareness, and understanding of the full spectrum of racial dynamics, which are occurring in Jasper County. The methods in which information is gathered and disseminated among the African American communities through television, radio, newspapers, and other forms of literature are effective means for sharing information. Nonetheless, the new paradigm in the twenty-first century is proving to be social media. In one of his speeches, Malcolm X stated, “The media’s the most powerful entity on earth. It has the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, which is power. They control the minds of the masses.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the media plays a role.

### **The Role of Social Media**

The Arnold School of Public Health’s Department of Health Services Policy and Management, and the Institute for Partnerships to Eliminate Health Disparities (IPEHD),

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<sup>8</sup> Racism and the Media: A Textual Analysis - SOPHIA, [http://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1478&context=msw\\_papers](http://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1478&context=msw_papers), accessed January 02, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Malcolm X Quote - Famous Quotes, Proverbs and Sayings, [http](http://www.famousquotes.com/quote/1478), accessed January 04, 2017.



along with South Carolina Department of Health, and Environmental Control's Office of Minority Health hosted the 9th Annual James E. Clyburn Health Disparities Lecture on Friday, April 1, 2016 at the University of South Carolina Alumni Center. The keynote presentation was by the President of the American Public Health Association, Camara Jones, MD, Ph.D., MPH.<sup>10</sup> The theme of this lecture was "100 Years of Health Disparities: Is There a Will to Improve the Health Status of All?" Jones challenged a deeply engaged audience to uncover, rediscover, or ignite the will to eliminate inequities and address the pervasive racism that has dominated the United States for centuries. She also pointed out that not everyone who needs to be a part of the conversation was in the room or was aware of the disparity.<sup>11</sup> So, part of the audience's charge, she noted, was to engage others in this effort.<sup>12</sup> The issue of African Americans being disconnected from the systems that are designed to protect and assist them is real. Whether its politics, healthcare, education, or economics, the disconnection appears to be the same.

Also, Jones challenged her audience to engage in uncovering, rediscovering, and igniting "the will" to eliminate inequality, and address the pervasive racism in the country by engaging others; however, physical presence, one-on-one dialogue, and town hall meetings are necessary and effective. The venue of social media is the new paradigm for disseminating information to the masses effectively, especially the African Americans 40 and below. She asserts:

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/public\\_health/about/news/2016/clyburn2](https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/about/news/2016/clyburn2), accessed January 04, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/public\\_health/about/news/2016](http://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/about/news/2016), accessed January 04, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.asph.sc.edu/health\\_disparities/news.shtml](http://www.asph.sc.edu/health_disparities/news.shtml), accessed January 04, 2017.

When you start asking and addressing these kinds of questions, you are now doing something that is quite distinct from addressing the social determinants of health...you are now addressing the social determinants of equity... “where these social determinants of equity are systems of power-systems that are powerful enough to distribute resources and populations, and they include racism and sexism and heterosexism, and economic systems like capitalism.”<sup>13</sup>

This profound message of discrimination must be shared with the masses to promote awareness and change, utilizing social media.

The Obama campaign illustrated the massive, meaningful impact that social media can have on getting young people engaged and involved. mybarackobama.com was not merely a website; it was a movement that made politics accessible through social media which people were already using every day. It changed the face of political campaigns forever; but even more so, it made getting involved as easy as opening up an internet browser and creating an online profile. Above all, The Obama campaign made history: It showed the power of social media to do nothing short of changing the world.<sup>14</sup>

President Trump also tapped into the powerful tool of social media. His social media campaign resonated profoundly with groups of White Americans who rallied to his language: “Make America Great Again” and “Take Our Country Back,” represented middle and low-income White Americans who were disgruntled about the economy and the direction of the country. However, the economy may not have been the primary reason for their support of Trump. It may be a direct result of ingrained racism that many White Americans deny exist within their culture.

## Conclusion

The interviews conducted during this study revealed there is a consensus that racism exist in Jasper County and is demonstrated by the dominant White culture through

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> How Obama Won with Social Media | The Dragonfly Effect, <http://dragonflyeffect.com/blog/dragonfly-in-action/case-studies/the-obama-campa> , accessed January 04, 2017.

racial profiling, discrimination, and a strategic plan to economically impoverish African Americans and minorities through economic, political, and social systems and through efforts to disrupt the African American family and to keep their community divided. However, this is not to say that all members of the dominant cultures are racist.

The research also suggests the dominant culture has an agenda to control the economic, political, and social climates of the county. This could include land management, zoning, and the buying and selling of properties. The participants agreed that the emergence of new Charter schools could have a negative effect on the public school system, which is approximately 90% African American. An important consensus was that of an awareness of the lack of meaningful jobs in the immediate area, which has led to the massive busing of adults to menial jobs and has kept parents away from their children 14 to 16 hours per day—often five days a week. As a result, this has led to some children raising children, some youth seeking family in gangs, and far too often, low school performance. Frequently, there is a lack of proper nutrition, and a seemingly never-ending cycle of poverty.

With the use of Butler's TAACIF, it became evident that there is a need for a refreshed awareness of the importance of clarity in understanding the essence of the African American identity, which can renew constructive arguments among the leaders in the community. In addition, the renewed awareness of the importance of defining communal identity in the context of African-American heritage seemed to be a motivating force for the majority of the participants. Four of the participants have reported they have shared the information concerning communal identity with others within their circles. They reported their information sparked in-depth conversations concerning African American

heritage. In addition, pastors have vowed to speak more on relevant social justice issues during speaking engagements. All the participants state they have been reminded of the importance of finding communal and individual identities and without this understanding, African Americans lack the foundation needed to stand against the oppressors.

The understanding of the African American identity is somewhat reminiscent of the civil rights movement during the 60s when Jesse Jackson and others gave a sense of identity to African Americans through the affirmation, “I am somebody.” Although a total understanding of all the dynamics that came along with that affirmation may not have been there, just repeating those words has power. An understanding of communal identity is a proven source of uniting, educating, and empowering a people into action. Just as the civil rights movement in the 60s utilized this concept to galvanize its movement, so can African American pastors and community leaders in Jasper County adopt the concept within the context of the demographics of the community to educate individuals of the importance of unity and how African Americans lives are intertwined. Therefore, TAACIF is beneficial for the community because it is a tool to be used to bring African Americans together in positive ways that promote change for the future generation.

Conscientizing African American pastors to critically explore the cultures of others can lead to a systemic approach to understanding the dominant culture. This awareness has the power to bring knowledge that can lead to authentically formulated strategies to revive the community and empower the minorities in Jasper County which must stem from the recognition of the ingrained racism that exists in both dominant and minority cultures. Specifically, within the dominant culture, the future of the African American community in Jasper County hinges on pastors and community leaders developing a comprehensive

understanding of that ingrained racism because it is beneficial in the navigation through the maze of cultural differences, realities, preconceived notions, and misinformation regarding culture. Furthermore, to combat the political, economic, and social challenges, pastors and community leaders must come to a consensus that racism exists in Jasper County. Also, they should understand strategies that are designed to advance the dominant culture in order to counteract their tactics. Educating the community about voting, school redistricting, Charter schools, heritage, personal finances, and the selling of their properties is an essential counteraction.

Historically, the Black Church has been a major influence in the family and in the economic, political, social, and in the education of the African American community. It was the meeting place for every major and minor concern within the community. In the family, it was a place for retreats and reunions in the form of big meetings or camp meetings when all members came together to rebound and to worship for days at a time. During that time, the church was a safe haven and the hub of all transactions. Thus, the Black Church in Jasper County must resume its role and responsibility of leadership in the African American community. Overall, church members must be willing to follow the pastors who strive to empower communities through their examples. Pastors must also be aware of the church's reservation to follow because of poor leadership in the past. However, if pastors lead with integrity and truth, the church will more likely rally behind them.

Social media is important to bring awareness. This was seen in Barack Obama social media strategy, which was successfully used in both presidential elections of 2008 and 2012. The objective is to use the media to engage young adults by promoting fun events such as concerts, consisting of local talent, dances, cookouts, and political rallies. The

young adults should organize these events; all speakers will be of the millennial generation. Older adults will serve as facilitators over the projects. It is important that the ideals originate from the young people, and they are active in the events from their inception to completion. In this way they may claim ownership. If successful, the political climate can be brought back in balance by getting fresh minds involved in the process and not by simply putting African Americans in office, which has been the preferred option. However, if qualified African Americans are not in place, moderate candidates, who stand a chance to win and have the African American community at heart, should be promoted and backed at all costs. While African Americans began to groom individuals for local offices, getting young minds involved in the local branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Democratic Party, and in creating their own organizations is key.

It is pivotal that leaders, who have come to this awareness of the new age, support our youth by underwriting them, financially, through local civic organizations, private donations, church unions, and associations in the county. The time has come to pass the baton to the next generation and support them as they struggle to make a difference morally, physically, spiritually, and financially by stepping out on faith and facing the challenges before them. The passing of the baton of responsibility and leadership is at a crucial juncture in the history of African Americans. Therefore, our young people are the new lifeblood and will become the salvation of our culture. The time has come to systematically train our young adults for the task ahead, being fully aware that time is not a luxury.

In brief, it is the responsibility of African American pastors and community leaders of Jasper County, South Carolina to enlighten all residents to the realities of systematic and

systemic racism and organized and methodical injustice. The methods of communication cannot be with drums and old Negro spirituals as our ancestors used but rather through means of technology that include Zoom meeting, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Black Planet, and more. Pastors and community leaders of Jasper County can no longer be lulled to sleep but rather play significant roles in fostering thriving churches and communities. The ancestors told the story, and the story must now be passed on, for there is a divine awakening for such a time as this.

## **Appendix**



## **Introduction Letter**

Dear Prospective Participant:

My name is Cleveland Stokes, and I am a student in the Doctor of Ministry program at The Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta Georgia; presently I am conducting research as part of the requirements for my doctorate degree. I am writing this request for your participation in my research study about, “Awaking a Community by Conscientizing the African-American Church and Community Leaders of Its Dominant Culture’s agenda. I have considered you eligible to participate in this study because you are presently functioning as a pastor, community leader, social worker, or a concerned citizen.

The purpose of this study is to conscientize the African-American and church and community leaders in Jasper County, concerning the inevitability of negative change coming to these communities, which appears to be a result of racism and of the dominant culture’s agenda to control the political, economic, and geographical aspects of Jasper County. All information obtained will be used and shared with faculty Professors at the Interdenominational Theological Center. No participant name, church name, or physical address will be mentioned in this survey; all information obtained will be held confidential and anonymous.

Rev. Cleveland Stokes M.Div.

## **Consent Form**

**The Interdenominational Theological Center Academic Department:**

**Doctor of Ministry**

### **Title of the Research:**

AWAKENING A COMMUNITY FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS:  
CONSCIENTIZING THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH AND COMMUNITY  
LEADERS IN JASPER COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

You were selected as a possible participant because you are a citizen or worker of Jasper County and have shown an interest in the future of the community. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to conscientize the African-American and Community leaders in Jasper County, concerning the inevitability of change coming to these communities, this change appears to be a result of racism and of the dominant culture's agenda to control the political, economic, and geographical aspects of Jasper County. Also, to examine the reasons why these communities appear to have become apathetic in their response to these agendas.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:  
Grant me no more than 90 minutes to interview you at a place of your choosing and time and follow-up later.

I will ask seven questions concerning racial, political, economic, moral, education, and geographical aspects of Jasper County. I request that you be open and honest with your

answers.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risks are minimal and are no more than you would encounter in everyday life. Names will remain anonymous. No information will be printed in ways, which could be traced back to its source. The benefits to participation could lead to the formulation of strategies, which could empower the masses and motivate them into action.

**Compensation:**

There will be no financial compensation for your participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be secured. In any report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All collected research material will not be shared with anyone or sold to any corporation for monetary gain.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with The Interdenominational Theological Center. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contact:**

**Dissertation Project Chairperson**

Charles E. Thomas Jr., PhD  
Vice President of Administrative Services Interdenominational Theological Center  
700 Martin King Jr. Drive, SW  
Atlanta, GA 30314

Tel: 404-527-7711  
Cell: 404-502-3606

**Researchers**

Cleveland Stokes 803.942.0765, or email  
clevelandstokes24@outlook.com

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, please submit your request, and I will connect you to the proper authorities.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers.

I agreed to participate: YES/NO

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Interview**

### **DOES RACISM EXIST IN JASPER COUNTY?**

**Pam**

Racism does exist, the public schools are predominantly black, and the whites go to private schools. There is a lot of racism in my view on the political scene because most of the people who are in charge are white. Since they are in charge, they do things to better their community or their parts of the county.

African-Americans are being bused to Hilton Head by the hundreds. When you think about it, they are busing people to slavery. Those people get up 5 o'clock in the morning and do not get home to 8 o'clock at night; it is like slavery. Parents do not get to see or spend quality time with their child, which breeds another generation of undisciplined and uninformed young people. I believe this is a part of the overall plan by whites.

**Mike**

New businesses are bringing in individuals from the white race using the good old boy system, somebody that knows somebody while minorities get the menial jobs. There is no advertisement of these jobs that they might get the best-qualified candidate, which may or may not be black the fact of the matter is that there is no announcement.

Racism exists and is evident in the many forms of discrimination, which African-Americans must endure, from employment to racial profiling. The racism that exists is a heart or a moral issue. I cannot stop you from being a racist, but I can prevent you from saying what I can do about it. Is racism alive and active in Jasper County? Yes, however, African-Americans possess the power to stand against this racism in all of its forms. We have to become aware of racism then do something about it.

**Scott**

Jasper County is not unlike the rest of America. Racism exists in America, and because of this racism, African Americans and people of color are impoverished.

Economically, the unemployment rate is high; affordable housing is non-existent. There is a high crime rate, high incidents of unsolved homicide. You got a high dropout rate of 45% for high school students. They are dropping out of school, but they are not moving away. They are not dropping out and migrating. They are dropping out and staying here, but they are not engaged in anything. They are not involved in school; they do not participate in work and cannot find a job because they dropped out. If they find a job, they are going to Hilton Head working in the tourist service industry.

This seems to be the pattern of many of the African-American youth in Jasper County. This model appears to be one of the unspoken plans, which is utilized to maintain an unskilled workforce for the tourist industry in Hilton Head and the surrounding areas. Also, there is no industry in Jasper County simply because whites do not want it, they want to keep things the way they are, and this keeps the black people down while they thrive. That is how they stay wealthy by keeping the African-American so-called “in his place.”

**James**

Racism is always raising its ugly head, and it appears as though too many of us in the minority community allow others to undermine us and bring division in the minority community. One of the most effective tools that the dominant culture has used over the years is to divide and conquer. This tactic has been used by dominant cultures throughout the world to maintain control over their empires and has proven to be a highly effective strategy used in Jasper County.

**Marnie**

Yes, I think to some degree it does, but it is so subtle it is kind of hard to pick it up, it is not as blatant as it has been. We kind of do some little undercover kinds of racism, for example when you go to the stores, there are some individuals, who tend to follow certain people as they come in. When I say, individuals, I mean mostly African-American, especially young blacks are being stereotyped and targeted.

Racial profiling is an offensive weapon used by the dominant culture to target and to get young African-American men into the judicial system. What this does is, it labels them, it is a way to strip young African-American men of their voice, their dignity, their abilities to lead so-called respectable lives in American society.

**ON A SCALE 1 TO 10, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE COMMUNITY'S  
RESPONSE TO THE ISSUES?**

**Marnie**

A four, as I said before we lose trust for our people because we say we'll vote for you, but when we get in the booth, we make a decision that is different based on feelings and not necessarily on actually knowing. What we base our decision on is what we hear and what we feel. The community appears not to care.

**Pam**

I would rate them a three because I feel that people do not care because they will not stand up to the white politicians and because of apathy and maybe fear!

James

I would say two minus and let me share with you why two minus. Because the minority represents the majority in this county, we do not have the majority of persons, in the majority, with interest and concerns to come forth to make a difference so that they can be represented as the majority in the county.

**Keshea**

I would rate them a three because I have been at community meetings and I see the level of involvement, and it is the same few people. When there is a councilor school district meeting, you see the same individuals. They are labeled as troublemakers with a negative reputation. However, they are allowed on the agendas to speak because they are unable to mount a viable threat against the system.

**HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE LEADERS AND COMMUNITY ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 IN RESPONSE TO THIS ISSUE?**

**James**

A three, because it appears that the religious leaders seem to be so heavenly minded until they are no earthly good. I think they forget the fact that while they are the spiritual leaders, their parishioners must and will live here until they die. So why not provide the absolute best quality of life for your parishioners while they are here so that they will continue and enjoy a meaningful life. The leaders are not blending the gospel with the current events of the African-American community.

**Keshea**

A two, I see no difference in the leaders because they seem to share the same mindset.



**Scott**

Poor. I think that it has to be some real concerted effort to do outreach and engagement of the average citizen, the youth, senior professionals, and the law enforcement. I think there has to be some coordinated plan and effort to do outreach so that people can have some ownership in the County concerning decisions and what African-Americans think matters. Most African-Americans feel that what they think does not matter.

**DO YOU SENSE A SPIRIT OF APATHY?****Marnie**

The voice of the community seems to say we do not want to get involved; we are just not interested; we are just so far removed from what is going on. It's just like all the different shootings and all the things that are happening that you see on TV, you see in the surrounding counties and unless it hits home it's like we just don't want to get involved and as long as it doesn't affect me directly, it doesn't matter.

**Pam**

Yes, there is a spirit of apathy. I feel this apathy in the African-American community in Jasper County is because the current officials and laws do not reflect the African-American community positively. Things are changing for the worst, and I think because the African-Americans feel they are not a part of the modification, they allow the white powers to do as they please. Few people in Jasper County voice their opinions. They do not voice their views in town Council, school boards, and other meetings

because they feel, maybe that is not their place to say something since they have not been doing it in the past, so why should they start now.

**Keshea**

Yes, there is apathy especially among the young African-American because of lack of jobs, lack of opportunities and a sense of hopelessness. I think it is just the culture which we live in today especially with young African-American men, who seem to be targeted.

**James**

In the political climate, apathy is high because of the lack of understanding of the power that they have at the ballot box. They lack the knowledge of the absolute difference that they could make if they came together and pooled their efforts politically. And educationally you have the very same thing. I think they would like for their children to do well but do not know what they need to do, to make certain that they do well.

**Keshea**

I think it is evident by the African-Americans inability to get involved. They do not vote, they do not come out to the polls, when you have a town meeting or community meeting or when the candidates are presenting their platforms the community is not present. The disengagement of the community, in my opinion, promotes this atmosphere of apathy.

I do not think this apathy is unique to Jasper County. I believe it is more evident there because the economic status of the residence in Jasper County is more marginalized than it is in other places in the LowCountry. People are struggling with basic needs, and they do not think their vote, or their input makes a difference.

This apathy disconnects them from policy, and decision making in the community and this apathy perpetuates itself because young people do not see their parents engaged or involved, so they too become disconnected. They do not understand why they should be involved. There is no role modeling, no mentorship, leadership programs that I know of that engage youth in a public way.

**IN YOUR OPINION WOULD YOU SAY THERE IS A STRATEGIC PLAN ARE AN AGENDA FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JASPER COUNTY BEING PROMOTED BY EITHER THE DOMINANT CULTURE OR THE MINORITY CULTURE?**

**James**

Oh, there is a plan. Unfortunately, that plan does not include the majority, which is the minority. That is so unfortunate, and it appears as though we will not come together to understand that plan that does not include us.

**Keshea**

No, I do not think there is a plan among minorities, and among the dominant culture, the program is not inclusive of all the citizens of Jasper County.

**Mike**

I believe there is a plan, just how strategic it is, I am not sure. There are plans in place to get Jasper County where it needs to go but there are a lot of obstacles in the way because of racism, or people do not want certain people to advance. There has been a plan to improve the school system, but without funding, they will not be able to do it. The plans are in place, but nobody is following the plan. Is it possible that the scheme is not to

follow the plan? No, I think what happens is the mindset of those of the dominant culture is not to achieve certain things, it is not down on paper, but it is a reality within them.

Does the minority culture have a plan for the betterment of Jasper County? No, the minorities do not have a plan per-say we operate mostly on reaction rather than being proactive we are reactive. No, there is no plan to advance anything in Jasper County. To get a plan first, we have to come together. Leaders have to give direction for people to follow if not it is like a ragtag assembly of people when nothing gets done. I think the apathy of the community is a result of not having a plan.

## **HOW CAN LEADERS BRING ABOUT CHANGE?**

### **Pam**

I think African-American leaders need to reach the people who are voting age, the young people because they are the future. African-Americans in Jasper County do not vote; they do not want their voices to be heard. Many of the youth have not been taught the importance of voting when they do not see progress being made they wonder what difference it would make if they voted, nothing ever changes.

### **Mike**

First, you have to identify the moral issues and the factual problems. I think the pastors of these churches black and white need to sit down, look at some issues collectively, and talk about interracial concerns. Such as why there is so much tension among the Blacks and Whites in Jasper County?

Whites can be more tolerant of Blacks and Blacks can be more tolerant to Whites and not be so accusatory toward each other. Not many black folks have examined the

dynamics of the culture of whites, and likewise, most white culture has not assessed the dynamics of the black culture. Northern whites especially those who have moved to Hilton Head and Bluffton have no idea what rural African Americans and rural White America cultures are about.

**Pam**

The role of young leaders should be to come together and spark change. I know many young people do not vote. They should vote for the people they think should be in charge. They need to be able to spark conversations as to why things are the way they are. Why there is poverty in the county, why unemployment is the way it is, why they are so complacent, and refuse to engage in conversation about these issues.

**Mike**

One thing lacking in our leadership as African-Americans is an understanding of the dominant culture; we look at them as slave drivers coming in and trying to take over. All they are doing is trying to better the community and want to do it from their perspective, not yours, not ours because we will not voice our opinion. They cannot stop the voice of the African-American, we allow them to stop our voices because we do not express our opinions. They are going to move forward unimpeded in the direction that they want to go, this is no fault of theirs, they are simply who they are. I am not condoning their actions, but that is the reality. Deftly we need to stand up for our rights and voice our opinions with respect, courtesy, and love. Most of all we should do it in love, which would suggest we return to our ancestral roots. If we would look at the common denominator and work on that commonality, instead of the differences, there would be no threat coming from either side.

**James**

The very first thing, it is imperative that leaders come together and get on one accord. So, they will be in a position to lead the people more efficiently. You cannot lead and follow at the same time. There is no such thing. I think that we have too many leaders with their personal agenda opposed to understanding the need for them to come together and reach out to the masses.

The dominant culture is going to ignore the African-American community, until the minority culture comes together, unite, and let them know we are not going to tolerate anything less than what we rightfully deserve.

The community leader can galvanize the people by teaching the truth and living this same truth. They can do things in their community on an ongoing basis to engage the community recipients, encouraging them to vote. Try to come up with forums, focus groups, interviews, outreach, which could be used to get a pulse on what people think and feel about certain issues. One thing I see happening is people take surveys, and they want to know your opinion. But, no one ever comes back and says what the study revealed. No one shares the finding with the community.

## **WHAT ROLE DOES PALMETTO BREEZE TRANSIT PLAY IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY?**

**Mike**

When is it an industry? The first thing is most of the industry in South Carolina goes to where Columbia says it is going. Then the question becomes why not Jasper County, maybe it is because we have got more pine trees down here than people.

We do not have the political clout in Columbia to dictate where these industries go. The people that do look at this area look at a couple of things: the political makeup of this County when I bring my industry in here, how is it going to affect my taxes, and will I be able to find qualified people with the educational level that I need to work. The two things are the taxes and having the people in place to be employed.

Also, if they do not see a predominantly white council, they will shy away from that area. A White controlled County will lock in the industry. If you go anywhere throughout South Carolina, you will see this scenario.

### **Scott**

Hilton Head does not want Jasper County to have industry because it takes away from their workforce. Jasper County has been labeled as a hospitality industry county. It puts a damper on the amount of viable industry that comes into Jasper County because it takes away from the Hilton Head-Bluffton and coastal areas that rely on the unskilled labor of the minorities in this county. The school districts are subpar and the powers that be are not willing to give any incentives to draw these industries into the county.

It provides employment because most of the people that are being transported do not have the transportation to get to the hospitality jobs. So, the Low Country Transit Authority has invested in the bus service to keep the hospitality industry viable. They are even advertising overseas to Japan and China to bring young people to go to work under false pretenses, promising them life in the resort town, for them only to find they are working for a menial wage and living far from the resort area. Being bused to work and back daily.

### **Marnie**

They bus African-Americans mainly to cleaning positions, which have no means for any advancement per se, and it does not require a lot of education, and it's almost as though whites are trying to keep the African-American suppressed in Jasper County. Our children are becoming statistics; I see more young parents, more young children being parents. I see the average age of a grandparent being anywhere between 45 and 55 as opposed to 50 maybe 60 years old. At the rate we are going, I do not see a bright future for African Americans not only in Jasper but this in general because we refused as the older generation to train them as we were.

**Keshe**

Well, I think it is more like a slave ship. You know, pick the cargo up, take them to Hilton Head and bring the cargo back. They have expanded their business model. They need to work in the county so they can have a county-wide transportation system that is affordable. I do not think they are affordable to the average person. I think the county or the state or somebody needs to subsidize so that somebody can get on the bus and go from Jasper County to Beaufort County and work paying \$6 going.

**DOES THE CURRENT POLITICAL MACHINE WORK FOR ALL OF HIS  
CONSTITUENTS?**

**Mike**

No, when we talk about a political machine we are talking about the elected officials. I think they use a broad brush to specify the needs and desires that affect the African-American community. When we look at unemployment compared to whites and



underemployed because wages are so low. I do not think the political climate or movers and shakers are taking these factors into consideration when making laws and policies.

**James**

Absolutely not! We are too fragmented, and that is the major problem.

Fragmentation will never bring about the desired positive results to make a significant difference or a measurable positive difference, because of this fragmentation, the dominant culture feels they do not have to address our issues.

### **WHAT ARE THE MORAL RESPONSIBILITIES IF ANY DOES THE MINORITY AND DOMINANT CULTURES HAVE TOWARD EACH OTHER?**

**James**

Yes, there is a moral responsibility, and that moral responsibility is for the spiritual leaders and others who are concerned in the community to come together and help others to understand that we are brothers and sisters and each other's keeper.

**Mike**

All have a responsibility to look out for those who are misfortunate. We have a responsibility to help those who are less fortunate. If we do not think about those individuals how can we assist them? You cannot help if you do not consider their plight, to me that is what made the King so powerful because he appealed to the moral conscience of the nation. He knew he did not have the power to make them do anything, but when he attacked their moral conscience, that moved them into action.

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