

How black churches have contributed to the black community socially, economically...

[Politics](#)



The black church dates back to mid eighteenth century when Richard Allen and Absalom Jones from Philadelphia founded the Free African Society. Since then, the black church has played a very pivotal role in uniting the black American community.

As the church grew, it became the centre of community based development where people could respond to every day issues and initiate solutions. For example, some of the long-standing churches of the northern blacks, many of which were middle class and Baptist or Methodist, tried to introduce recent immigrants to the northern life via different educational mechanisms. They conducted training on how to behave in public gatherings among others. While some apparently ignored the new coming migrants, and choose to advance their race by cultivating cultural, intellectual and economic prospects, others coordinated measures to help their fellow race men.

As a result the church of the southern immigrants, majority of them belonging to lower class coordinated travel, job searching, temporary lodgings for newcomers, and other services in addition to offering sociability and spirituality.

Subsequently, the birth of secular black community came into effect providing entirely new fronts for socializing, and an arena for social discussions on the meaning of race and goals of racial development.

Black churches qualify as spaces for black counter-public. It is in these public spaces where the potential of black church is manifested. Public spaces such as churches creates a platform where African Americans belief themselves to be exclusively in the company of other African Americans. These places are

unique because African Americans come together as a result of their blackness in a manner not exhibited in other counter-public arenas. It is at such places that in addition to the primary goal of worshipping God, they feel as sense of membership and being at home. The togetherness they feel when attending black churches is far much unique that race has become a fundamental condition for togetherness. Barbershops and beauty salons subsequently fall in the category as black churches and play the same roles of facilitating black social gatherings.

Black churches became incubation centers behind schools, business enterprises, clarity, and recreation. Urban churches in essence engage in outreach services encouraging congregants to help reform prison facilities, visit hospitals and help the sick, and provide food and clothing for the indigent. In some instances, black churches founded schools, hospitals, and nursing homes. Schools became the first initiatives to be supported by churches. These advances were aimed at developing advancements of freed men and women who will subsequently advance the education level of African Americans.

Post slavery economic problems among the poor and near poor blacks necessitated the Black Church response to meet temporal needs. Slavery and racial discrimination affected the economic capability of most African Americans. The limited or lack of knowledge among them and the fact that many black churches were located in poor urban neighborhoods meant that organizational resources economic were directed at economic outreach programs.

Thus, a self help tradition was promoted in these neighborhoods fueled by

the biblical teaching where Christ feed the masses before he taught them. Thus, black Christians were encouraged to support the less privileged in society. This specifically applied to African American masses who in spite of being dilapidated by poverty, had to fight against slavery, freedom and equality.

Statistics show that black churches provided economic support to the poor back then and now. In the early black churches, Mays and Nicholson found that 97% of the churches provided economic relief for the poor and the less fortunate while 2. 1% fed the jobless and about 1% provided medical facilities and other benevolent services. Recently, Andrew showed that 66% of the congregation supported sponsor family programs including intervention and counseling while 40% of these programs are instrumental in food sustenance, clothing distribution, emergency financial aid, referral services, homeless shelters, and income generating activities. Other services include employment coaching and counseling, youth affairs, senior citizens services, hospice and elderly care and young learners mentoring programs. When newly freed black men were bestowed the right to vote, they used churches as a front for mobilizing the new black electorate. Churches provided the space for political gatherings as ministers and church members serve as delegates to teach on constitutional conventions and vie for elective positions. News about political processes was delivered through black churches. Although their political advancements declined towards the 20th century, black churches remained as fundamental front for civic tradition of political activism.

Numerous northern churches worked hand in hand with civic organizations to

provide help to freed men/women and immigrants. Other churches employed political machinery as a direct method of black voter mobilization. Those vying for political positions seek the endorsement of black ministers who would further make direct appeals to the congregation to deliver votes to a particular candidate. As such, politicians recognized that the church is a key factor in their social lives and look upon it to provide advice concerning political matters.

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