

ADAM COME HOME: THE RENEWED COMMITMENT OF THE CHURCH TO
ENCOURAGE BLACK MEN TO RETURN TO THEIR FAITH COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

ADAM COME HOME: THE RENEWED COMMITMENT OF THE CHURCH TO ENCOURAGE BLACK MEN TO RETURN TO THEIR FAITH COMMUNITY

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Belton Creek Baptist Church is a faith community that seeks to do the will of the Lord. The absence of the young Black men fulfilling their roles in their homes and faith communities has noticeably become a major concern within Black churches. Broken homes and communities lead to broken relationships. The struggle of broken Black men to return to his faith community is a plight that if left unattended leads to perpetual violence and destruction. The brokenness; Black on Black crime, high incarceration rates, minimal to no education, high pregnancy rate with unwedded couples, poor to no vocational job training skills, and a low value of self-worth are examples of the brokenness Black men have come to learn as a way of life.

The Project Director undertook the challenge to develop opportunities to equip the faith community with the tools through workshops to become more engaged with broken Black men. The initial task was to show the faith the community the role they play in the departure and denied return of Black men by discriminative behavior that perpetuates isolation. Through surveys and questionnaires, the project manager sought after evidence that the Black church bears major responsibility on the demise of the Black family by the continual pushing away of the Black male.

This thesis is designed to be the foundation of a much larger work that speaks to the ongoing problem of how the Black community has suffered and continues to suffer because of the absence of the Black male in his home and faith community. While engaged in healthy dialogue with various faith communities, the Project Director's passion to get involved in bringing initiatives to a vast audience became evident in the programs that are birthed. It is clear, based on current crime rates, educational deficiencies among young Black boys, low employment rate, and high incarceration rates that a project of this magnitude is need in the Black community.

TO TOYA, TYESHIA, JASMINE, GREGORY, AND AIDAN

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CHAPTER 1

ADAM COME HOME

The symbols of Black men embracing their faith community and the impact they had on the global community where today's young Black men can associate themselves are the young Black men that worked, in conjunction with the major contributions of Black women, during the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s produced historical Black leaders who fostered campaigns of transformation—transforming the marginalized to men and women of esteem and purpose. The majority of these leaders were by-products of the Black church. Symbolic leaders such as, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Rev. Walter Faunteroy, and Rev. Jesse Jackson, to name a few, are men that our present generation of young Black men should be able to identify with. They began their training from the pulpits of Black churches across the south.

By no means should the voice of courageous Black women be overlooked. Their contributions to democracy were both extremely important and equally impactful as their male counterpart. However, to express the connection of encouraging young Black men of today to return to the church, this project will focus on the Black male as a symbol of transformation and unity within his faith community.

During the Civil Rights era, Black men had a strong voice in the community, mainly in part because the community was the Black church. Yet, over three decades

later, Black men have become invisible in the Black community; and subsequently, the Black church. Where did they go? Why aren't Black men flocking to the church? These questions must be answered in order for the Black community to recapture the stability and honor that made it possible for its people to endure both economic and social oppression.

In 1994, Jawanza Kunjufu¹ inspired me to engage in ministry of reconciliation when I read his book entitled *Adam! Where are you?* The answer to this rhetorical question is not solely about absence of one man; rather, it is about the absence of a community of Black men. Kunjufu's intent was to uncover why Black men don't attend church, a subject that has sparked a sense of purpose in my ministry. He prefaced his topic by lifting up the conversation that God has with Adam in the 3rd chapter of Genesis, where he connects the conversation of God and Adam to the conversation that God has with the Black male. However, the problem that exists with the Black male is he does not answer God as Adam does.

There are many reasons why the Black male is not engaging in conversations with God. God has been trying to get the Black males' attention but he does not answer. As a result, the Black man has lost his rightful place in his own community. When the Black male was the center of his family, the family prayed together and stayed together. The community was a compilation of strong families where the church was its meeting place and the Black male was the head of his family. Once again, society has offered many reasons why the Black male has become disengaged with his faith community and as a result, the community at large suffers. Adam it's time to come home.

1. Jawanza Kunjufu, *Adam! Where are you? Why Most Black Men Don't Go To Church* (African American Images: USA, 1994).

Within the faith community at Belton Creek Baptist Church, in Oxford, NC, where I serve as Pastor, there is a ministry opportunity to strengthen families in the community by engaging in conversations that ignite a reunion of Black men migrating to the ecclesia. Each Sunday as I look out into the congregation, I see a disproportionate number of men to women in attendance. To where have the men disappeared? Why have Black men stopped participating in faith communities?

Oxford, North Carolina is a rural setting that continues to depend heavily on agriculture as its primary source of revenue for the average household. In the African American community, Oxford is known for the oldest African American orphanage in the state of North Carolina. For a large percentage of young Black men, opportunities for success are limited to farming or working in the factories. Gangs have become very prevalent over recent years where educational excellence has been exchanged for drugs and gun violence. The school system's failed attempts to educate young Black men has led to a method of pushing them through despite learning. It has produced an academic failure that is evident in the 2012 end-of-grade scores of African American 5th graders where a mere 36% of its students passed the end-of-grade math and reading standardized test (See Appendix A).

It is my contention that when we develop communities that focus their energy on strengthening families through strengthening the male presence in the church, then the faith community will become successful in fulfilling its mission. Therefore my focus is not on the problem; rather, the opportunity to develop effective ministries to encourage Adam—the Black male—to return home. Hence my project, “Adam Come Home” is a

ministry project designed to renew the commitment of Black men in their faith communities.

The power of God expressed in community allows humanity to witness what it means to be a child of God. When humanity breaks the bonds of community, the order of creation is disturbed. Humanity was created by a communal God out of the abundance of God's grace for fellowship—first with God and then with God's creation. We were created to fellowship in community—a connection and communications with God and creation. When the Lord called unto Adam asking, “Where art thou?”, it was not because the Lord was unaware of Adam's whereabouts—rather, Adam was given the opportunity to search within to realize that he was not in the place in which God intended for him to be. Instead, Adam was in a place that was outside of fellowship with God and God's creation.

The work of our Lord Jesus Christ deals with reconciling those who are lost to God. Recent data suggests that there is a huge disconnection of Black men spending time with their faith community but are behind prison walls instead (see Appendix B). Scripture reveals to its reader that the will of God in the dispensation of the fullness of time is to gather together all things in Christ, in heaven and in earth, which suggests that God's will is to reconnect that which has been disconnected through Jesus Christ and the Church.

As I travel to various national conferences during the course of one year, emphasis was placed on multiple ministries that encouraged worship, witness, and mission, however I failed to hear any themes having to do with training the ecclesia on the importance of reconciling those who are lost to the God who promises “to heal the

land” when the broken and lost humble themselves, pray, seek God’s face, and turn from their wicked ways.² Therefore, this project will address the biblical and theological position that God is a God of reconciliation and God desires wholeness in the Black family, Black community, and the Black man. This project will address the Black man’s reconciliation with God through restoring healthy fellowship with faith communities.

The intent of this project is to develop conversation 1) at Belton Creek Baptist Church, 2) the surrounding communities, and finally 3) globally on the importance of churches being willing agents of reconciliation to those who decide to return to their faith communities. As I develop these narratives, it is equally important for the Belton Creek faith community to explore rationales of why Black men are absent from the church through their narratives. While this ministry opportunity seems to be quite vast in nature, the primary target audience is focused on Black men ages 18 to 49. The ultimate goal is to develop effective ministries that reconnect and restore Black men to their families, their communities, and their churches. The absence of the Black male in faith communities has led to his absence in his home and in the life of his family. It is important for the integrity of this project to not over extend its scope. There are numerous concerns that plague the African American community and this project, although it may initiate needed dialogue for future work, will not attempt to address them all.

It will however address issues that keep Black men from entering their faith communities and enlighten the ecclesia on effective methods of ministering to them. Therefore, I will focus on developing a conversation surrounding the motivations of young Black men to determine an effective course of ministry. According to Reginald

2. 2 Chronicles 4:14.

Lanier Jones, a noted psychologist with a focus on young Black men, he contends that young Black men become aware of self through individual interaction with and reaction to other members of society, his peers, parents, teachers, church leaders and others.³ As we analyze this focal group of Black men, we must pay close attention the role their community plays in the development and procurement of responsibilities that provide the foundation to their success or lack of success in their communities.

One may say that there is strength in numbers; to a certain degree this is true. But I would also contend that a band of outlaws following their own lead is weak at best. True strength is birthed out of unity. When a group is unified, they gain the power to overcome many obstacles. But when they are dysfunctional, they become weak and are rendered powerless. As we take a closer look at the faith community of Belton Creek Baptist Church, we discover the importance of unity in faith communities both in the church and the community at large for the sustainability of the Black male. I contend that the absence of the Black male in his faith community produces chaos and despair. When the Black male returns to the place where he belongs, in his faith community, Black families will become stronger and will produce a generation that will pay it forward for generations to come.

This project, although it will address some of the reasons why Black men avoid the church, focuses on how to prepare the congregation to receive these broken Black men once they have made the decision to reconnect to their faith communities. As a minister who began serving his call deeply involved in prison ministry, the most frustrating encounter is having a member of the congregation reject the fellowship of one

3. Reginald Jones, *Black Psychology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 113.

who is trying to reconcile himself with God through his faith community. The method by which I approach this project is to gather narratives from the faith community of Belton Creek Baptist Church and surrounding area and develop training workshops that will provide the disciples of Belton Creek necessary tools to engage in effective ministries of reconciliation.

Therefore I will begin this quest by discussing why I chose this topic. This will allow the reader to connect with the project through the lens of Belton Creek Baptist Church ministry context. I will then move to the experience I had while gathering the data and discuss the interesting lesson I learned. It is interesting to see how information is gathered and interpreted for the development of ministry. After which I will discuss my experience with my Lay Advisory Committee and how the project, the actual process of developing the project, changed both of us. Effective ministry is both transactional and transformative. This gives the reader the opportunity to see how the project shaped the spiritual foundation of those who were actively involved with hands-on preparation. Next I will explore the details of the project itself. Here I will discuss things that worked and didn't work. I will make note of relationships that were formed from the project and new ministries that were birthed from the project. And finally, I will reflect on the entire process and analyze its effect on me both personally and professionally and determine what's next. With an undertaking of this magnitude, there is a greater work in store for the Belton Creek Baptist Church faith community.

CHAPTER 2

WHERE ARE OUR BLACK BOYS?

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, "Where art thou?" (Gen3:9).

In the age where Black History has been redefined by President Barack Obama, Black America has discovered a sense of a new eschatological hope. In a nation where being Black is equated to discrimination, classism, and economic disparity, African American communities are more alive than ever. But is electing the first African American president enough to save our Black men from destruction? An article, submitted to the Sage Journals by Darnell F. Hawkins of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, highlights the disproportional reality of Black and White homicide differentials. Hawkins reported over twenty years ago, the rate of homicide among Blacks in the United States has been consistently higher than those of white Americans and of other ethnicities. Hawkins argues that if the subculture of a community is ignored or underemphasized a variety of historical-structural, situational, and economic factors that might explain high rates of Black homicide will go unnoticed. Behavior cannot be changed without taking into account the positive and negatives of one's culture. One of Hawkins' propositions suggests that the historical devaluing of Black life is an important factor to consider when evaluating theories of violence.¹

1. Darnell Hawkins, "*Black and White Homicide Differentials: Alternatives to an Inadequate Theory*," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* (December 1983): 407-440, accessed October 23, 2013, <http://cjb.sagepub.com/content/10/4/407>.

There are many factors that must be addressed in order to solve the dilemmas of the Black male. There is none more important than bringing resolution to the historical concern of devaluing Black life in America. During the Civil Rights Era, the Black family life was rooted in its belief in the God of the oppressed. The leadership of the Black church sustained the connection of Black Pride and Black Worth. James Brown's, "Say it loud; I'm Black and I'm Proud," served as the anthem for the Black value system. When Black men knew who they were they valued life and family. In this chapter, I will discuss the motivation behind why I chose to develop a ministry that addressed the return of the Black male to his faith community.

As I stand before the disciples of Belton Creek Baptist Church, I cannot help to notice the void of Black men from the ages of 18-49. Being in my mid 40s there seemed to be an absence of brothers with which I could share similar narratives. I couldn't help but to ask the disciples "where are the brothers?" And as I began to hear the various stories I realized as pastor, I had to dig deeper to uncover what was the driving force that pushed these brothers out of the church and more importantly, what was preventing them from returning.

As I reflect on my personal narrative of ministry, I took personally the challenge to develop effective ministry that not only encouraged Adam to return to the church but also taught the church how to receive these brothers when they did return. One thing I know quite well is the negativity with which some members of the church could greet anyone who doesn't fit into their presuppositions of what Christianity and Christians look like. I was motivated by my own personal experiences that as pastor, I would teach

disciples the value of rescuing one who was once lost to become all he was intended to become.

In a recent article published by the New York Times entitled, *The Plight Deepens for Black Men, Study Warns*, Black men are viewed as an endangered species. Over the past three decades there has been a noticeable change in the Black community; that change being the absence of the Black male. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics at yearend 2004, there were 3,218 Black male prison inmates per 100,000 Black males in the United States, compared to 1,220 Hispanic male inmates per 100,000 Hispanic males and 463 white male inmates per 100,000 white males.² In light of these alarming statistics, the New York Time's article further highlights that "The share of young Black men without jobs has climbed relentlessly. In 2002, 65 percent of Black male high school dropouts in their 20's were jobless—that is, unable to find work, not seeking it or incarcerated. By 2004, the share had grown to 72 percent."³ But what is more astonishing is that in spite of being one of the wealthiest nations on earth, we have allowed these numbers to get worse. In 2009, Black men escalated the prison population to 4,749 Black male inmates per 100,000 Black males held in state and federal prisons and local jails six times higher than white males at 708 per 100,000 and 2.6 times higher than Hispanic males at 1822 inmates per 100,000.⁴ Based on these rapidly inclining numbers, maybe the reporter for the New York Times is correct with his language of 'endangered species.'

2. US Department of Justice-Office of Justice Programs (June 30, 2005).

3. Erik Eckholm, "*The Plight Deepens for Black Men, Study Warns*" New York Times (March 20, 2006).

4. US Department of Justice-Office of Justice Programs (June 30, 2010).

The motivation behind this project is to decrease the negative mindset of young Black men who seem to embrace being incarcerated as validation of manhood rather than being an active member of his family and faith community. I am pursuing this project because it is time for the Black faith community to uphold its responsibility to become the leader of social justice even at the expense of exposing its own failures.

Undeniably the troubles will expand for the Black man, but he does not have to remain in his current state. In order to rectify this problem, the Black community must recognize these problems exist. The Black man's dilemma will continue to escalate primarily because of the false perceptions of reality that have influenced the Black community. In days past, the Black community had a sense of purpose and direction. Its perception of life was based on divine revelation. The Black community was a people who depended on and responded to a God that called them His people. In today's generation, the Black community, by and large, has placed its hope in the desire to be accepted by white America, rather than embracing their culture which requires each household to be accountable for its own actions. As a result of this infidelity, the Black community is left without its king.

There are many reasons for the demise of the Black family; but I will speak of just a few. I am more concerned with building effective ministries and not dwelling on the past. However, I must recognize key factors that have led to the demise of the Black family. The most significant dilemma is the absence of the Black male. These staggering numbers of our Black men incarcerated and away from their responsibilities is the direct result of the Black male refusing to engage in the ongoing conversation with God. God doesn't stop communicating with His creation. Therefore, God never stopped

talking to Black men; it was the Black male who stopped talking to God. As Africans living in America during the exodus from the evil rulers of oppression, we fostered a level of faith that, without any questions, centered on our personal and collective relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. As a result of the struggles of our leaders, we were able to celebrate the freedom to live without boundaries. We were delivered by God. As a people, we believed that the Lord had set us free. Yes, we were free, but God warned us not to use our freedom for self-indulgence.

Unable to handle the freedom that came from the Civil Rights Movement, the Black male traveled down the path of unrighteousness seeking the glory of white America. He became distant from his responsibilities as the head of the house, father to his children, and role models in their communities. The Black father had become in danger of extinction as well as a fugitive of his own community. As a result, young Black boys became members to a society, named by Henri J. M. Nouwen, as the 'The Generation without Fathers'. "There was a time, and in many ways we see the last spastic movements of this time still around us, when man's identity, his manhood, and power, were given to him by the father from above. We could have predicted that the coming generation would reject this, since we have already accepted that man's worth is not dependent on what is given to him by fathers, but by what he makes of himself. We would have accepted this, since we have said that faith is not the acceptance of centuries-old traditions but an attitude which grows from within. We could have anticipated this ever since we started saying that man is free to choose his own future, his own work, his own wife."⁵ Nouwen believes that men, in this case, Black men, have fostered a mindset

5. Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer; In Our Own Woundedness, We Can Become A Source Of Life For Others* (NY: Image Books Doubleday, 1972), 30.

in young Black boys that they no longer have to depend upon the Father of Creation; rather, they must rely on what they can make of life through their own works.

Is this the desired result that our leaders were hoping for when they marched through the racist streets of Alabama? The church must re-visit its purpose to proclaim the good news of reconciliation in the heart of oppression and rally behind the efforts to reunite broken Black men to God through the creating of effective ministries. One could only imagine the anguish and frustration that our forefathers would express if they were to experience what their work had produced. We have become infected with a ‘double conscious mind’⁶. That is, the Black male suffers from an awareness of himself as well as an awareness of how others perceive him. The danger of double consciousness resides in conforming to or changing one's identity to match what others perceive to be the person's identity.

Black men often reflect a duality of consciousness in understanding that their experience in America historically has not met their basic needs (love, nurturing, belongingness, and acceptance) and has instead produced a diverse group of men in modernity, often homogenized into boxed identities [stereotypes] in American culture. To obtain power and the ability to perform traditional masculine roles is the striving of every male child. However, as the Black male transitions from childhood to adolescence, and unresolved conflicts related to psychosocial development are retarded due to insufficient access to masculine status and the historical continuance of social, cultural, and economic

6. Charles R. Foster, Fred Smith, and Grant S. Shockley, *Black Religious Experience: Conversations On Double Consciousness And The Work Of Grant Shockley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003).

disadvantages, it becomes increasingly evident that academic, career, and social prosperity in the later stages of development have the potential for negative outcomes.

Black men today continue to suffer from a double—consciousness mind. After the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s, Africans in America traded their African souls for a piece of the American dream and released the values that got them this far for the iconic proclamation that they have “made it.” They have changed their identity, religion, community, and culture in order to be accepted by their white counterparts. Being accepted by the majority culture has stripped the Black identity that ignited unity and commonality. Once Black society fall prey to the divisiveness of becoming successful by any means necessary, the fabric of family and community dissipated into an abyss of emptiness.

Historically these findings of discrimination are nothing new in the Black community. In the eyes of Black society, there has always been a scheme to eliminate and contribute to the destruction of the Black family. In some theological circles within Black academia, one could classify the current judicial system as a modern day ‘Jim Crow’—where Blacks appear inferior to whites.

For most young Black boys, survival in such an environment is a proposition that appears hopeless but nevertheless, is a proposition that must be defeated by any means necessary. Difficult as it may seem, it becomes even more difficult to exist as a community, as a society, and as a people if there is not a change. In a world where being male and Black has meant being psychologically castrated—rendered impotent in the economic, political, and social arenas that whites have historically dominated, young

Black men learn at an early age that the classic American virtues of thrift, perseverance, and hard work did not give them the same outcome nor rewards as their white counterparts.⁷ This psychological dilemma plagues the mindset of young Black boys from their entry into public schools to their seeming fate behind prison walls. A paradigm shift is essential and is why this project is so important—not just in the Belton Creek Baptist Church community but the global community at large. If there isn't a purposeful journey from the prisons to the church, Black boys will become extinct.

The church is the only place where Black communities can escape from the injustice and oppression that served as a safe haven for training and evaluation. Social leaders were trained and held accountable to be leaders that spoke for the socially and economically mute. But as American culture moved from segregation to inclusion, young Black boys redefined what it meant to be a man. Major and Billson seemed to believe that the Black community set aside their heritage and culture and picked up the mantle of assimilation and false perceptions of the white man's reality. Just as Blacks were positioning themselves to receive their proverbial "forty acres and a mule"—a mindset in the Black community that compensates the tyranny of slavery, Black men began to define manhood in terms familiar to white men: breadwinner, provider, procreator, and protector.⁸ Where is the James Brown mindset when a society needs it? When did it become wrong to be Black and proud?

No one should feel inferior because of the skin tone that God chose to give them in His infinite wisdom, majesty and glory. It is true that Black America lives constantly

7. Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson, *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas Of Black Manhood In America* (New York: Lexington Books, 1992), 1.

8. Ibid.

between two planes of awareness—a dual existence that influenced their religious development historically and presently.⁹ The Black community depends on its rich history to help it navigate through postmodernity. History reveals that Black people came to terms with their Blackness, their spiritual gifts and their social situation of slavery and brutalizing oppression in a white racist church and society by working out their salvation in relation to questions of their bondage, their separation from family, their chattel—being someone’s property status, and their idea of good and evil, and of God and Satan.¹⁰ But history also reveals a darker side to the realities of being systematically castrated from society. When Black men are cut-off from being an intricate part of their communities, the values of spiritual gifts and the willingness to press toward the proverbial mark of their high calling seems pointless to him.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, “Where art thou?”¹¹ God, in infinite wisdom and divine majesty, poses a question that seemed to be both pretentious and somewhat hollow. Pretentious in part because God is “All Knowing” and God does not need to ask questions. And hollow in the sense that in the “all knowingness” of God, God knew spiritually that Adam was not in his rightful place. But a closer look reveals that God does not ask for God’s benefit; rather, God inquires of Adam to give Adam an opportunity to deal with his brokenness which would allow him to return to his right relationship with God. This is the essence of why I chose this project. I want to bring to Black men an awareness of their brokenness to encourage them to see the king within them. Maybe Hawkins is correct that Black men have

9. Ibid.

10. Foster, 31.

11. Genesis 3:9 KJV.

devalued themselves. The statistics show this to be evident. But as one who has been called by God to lead God's people back into right relationship with God, I am convinced that when Black men retake their proper positions within their faith communities, God's global community, God's church wins.

The church has been a safe haven for the Black family for decades. Black churches birthed our Civil Rights leaders of the 50s and 60s. Black churches fostered family traditions and values that allowed a village to raise one child. Therefore, if there is going to be a reclaiming of Black men, it must begin in the Black church. Jesus the Christ will return one day looking for His church to be without spot or wrinkle. Will the Black church be ready to be judged by the Christ? Is the Black church living up to the core principle of Jesus: to love unconditionally? Do the behaviors of the church leaders exemplify our Lord and Savior? I embarked on this project to bring awareness to the Black church that it must be accountable for its actions and be committed to its original purpose.

It is my belief that the Black church and its leaders must be held accountable, in part, for the demise of the Black male and its failure to fight off the disconnection between the Black male and the Black church. Based on the recent report earlier stated from the Department of Justice Statistics, it is evident that Black men choose to separate themselves from the church community. The question that remains is why? Could it be partly due to the immorality within the church or the irresponsible and unethical behavior of church leaders inside and outside of the church?

When God asked, in the first book of the Bible, “Adam, where are you?” the question was not asked because somehow the all-knowing powers of God failed. The question was posed because Adam did not know where he was. Although this question is quite intriguing, it does not address the core issue at hand. The question that must be considered in order to develop effective ministry is what happens to Adam when he hears God’s voice and goes to the house of the Lord and does not see God there? Yes, Adam has made many mistakes, but God Himself wants Adam to repent and reconcile with his creator through Jesus the Christ, who is the head of the church.

If the Black church, in the historical foundation of the Black community, was the backbone of the Black family in the Civil Rights era, then it must be just as relevant to the Black family in the post-Civil Rights era as well. Church leaders must be held accountable for upholding ethical and moral standards so that brothers who are experiencing the prodigal¹² son’s experience can look to the church for safety. It is the intention of this project to bring the accountability levels of preachers to a level that warrants both the office and the assignment that was entrusted to them by God.

Just as the Bible reminds us that the prodigal son realized one day he was not created to live in the pits of existence and returned home, the Black male must do so as well. The prodigal son came home to his father’s unconditional love; but when the Black male comes home, he returns to a place that is still indifferent towards him. Rather than seeing his homecoming to the church as reconciliation to God, he sees it as coming home to a church comprised of the familiar ingredients of the wilderness he left behind—

12. Luke 15:11-32.

immorality and unethical behavior. To him, the church looks just like the world full of chaos and despair.

Black church leaders are entrusted to create an atmosphere where the Black community can congregate to equip themselves to deal with the calamities of the world. According to H. Beecher Hicks Jr., the Black preacher must engage in biblical and culturally oriented, instructive, directive, and supportive relationships with Black persons as well as interpret life's meaning and advocate for life's potential in light of the required commitment to Jesus Christ. The main functions of the Black preacher are to proclaim the gospel, parent the extended family through the Black church, and empower persons in the context of congregation and community.¹³ Based on Hicks' assessment, the Black preacher is the conduit between the Black male and the Black church; therefore, the Black preacher must strive to promote healthy Black families within the community.

Jawanza Kunjufu identified twenty-one reasons why Black males don't go to church. "Black men stay away from the church because of: hypocrisy, ego/dictatorial, faith-submission-trust-forgiveness-angry at God, passivity, tithing, irrelevance, Eurocentric, length of service, too emotional, sports, attire/dress code, classism/unemployment, education, sexuality and drugs, homosexuality, spirituality/worshiping alone/universalism, heaven, evangelism. Lack of Christian role models, streets/peer pressure, and parental double standards forced when a child."¹⁴ To deal with the issue of why Black men devalue Black life in America and isolate them from the core of Black existence, this project has to deal with the possibility that what is

13. Beecher H. Hicks Jr., *Images Of The Black Preacher; The Man Nobody Knows* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1977).

14. Kunjufu, 56-70.

portrayed by the leaders of the Black church could be contributing to the demise of the Black male. Therefore, as we journey down the path of reconciliation, to achieve our desired outcome, I must first administer surveys within the faith community of Belton Creek Baptist Church, then the community at large and pay close attention to the narratives that they tell about both communities. After hearing the narratives, the next step is to develop a series of training workshops for the church to equip disciples who to minister to and love broken Black men as they return to their faith community. The structure and content of the workshops will be the product of the information gathered from the surveys. The Lay Advisory Committee will be in charge of developing and administering the surveys. The following chapter will discuss in greater detail the process to which this project takes shape. After the workshops have been conducted, the success of this project will be evaluated by the continual ministry opportunity this work inspires.

CHAPTER 3

HOW THE PROJECT TOOK SHAPE

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”(Isaiah 6:8 KJV).

In order to properly gauge the magnitude of the ministry opportunity, I had to first determine how the faith community, first Belton Creek Baptist Church, and then the community at large felt about the visible void of Black men in the church. In doing so, I centered my conversations with the disciples around their perspective of why so few young Black men do not attend Belton Creek Baptist Church. Interestingly and initially, the disciples were reluctant to divulge their narratives in fear it may offend a loved one. But over a period of time, I was successful in getting the disciples to speak candidly about some of their concerns and the concerns of those who no longer attend church. As a result, I identified ten individuals—deacons, trustees, missionaries, Sunday school teachers and willing workers--who would volunteer to form the lay advisory committee to assist in developing a project that would address the concerns of the congregation.

As a group, we decided to meet twice a month on Wednesdays before bible study to develop a project that would achieve our intended goal of developing effective ministries that would encourage young Black men to return to their faith communities.

I shared with each member the prospectus of this project. I reviewed with them the theological and biblical implications of broken Black men and their effect on the church. I expressed to them that the intentions of our efforts must be focused on transforming the lives of the church to be disciples of reconciliation. After carefully reviewing the scope to which we would like to engage in this project, we successfully selected an outstanding Lay Advisory Committee.

The members of the Lay Advisory Committee are diverse in both education and vocation. Their educational levels, professional occupations, and church affiliations are described below. However, as I examined the congregation's actions and how they fellowshiped with one another, it became very obvious that they are very mechanical. Their success is determined by how effective each member fulfills their function.¹ Each member is held to a very high standard and is often reminded by the leaders of their commitments and what is expected of them. I often hear Deacon William Cozart remind leaders in meetings, "Ya'll know what we supposed to do" as if the effectiveness of the ministries depended upon the effectiveness of the disciple. Nevertheless, the Lay Advisory Committee members consist of the following individuals:

Larry Barnes, a 1978 graduate of Seton Hall University with a Master's degree in Administration is retired from NC State Government as a State administrative officer. He also served as a principal in the Granville County Public School System. He is married with two children. Brother Barnes has been a disciple of Belton since 1984 and serves as an Adult Sunday school teacher, Trustee, and a Deacon in training. He is a servant for God and His people.

1. James F. Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 23.

Brother Barnes was very instrumental in developing the structure of the workshop. His organizational and administrative skillsets were extremely instrumental pulling the topics and discussion together to stay on target and message. Under his leadership he assigned members of the committee to work on sections that best fit each member's skills and experience.

Julia A. Cozart, assistant chair of the Lay Advisory Committee, is a 1982 graduate of St. Paul's College with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Elementary Education. She is currently employed by Durham Public Schools as a kindergarten teacher and is married with one child. She has been a disciple of Belton since childhood and is always concerned about student growth. She is very active in church ministries.

Joyce Carter, a 1971 graduate of South Granville High School, is currently employed by Murdoch Developmental Center as an EDA Communications Assistant and is divorced with no children. She has been a disciple of Belton since the age of twelve and serves as both Junior and Intermediate Sunday school teacher, President of the Missionary Circle, an usher, and serves on other ministries. She is a person who loves the Lord and will serve Him as long as she lives.

Sister Carter's passion for evangelism was useful in administering surveys to both the Belton Creek faith community and the community at large. Her willingness to engage in the community allowed our project to expand throughout the city of Oxford. Her evangelistic efforts produced opportunities for our project to have an opportunity to talk before the city council and the major's office.

William Cozart, a 1979 graduate of St. Paul's College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, is retired from the Town of Chapel Hill as a Drug

Program Director and is currently employed part-time as a certified Substance Abuse Counselor. He is married and has one child. He has been a disciple of Belton since childhood and is very active in church ministries. He is the Chair of the Deacon Ministry and the Recreational/Activity Ministry.

With his experience surrounding mental health, Deacon Cozart was very instrumental in developing the mental health component in our workshop. His compassion and drive to assist those who are struggle from mental health issues brought an element of concern that Belton Creek Church was eager to embark upon.

Roy Roberts, a 1985 graduate of the North Carolina Community College System General Education degree program. He is currently retired from John Umstead Hospital after thirty years of service. He is married with one child. Brother Roberts he has been a disciple of Belton since age 12. He serves as a Deacon, Chair of the Cemetery ministry and an active member of the Laymen's League Ministries. He is always willing to serve others in need.

Chenita Roberts, a 2005 graduate of North Carolina Central University with a Master's degree in Special Education. She is currently employed by Granville County Schools as a Special Education teacher and is single with no children. She has been a disciple of Belton since age 14 and serves on various ministries in the church.

Helen Harris, a 1967 graduate of GC Hawley high school with a high school diploma. She is retired from Granville County Schools and is married with 2 children and 4 grandchildren. She has been a disciple of Belton since age 13 and is family oriented and loves Christian integrity.

Mary Harris, a 1967 graduate of GC Hawley high school with a high school diploma. She is retired after 30 years of working with the state of NC and currently has part-time employment with the Branch Banking And Trust. She is a widow with 1 child, has been a disciple of Belton since age 13, is family oriented, and is serious about her walk with the Lord.

Thomas Cozart, a 1967 graduate of GC Hawley high school with a high school diploma. He is currently employed by CertainTeed having worked for them for 35 years and is married with 1 child. He has been a disciple of Belton since age 8 and is a Trustee, Usher, sings in 2 choirs, and serves on the finance and cemetery ministries.

In its initial stages, meetings were well represented of the committee. But just like any other ministry group, people began to find other things to occupy their time on the day that was designated to meet and according to my timeline submitted to our project advisor we were rapidly approaching two months with only a few meetings under our belt. This led me to call an emergency meeting one Sunday after service to explain to the lay committee the commitment that is required of them and the dedication that is needed to complete our project. After everyone re-committed themselves to our project on that Sunday, the subject of failing to uphold the commitment and dedication ceased to be an issue. It no longer was the pastor's project; it became Belton Creek Baptist Church's project. It truly became our project.

After giving the committee the guidelines of their roles, they elected Brother Larry Barnes, a retired educator to become the leader of the committee. Their first task was to develop surveys containing questions that would give clues of why young Black

men ages of 18-49 disassociate themselves from the household of faith. This process appeared at first to be going nowhere quickly. There seemed to be a disconnection within this small group of disciples that prohibited them from agreeing on any suggestions. One of the largest barriers to this first task was the groups' inability to see through lenses that were not their own. No two people will have the same narrative, although they may take on the same shape, the details of how one distinguishes the nature of the story will take on a shape of its own. Realizing that everyone's perspective deserves equal consideration, I challenged the committee to look at this assignment from the perspective of one who is looking to the church for help but cannot find it. I asked them to consider what would a young man, who has been living on the streets and is trying to do the right thing, say about the church?

The committee took charge. They engaged the members of the church and developed a baseline of questions to consider. Sister Carter took the lead. Her enthusiasm and commitment was contagious. She created a buzz that excited the entire congregation. Looking at opportunities for ministry through a narrow scope only produces the desired outcome of the one who contemplates the outcome. With a project of this magnitude—one that transcends to a global opportunity—it requires broader possibilities and should not be limited by a narrow focus. As the group began meditating on becoming this young man who is trying to make his way back to his faith community despite his past mistakes and failures, they began to work together and engaged in conversations without interjecting personal attacks on each other. After several weeks of brainstorming, the lay committee presented to me over thirty possible questions that could give insight on the disconnection between Black men and the church and possible

solutions on how to fix the issue. We discussed in our meetings the implications of each of the possible questions and after much prayer, we decided that two surveys would be needed: one qualitative and one quantitative. A qualitative survey (survey #1) would be needed because we needed to get a good understanding of the stories individuals within and outside the faith community would tell. A quantitative survey (survey #2) would be needed because we needed to collect data that would measure the percentage of the faith community who held particular views related to our concerns (See Appendix C).

After developing the surveys, under the leadership of Brother Larry Barnes, the lay committee administered a qualitative and quantitative survey to the congregation; after which, they administered the same surveys to the community at large. We received over one hundred and nineteen returns of survey one and one hundred of survey two. We concluded that the sample size of 120 was large enough for the lay committee to develop a series of workshops to train laity on how to encourage and minister to broken Black men when they return to the church.

After reviewing the responses, we came to the conclusion that before we could develop an effective workshop for the disciples of Belton, we agreed that the Lay Advisory committee would need to go through the training first. During this process, Hopewell's assessment of the mechanical congregation perfectly describes Belton Creek Baptist Church became evident at Belton. The disciples were not opposed to the intentions of service to the less fortunate and fellowship with those outside of the intimate faith community; in fact, they welcome it. However, to them the primary need of the church is the realization of the congregational process to achieve results.² That is, to the disciples of Belton Creek, ministry must align with the current processes of the church in

2. Hopewell, 26.

order to be effective and to achieve the desired results. The issue with that is ministry evolves and if the church is not willing to step outside of its comfort zone, then ministry becomes ritualistic and ineffective. Therefore in our training, we had to focus on encouraging them to become visionary leaders. We needed to understand that it's okay to engage in ministry that is unfamiliar. If we are to teach the congregation how to engage with broken Black men, we are going to have to develop visionary leaders.

When asked in our survey whether a person's criminal background should determine whether they are accepted in their faith community, over 61% of those surveyed said that one's background should impact whether they are accepted in their faith community (See Appendix E). This is very alarming! To think that the church feels that those who have been incarcerated are not welcome in their faith community poses as a direct threat to the Black community! If not the church, then who? Who will set the captives free and give sight to the spiritually blind?

There are many reasons why people are afraid to let those who have been held accountable for their bad decisions and bad behavior into their sacred space. As people of faith, our project needs to teach our disciples that we have to move beyond our negative presuppositions of those who are broken and clothe ourselves with the cloak of confidence and forgiveness that eliminates fear. So as the Lay Advisory Committee and I engaged in conversations that our duties as Christians are to seek after the lost and empower them with the gospel of truth, we discovered that the same God who saved each of us by grace from our sins is the same God who can change the lives of broken Black men. After several lessons on tearing down barriers of ministry, we were now able to

start the process of developing an effective workshop that would train the disciples of Belton Creek how to engage in effective ministry with broken Black men.

After carefully reviewing the data acquired by the surveys, committee decided on three major areas to focus: the mental health of Black men, the dilemma of the fatherless father, and the “keeping it real” mentality of the hip hop culture that plagues the Black male community.

We first explored the mental health component of broken Black men. As we began our discussion on the mental dilemma of the Black male, we were taken to the story in the gospel of Mark where Jesus gave the benediction to the church, borrowed a boat, encountered a storm, told the winds and the waves, “Peace be Still” to get to the other side to the Gentile country of the Gerasenes to see a man who is described as having a mental disorder. He is living in a cemetery wandering in the midst of death, detached from his home, his family, and his faith community possessed by unclean spirits.³

Just as Jesus left the comfortable surroundings of people who were captivated by his ministry to minister to a broken man despite his mental issues, we too felt that if we are going to achieve our desired goals, we must be willing to do the same. In order to do this, we need to address the mental health concerns that plague our Black men. I was tasked by the Lay Advisory Committee to seek the professional guidance of someone who has experience in the subject matter to provide our project with the professionalism and expertise that is required to make a substantial impact on the project itself. So we shared the data of the surveys with Mr. James Todd, MSW, a certified clinical

3. Mark 5: 1 New Revised Standard Version.

psychologist, and tasked him to develop a clinical workshop that would educate laity on signs and symptoms of depressions. As we embarked on new ministries, the Lay Advisory Committee felt it to be very important that we educate our disciples on the mental condition of the demographic we sought engage. As a result, Mr. Todd developed part one of our workshop that dealt with the causes of depression in men, the signs and symptoms of depression in men, the different forms of depression, the dangers and pitfalls of substance abuse, physical abuse, and mental abuse. The Lay Advisory Committee reviewed his information and approved it to be a part of the training.

Secondly, we explored the component of boys becoming fathers in the absence of their fathers and the negative impact it has on the Black male's relationships-- past, present, and future. The committee then sought to pull the components together to deal with Black male relationships. Based on the conversations she had within the community, Sister Joyce Carter was very adamant that if we were to reach broken Black men, we would have to teach the congregation the importance of identifying life as broken Black men visualizes it.

We solicited one of my dear friends, Dr. Carl Kenney, PhD to develop a training workshop that teaches how to reach a society of young black boys who seemingly have no regard for authority. According to Mark' Gospel text, the young man in the cemetery resembles the broken Black man absent from his faith community. "He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him anymore, even with a chain; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he

broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones.”⁴

Dr. Kenney developed for our project a workshop that dealt with the images of Black masculinity. Striving for masculinity presents dilemmas for the black male because it is so often grounded in masking strategies that rest on denial and suppression of deep feelings.⁵ Deep within the souls of young Black men lays an enormous mass of negative feelings toward society, towards his community and towards himself. If young men are to learn how to become men from their fathers, how will they learn if the father is absent? The perpetual cycle of fatherless fathers leads to family decay. Boys who grow up without caring fathers or even male mentors to imitate are left to guess the behaviors that are acceptable with men. As a result, young men gravitate to cultural icons and idioms such as athletes and entertainment artists to validate manhood. These larger than life icons become the role model of what it means to be a man.

Dr. Kenney also dealt with the loss of manhood in Black communities. Broken Black men have lost authentic identity. Black men have adopted overblown myths of manhood. Obsessed with being “man enough,” they’ve become philanderers, controllers, and competitors—constantly overcompensating for their loss of a true role model, yet sorely unprepared for family life.⁶ With unemployment rates in Black communities nearly double that of White America-- to the tune of 17.6% in the first quarter of 2010-- there is a disproportionate number of Black men who have resorted to violence and a life

4. Mark 5: 3-5

5. Majors and Billson, 2.

6. Frank S. Pittman, *Man Enough: Fathers, Sons, And The Search For Masculinity* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1993), 314.

of crime to contend with obtaining the basic necessities of survival.⁷ With these circumstances, how can young Black boys grow up to be men of valor unless the church stands in the gap to reconcile and not tear down? The Lay Advisory Committee and I contend that it is important for the church to be able to identify with these broken men; not through the lens of disappointment, but rather through the watchful eyes of hope.

In the final piece to part two of our workshop, Dr. Kenney addresses how to encourage young men to overcome self-hatred. It is essential to address the stereotypes that Black men have about others and then the stereotypes that exist about themselves. During the training session, the goal was to reveal the patterns of behaviors that are rooted in stereotypes and to empower the disciples of Belton Creek to encourage young Black men to shape their own identity and their own realities.

The last area of concern, to which the Lay Advisory Committee tasked me to facilitate, dealt with the hip-hop generation and their “keeping it real” mentality, even at the expense of one’s own life. Our character in Mark’s Gospel, chapter 5 was described as, “Night and day he was in the graveyard or on the hills, yelling and cutting himself with stones.”⁸ The committee wanted me to address the state of the Black male from a theological aspect in a way that each disciple would be encourage to ignite into action.

We will engage in dialogue with the intentions of discovering what motivates these broken Black men. Jones believes that “Young Black men become aware of self through the individual interactions with and reaction to other members of society, his

7. "NC Unemployment Rate Twice As Bad For African-Americans As For Whites," North Carolina Justice Center, Last modified April 28, 2011, <http://www.ncjustice.org/?q=nc-unemployment-rate-twice-bad-african-americans-whites> (accessed November 18, 2013).

8. Mark 5:5 (Contemporary English Version).

peers, parents, teachers, church leaders, and others.⁹ If he is correct, then somehow we have to train the church that its role is to find ways to motivate young Black men to embrace their faith community. This will require the church to develop ministries that appease the interests of young men.

A young Black man living in a White American society assumes the attitudes of that which he identifies with and the looking glass in which he gazes reflects both what he sees when he looks at himself and what he is perceived to be by those who gaze at him.¹⁰ It becomes difficult to find motivation when society erects barriers that foster conflict rather than reconciliation. In 1990, 54% of White America believed that Blacks are prone to violence and that “Blacks are aggressive or violent.” Yet to have one’s own community turn and perpetuate the same stereotype is unbelievably heartbreaking.¹¹ If society feels negatively about our Black men, how does it really make him feel when his own community harbors the same sentiments? We must train our faith communities how to encourage our young Black men to become more aware of the value within them in spite of the impact of his negative image.

Finally, we will conclude this session by bringing to light the unspoken needs of Black men—the need for achievement, the need for self-assertion, and the need for approval. The committee concluded that it is extremely important for Belton Creek to understand that Black men have a need to achieve. His negative self-concept is further complicated by his internalizing of white society’s high-level goals and the need to

9. Jones, 113.

10. Jones, 114.

11. Kelly Welch, "Black Criminal Stereotypes and Racial Profiling." *Journal Of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 23, no. 3 (2007): 276-288.

achieve them without a true comprehension of how to effectively do so.¹² In our training, we have to harness the concept of achievement through holistic values rather than societal affirmations. We must gain the confidence to encourage our young Black men that the American dream of prosperity is realized in community and not in the destruction of it. If the Black church is to be effective in ministry, it must teach our young Black men what it means to be successful in the eyes of God.

Jones also points out the need for young Black men is the need for self-assertion or aggression. Since the days of slavery to some extent, the present day, the Black male has been taught by their parents not to be aggressive in their actions and their language. Blacks who were outspoken were considered radical and unreasonable or too sensitive. Therefore, it was more acceptable to assert oneself for self-expression, for achievement of one's goals, and for control of one's environment. Consequently, an individual's success in satisfying his need for self-assertion is to some degree determined by the sense of control he has over his environment.¹³

Within our faith community, we must allow young black men to control their environment. Let's teach our men how to be men by our actions and not by our words. If the church is going to be effective in ministry, we must welcome the voices of our young black men; not as a radical attempt to destroy our faith community, but to listen to them and hear the levels of their anxieties and concerns. Their assertiveness and aggression can be used as fuel for ministry. If we do not allow Black men to be expressive, they will hold these emotions within until they become explosive. As a result, he wanders through his graveyard and hills yelling and cutting himself.

12. Jones, 117.

13. Ibid.

The final need that we will address in the workshop is the need for approval. With the development of the self and through the process of identification, the individual's need for approval develops and grows as does his need to avoid disapproval. An individual's behavior, in accordance with society's approval which follows the achievement motive and expresses the need for self-assertion, is often tied to a need for approval.¹⁴ By their actions, Black men seek approval from society. Whether good or bad, he finds solace in the approval of men. This is why our black men gravitate to gangs. He is seeking approval for his actions. If the church is called to speak life into broken Black men, then the church must articulate and re-enforce its approval when the Black man's behaviors and actions lift up rather than tear down.

According to our timeline, the preparation of the workshop was on schedule (See Appendix F). However, we did run into one concern. The Lay Advisory Committee made the suggestion at a church conference to conduct the workshop during our Men's Conference in June. But according to our prospectus and the timeline set forth by the university, conducting the workshop in June was not acceptable. After convincing the Lay Advisory Committee why June would not work, we decided to conduct the workshop during bible study in May as scheduled then, repeat the workshop for the public during our Men's conference in June.

During the month of April and leading up to the workshop itself, Brother Thomas Cozart suggested that I preach and teach from the theological perspective of forgiveness and reconciliation. Based on the feedback from the surveys, he felt a need to embrace Christian values of being granted a second chance in life. It was important to convey the

14. Jones, 118-19.

message that we were all once lost, but by divine grace, we were all given an opportunity to enter into a sacred place of forgiveness.

The experience of forming the Lay Advisory Committee, collecting and interpreting the data, and developing a workshop that speaks to the need of empowering God's children to minister to broken Black men proved to be both therapeutic and rewarding. The most rewarding event during this process was when the Lay Advisory Committee took ownership of the project. When the project moved from the pastor's project to a project by and for the people, the project took off. This process allowed the pastor-parishioner relationship to grow. In the later chapters, I will discuss the details of the project's impact on me and the community.

CHAPTER 4

ADAM COME HOME; THE MINISTRY PROJECT

Keeping pace with our projected timelines, the Lay Advisory Committee approved a very detailed agenda for an impactful two hour conference. On May 8, 2013, We conducted our ministry project with the disciples of Belton Creek. For two hours we engaged in conversations with the objective to re-tool the faith community with tools to bring and keep broken Black men back into the fold. The people were completely engaged in the presentation and were intrigued with the results of the data that we collected. We were confident in the content that we were presenting and equally confident in how we were presenting the information. The shocked looks upon their faces were priceless when they were told that the church had such negative feelings toward those who face life's toughest barriers.

Stories really do weave living fabrics of common episodes.¹ As we shared our narratives of how we respond to brokenness, we realized that we all have been negatively influenced by past hurts and disappointments such that we built our own barriers preventing people whom we have deemed “no good” or “full of the devil” from engaging with us. We became, as Hopewell believes, actors integral to an encompassing drama of keeping as far away from those who are seemingly troublesome and problematic. As a result, the faith community became a ministry of characterization that particularizes the

1. Hopewell, 149.

congregation by displaying a mood and incident the unique ethos of the individual parish.² In other word, Belton Creek had become a community afraid of dealing with past hurts and pains so we found ways to avoid interactions with those who may uncover the mask. To the community at large, we were perceived as a church that only ministered to those who were actively involved in their church and who cared little about providing for those outside of the walls of Belton Creek.

Led by the chair of the Lay committee, the committee entertained questions and answers session after the presentation. Each committee member had an opportunity to validate the content of the workshop with narratives of their own. They talked about the stories within the community that they had gathered and how it was important for the church to listen with the cries of the community. Each member's input produced positive outcomes that were implemented for this project. As a whole, the Belton Creek Baptist Church family was moving in the path of reconciliation.

Several weeks later, after the suggestion of our committee's chair, we conducted a more intense version of the workshop with the men of the church and visitors at our annual Men's Conference. At this conference, we were afforded the opportunity to develop directives and initiatives for men who sought to be the conduits to other broken men.

Hopewell claims that there can be no single event, no opening night that presents a conclusive version of the story to its congregation. The story should instead inform itself and recur throughout parish life, the better to illuminate the ongoing activities of the

2. Ibid.

household.³ It wasn't a single event that shaped the ministry context of Belton Creek, nor was it a convincing story that was handed down throughout the years that perpetuated the mindset of this congregation. However, I would argue with Hopewell that there are events that could impact a congregation in such a way that significant change occurs. This project was that event.

After the project, everyone who was in attendance made a commitment to seek after those who are lost. As a church body, we decided to be inclusive-- inviting the community, whether they were a member or not to become actively involved in our ministry events. In our Men's ministry, we developed an initiative to mentor young Black boys starting from the 5th grade and provide them with resources and friendship to encourage them to stay in school, stay away from the judicial system, and set academic and vocational goals for the future. We chose to begin at the 5th grade because of the historical poor academic performances of Blacks in English, math and science (see Appendix A). We concluded that if our boys do not have the desire to be educated and are pushed through the system, they will become lost in a cycle of nothingness with desires of destruction rather than achieving goals.

Now that we have our first initiative, I formed a good and healthy relationship with the Granville County School Superintendent and presented to him the Belton Creek Ministry's Boys to Men Initiative (See Appendix F). He agreed to give our initiative the financial support it needed to impact the lives of our Black boys. He gave our initiative his blessing to adopt the entire 5th grade class of Black boys at C. G. Credle Elementary School.

3. Hopewell, 148.

Our objective is to provide mentoring for young Black boys from the 5th grade to senior in high school. The program will create partnerships with the local school district. Belton Creek's Boys to Men ministry matches a caring adult volunteer with a referred youth. Belton Creek will set up four distinct mentoring programs: (1) Saturday Academy tutoring is the central education component of Belton Creek Ministries' Boys to Men initiative. Students may participate in structured tutoring designed to assist the boys in achieving academic success in the classroom. The other components of the Boys to Men initiative consist of: (2) Camp David will focus on providing students with opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math; (3) Camp Habakkuk will focus on providing students with opportunities in Language, Reading, and Writing; and (4) Men of Valor will focus on providing human development for students.

Our mission is to provide young men with the essential tools needed to equip them to obtain educational opportunities while mentoring them to become quality young men with the following principles: (1) Commitment to inspire pro-social friendships, interpersonal skills, academic achievement, and instill a sense of value and hope for young African American men for the future; (2) Responsibility to empower young men to establish goals and follow through on commitments; and (3) Support-- Belton Creek Ministry believes that an individual is influenced by their support system. Therefore, Belton Creek Ministries' Boys to Men Initiative wants to surround young men in a caring, inclusive, moral and ethical learning environment.

We strongly believe that the keys to our success are to establish a strong network of support with the Granville County School System, which we have. Another key to our success will be to launch a series of fundraising activities that will successfully fund the

expanding program towards this end; we are in the process of finalizing our business plan to pursue grants and to engage in fundraising. Another key to our success will be to establish an effective training program for mentors that will increase their ability to be successful communicators, and to establish an effective monitoring system to protect both the youth and the mentor.

As the committee began to evaluate the effectiveness of this ministry project, we compared the sentiments of the faith community surveyed before the workshops to their commitment levels afterwards to determine whether the faith community has shifted in their outlook towards broken Black men. Before the workshop, 39% surveyed agreed that a person's criminal background should not determine if they are accepted in their faith community. After the workshop, over 85% of the congregation agreed that background should not determine their acceptance in their faith community. This one factor gives us evidence that the mindset of the faith community has shifted from separation to reconciliation.

In the next two chapters, I will discuss in detail how this project impacted my life. I thank God for trusting me to do kingdom work on earth. God has afforded me the opportunity to plant the seeds of reconciliation in the life of my ministry context. Effective planning and communication from the Lay Advisory Committee has resulted in a ministry opportunity that will positively impact the life of both the faith community of Belton Creek Baptist Church in Granville County, but also the state of North Carolina.

CHAPTER 5

THE PROJECT'S IMPACT PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope (Jeremiah 29:11 NRSV).

Ministry has a way of creating defining moments. Moments that changes the course of life and vocation. Certainly this ministry project has changed my outlook spiritually, theologically, biblically, and emotionally. I understand a little clearer the call that God has placed on my life. In this chapter, I will discuss how this project affected me in my personal walk with God. I will also discuss a refined theological outlook as a result of teaching faith communities how to engage in dialogue with broken Black men.

As a result of this project, I have become more aware of the ethical accountability of church leaders that is required for broken Black men to return to the church. It becomes difficult to offer men a new outlook on life when they look at the church and see the very thing they are trying to escape.

After engaging closely with my faith community and the community at large, I have come to the conclusion that the goal of the Black faith community should be to hold their leaders accountable in part, for the roles they play in the demise of the Black male in his failure to fight off the disconnection between the Black male and the Black church. Based on the recent report earlier stated from the Department of Justice Statistics, it is evident that Black men choose to separate themselves from the church community; but

why? Could it be partly due to the immorality within the church and the irresponsible and unethical conduct of church leaders inside and outside of the church?

There are a variety of reasons why Black males don't go to church. Although each of these play an important role to the absence of the Black male in his faith community, my project brought me closer to just a few of them; namely, human sexuality, hypocrisy, faith-submission-trust-forgiveness-angry at God, spirituality and worship and education. I will leave the other reasons for future scrutiny as I move forward addressing this ministry opportunity.

The issue of human sexuality has hovered over the Black church for decades. For some, the Scriptures are very clear on this matter and for others, the thought of God rejecting a child of God because of how one expresses themselves sexuality seems mind-boggling. There are many expressions of sexuality and to place limits or constraints only demonize the creativity of God. There is room, within the Black faith community to engage in dialogue surrounding the multiplicity of ways to express one's sexuality. Too often, narrow minded approaches to human sexuality clouds the lens of unity and as a result, people become ostracize when their definition of family doesn't the paradigms of those who seem to hold community and family hostage.

According to Willard Swartley, marriage between man and woman is God's intention for sexual union and fulfillment. Through procreation, humans too fulfill the narrative refrain, "each according to its kind." Procreation is viewed here as a privilege, responsibility, and blessing. So much so that in Old Testament life, barrenness was viewed as the lack of blessings.¹ He supports his position using the Mennonite

1. William M Swartley, *Homosexuality Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2003), 162.

perspective: “We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life. Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ, a covenant made in the context of the church. According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship.”²

Sexuality is much more than Swartley’s interpretation of marriage. The dynamics of the modern family has become much more than the male-female, two kids, and a dog model. And sexuality is not limited to physical interactions between male and female. Sexuality deals with maintaining physical health, engaging in healthy relationships, and building up individualize sexual self-awareness by understanding one’s sexual being and identity. Assumptions of sexuality lead to discrimination and discord. There was a valuable lesson to be learned from this project; that one’s personal position and discourse should not be the accelerant that ignites brokenness. A leader’s philosophical position concerning controversial matters should never be the reason why any of God’s children are denied the opportunity to return to their faith community. When leaders allow their beliefs to determine if they will obey God’s greatest commandment of love, then they fail in leading as God calls. Therefore, agreeing or disagreeing on human sexuality should not be the factor whether leaders are willing to engage in conversations with broken Black men.

Failure to engage in healthy dialogue on Black sexuality will continue to separate the Black male from the Black church. Caution to the reader, in terms of sexuality, we are also are not speaking of homosexuality, but healthy relations within the heart of one’s self.

2. Swartley, 164.

God has called us to love unconditionally. Unconditional love requires us to be in a continual relationship with God and a dependency on God to direct our paths.

Unconditional love does not prohibit the church leader from addressing human sexuality in the church. Instead, unconditional love requires us to deal with all issues no matter if it makes us feel good or not. The church should be a place where homosexuals, bisexuals, transgenderism, adulterers, murderers, thieves, and back sliders of all walks, shapes, and sizes are welcome as they are; seeking to reconnect with the power of God. Only God can save a sinner from damnation. What would the Black church look like if it is willing to allow God to transform the life of the sinner; regardless of their past mistakes? Our Black men have removed themselves from the church because most leaders fail to deal with the ethical issues that tear down the church.

In addition to dealing with the tough concerns that keep Black men from attending church, I have also come to realize through this project that is a dire need for preachers to hold themselves ethically at a high standard. There is a stigma within the Black faith community that preachers abuse their power as leader of God's people. The call to ministry is a call that must be taken very seriously. The call requires a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, a commitment to serve, sacrifice, moral integrity, ethical discourse, and the desire to lead by example. Whether male or female, black or white, all who are called must exemplify the willingness and the compassion to preach to the poor, the disfranchised and to those who are in bondage from sin. How can this be if we as preachers misused our power and authority for personal gain? Jesus imparted his spirit upon the church for the church to do God's will and not the will of the

preacher. It is very difficult to minister and meet lost Black men at the center of their needs when there are pastors abusing their powers for the sake of self-gratification.

During the exploration stage of this project, when I was reviewing various resources to shed light on this subject matter, I was intrigued by the information I discovered concerning the abuse of power that leads to sexual abuse. Joe Trull and James Carter suggest that long-standing sexual liaisons, homosexual relations, abuse of children, seduction of youth, inappropriate touching, and verbal and nonverbal innuendoes are all forms of sexual misconduct.³ Too often leaders within the church engage in unethical activities and conversations because they either lost or never gained ministerial integrity. One simply does not receive ministerial integrity because one felt the Lord called him into ministry. It would be preposterous to think that every Black preacher in America was called by God to proclaim the gospel to the poor, heal the broken hearted, and preach deliverance to the captives. If it were so, our communities and our families would be set free from the world's bondage. We have Black preachers that were not called by God and are serving their personal agendas and not the Lord's. As a result, they have no clue that ministerial ethics begin with a clear, decisive, and supernatural understanding of what it means to be called by God.

Sexual misconduct is a violation of the integrity of the office of the ordained minister. The pastor is entrusted with conducting him/herself in a manner that fosters trust between pastor and parishioner. Any violation would be contradictory to the ministry of Jesus Christ, and would be a betrayal of the ordination vows of the minister.

Trull points out six identifiable traits of sexual misconduct: (1) Sexual intercourse with persons outside a marriage covenant. This includes rape,

3. Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), 165.

consenting adult, children, and incapacitated persons. (2) Oral sex with persons outside a marriage covenant. (3) Unwanted or inappropriate physical touching outside a marriage covenant. This includes genital fondling, foreplay, and any physical contact not appropriate to pastoral ministry or normal friendship. (4) Physical-sensual display of the body or titillation of senses in ways suggestive of inappropriate sex. (5) The use of pornography, individually or with others, in ways intended to stimulate erotic fantasies of inappropriate sexual behavior. (6) Verbal and visual contact with another person that implies or demands inappropriate sexual responses.⁴

What if faith communities held Black church leaders accountable and demand that they live up to the moral and ethical standards deserving of free agents of the gospel? Would our Black men staying away from the church? One of the remarkable defining moments of my project was when I was told by a group of young Black men the reason why they stay far away from the church is because they see the same characteristics they are trying to avoid in the streets resides in the church. They want to run to a place that would accept them as they are and give them an opportunity to become good fathers and good husbands. I no longer look at people's current conditions with a judgmental damning expression. I look at people now with the mindset of reconciliation. This project truly taught me the how God desires to reconcile God's self to those who are lost without condemnation.

What a marvelous church it would be where broken people can experience reconciliation—a reunion between the sinner and the Savior. God called pastors to lead sheep to a place of understanding of who God is. The Bible speaks of a story where a farmer lost one of his one hundred sheep. But when that one returned home, he welcomed the sheep with a bigger celebration than what he expressed to the ninety-nine

4. Trull and Carter, 165.

that did not leave.⁵ It is this kind of excitement that Black men need to experience when they return to the church. Rather than the ninety-nine being upset with the one who returns because of what he has done, wouldn't it please God if they celebrate his return? Unfortunately they experience hypocrisy in the church instead.

How does the Black leader expect to save the one lost sheep when the lost sheep returns and sees the pastor doing the very same immoral acts that he is trying to escape? Based on Kunjufu's research, many brothers said that there were too many contradictions between what was being said in the church and what was being done in the community.⁶ That is, preachers tend to say one thing behind the pulpit but in the community engage in actions that contradict what they say. Black church leader's false claims of admirable principles, beliefs, or feelings are damaging our Black communities. I have learned during the research and implementation of this project that as Black church leaders we are failing our communities if we do not teach our congregants the importance of the church to embrace, instill, and demand of leadership and of themselves strong ethical values in order to transfer strong ethical principles in the sheep that are entrusted to shepherd if we are going to be successful in meeting our objectives with Black men. Hawkins is correct in his proposition that historically, the Black male has devalued life. But could this same notion be true of the black church leader as well?

Before I began to travel down the road to reconciliation of Black men to their faith community, I approached certain aspects of ministry with my own interest at heart. If there was a benefit that I could achieve, I was inclined to participate. But now, as my

5. Luke 15:1-7.

6. Kunjufu, 56.

project came to an end, I see things different. My ministry project has taught me that there's no time for serving self-interests. Instead, it is time to embrace behaviors that are conducive to God's plans. Morality is not defined by what people think about you or how they would perceive your actions while facing difficult circumstances. It is not what you do when people are around to pass judgment. Alternately, moral character is best described as what you do when no one is around. Who we are determines what we do. If we are children of God when people are observing us, we should also be children of God when no one is watching.

There is power when the people of God assemble on one accord—power that transforms death into life, sadness into joy, evil into good, and sin into salvation. The Black church leader is entrusted by God to use this power to preach the gospel to the poor and direct wayward lives to turn toward the only wise God who can keep them from falling. But it takes morality for the preacher to gain power.

It is my desire that the Black churches take a stance on tough ethical issues and address human sexuality by using the Word of God. How much power would our faith community have to speak life into death if our church leaders decide to serve God than themselves? Our community is dying and our Black men need to be rescued. Therefore, we must be able to look to the Black church as a place where healing occurs. I am not suggesting alienating any of God's children because of their sexuality. One's sexual preference cannot be compartmentalized in a global theological position. In fact, the alienation of God's children should never be up for debate. Just as some acts of sexuality can be considered as sinful in some communities of faith and not sinful in others; likewise, adultery, stealing, lying, coveting another's spouse, hypocrisy, fornication, and

hatred, just to name a few, are also considered to be sinful acts towards God. However, the latter seems to be an attraction to the church and the aforementioned a deterrent. In order for the Black church to be effective in reconciling the Black community, by way of the Black male presence, back to God, the preacher must be willing to take a stand against sin. Sin should never be up for debate. If your actions cause you to be separated from God's plans and purposes for your life; that's sin. God intends for His church to be without spot or wrinkle. My project taught me that failing to address the moral and ethical issues of the Black church has left the church unprepared for the return of the Messiah.

I also learned from listening to the conversations of the faith community that it is important to embrace conversations about God through the lens of Black experiences. There seems to be a lack of self-awareness and self-pride within the Black faith community. Historically, Black faith communities have viewed God as the God of the oppressed as if the Black faith community were the Hebrew slaves held captive by Pharaoh's army. The community could identify and relate to the struggles that oppression forced upon them. But when you talk to Black faith communities now, the God of the oppressed developed into the God of wealth and prosperity. As a result, when one finds themselves in a struggle, they become castaways isolated from fellowship with God and their faith community. The Black faith community must be reconciled to God through a theology that is relevant to Black life.

According to Gayraud S. Wilmore, the basic problem addressed by Black Theology is the ideological role racism plays in the culture of the North Atlantic Christian community, a culture which equated the authority and omnipotence of Euro

American White men with the authority and omnipotence of God Himself. That is, a culture which for almost two-thousand years created a deity in the image of the White man and gave God the attributes of Caucasian idealization. This is essentially the religious basis western Christianity and the cause of much of the oppression that Blacks and other non-White minorities have experienced.⁷ Based on Wilmore's assessment, there was a great need for the Black community to find its own identity for establishing a people who viewed God as a God of the oppressed. It was essential that Black people embraced a God who understood their plights and struggles. It was the Black theological movement that challenged Blacks to search the biblical stories and witness the correlation between the biblical struggles and the struggles of Blacks in the 1950's, 60's and 70's.

This period of history was a very difficult time for Black America. Black America wanted to be heard and respected as a people who had every bit of the right to have the same rights as their white counterparts. The cry for Black Power filled the hearts of an oppressed people. The Black Power movement's main focus was to define the world in the terms of Black America. Not only was there a need to define their world culturally, but spiritually as well. James Cone, the founder of Black theology, states, "The Black Church was thus faced with a theological dilemma: either reject Black Power as a contradiction of Christianity and thereby join the White Church in its condemnation of Black Power advocates as un-American and unchristian, or accept Black Power as a socio-political expression of the truth of the Gospel".⁸ The early Black Church leaders realized the importance of self-worth and a high value of purpose for the Black man.

7. Gayraud S Wilmore and James H Cone, *Black Theology; A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 603.

8. Wilmore and Cone, 350-51.

During the Civil Rights Movement, it became essential that the Black family stand on one concept, to defeat oppression and idea that has seemed to be lost over the years. I was reminded through the brokenness of Black men who saw no value in their culture, their history, nor their new possibilities that awaited them in their future the need for the promotion of self-worth and purpose in our Blackness. We once were Black and proud, now we are reduced to a level of shame and disgrace.

Has the Black church lost its identity? When broken Black men look into the Black church can they culturally relate to messenger and the message? Is the struggle for equality for Black Americans over? Have we accomplished the freedom and justice that the Black theological movement so desperately sought after? Black Theology was created to hold the church accountable for Black people's struggles and injustice from the hands of the oppressor. I have discovered that the absence of an effective Black theological discourse results in the Black church's failure to be relevant in the social, economic, and educational injustice that plagues our Black faith communities.

The Black family, led by the father, became empowered through the Black Church. The Church understood its place and purpose in securing and maintaining the stability of the Black family. The Black Church had to make important decisions on how they would systematically approach and define Black Power. "We knew that to define Black Power as the opposite of the Christian faith was to reject the central role that the Black Church has played in Black people's historical struggle for freedom", states Cone. "Rejecting Black Power also meant that the Black Church would ignore its political responsibility to empower Black people in their present struggle to make our children's

future more humane than intended by the rulers in this society”.⁹ The Black Church had then, and continue to have today a theological responsibility to empower the family in the midst of their struggles to obtain the basic human rights that White America enjoyed. The Black Church served as the training ground for families. There was a great need for theology to beat in rhythm with the heartbeat of the Black man. It was a Black tradition that the man was the head of his household. Therefore, the Black male marched to the drumbeat of the Black Theology movement. The Black man now sees the institution of the Church both as spiritual and now as a platform to demand social and political freedom. It was very important for the Black Church to establish the foundation of community. The Black Church began to require the people of God to look within their history to seek out and find innovative ways to consider and exist as Blacks in a White world. As a result of Black Theology, the Black man had a purpose and was proud to worship the God of the oppressed. “It was initially understood as the theological arm of Black Power, and it enabled us to express our theological imagination on the struggle of freedom independently of white theologians. It was the one term that white ministers did not like, because, like Black Power in politics, Black Theology located the theological starting point in the Black experience and not that particularity of the western theological tradition.”¹⁰

It was the Christian hope that Black men embraced when they were able to see themselves in the context of Scripture. As a result, Black families flocked to the churches to become equipped with the hope that God would resurrect their lives and save

9. Ibid.

10. Wilmore and Cone, 352.

them from the wicked hands of the oppressor. It was within the relationship of the Black struggle and Black Theology that the Black man became very powerful and influential.

What has happened to our Black men? Adam! Where are you? When the omnipotent, omnipresent God called out in the garden, Adam tried to hide himself because he felt as though he was naked and realized that he no longer was attached to the created power of God. Could it be that Black men are not attending church because they feel naked and detached from the omnipotent and the ever present creative power of God? According to the experience of this project, the answer is a resounding, “yes”.

When we have conversations about God through the lens of our faith communities, the community becomes knitted by threads of hope and faith in God. If unity exist in the chasm of despair and brokenness, the family becomes empowered with the presence of responsibility and accountability. A community divided renders itself powerless. But a community united has power to defy the ugliness of separation and destruction. When broken Black men return to the church, we must engage in conversations about God through the realities of Black life. We can no longer reject the Black Power socio-political expressions and discourse that create a keen sense of awareness. For too long Black churches have ignored their political responsibilities to empower Black people and as a result, Black men are wandering in the depths full of hopelessness and despair.

When Black theologians designed such a movement, in the 1950' and 60's, their goal was to make the future better for the Black children in America. I was taught many valuable lessons from this project but none more valuable to know that the struggle for social, economic, and educational equality is not over. In the midst of systematic failures in our judicial system, educational systems, and employment systems, today's Black

Church has developed a false sense of security with the ideology that the struggle for equality is over. To say that Blacks no longer have to deal with the economic, social, and political oppression is to say that being Black in America has no hardships attached.

I take away from this experience that fact that the Black Church failing to maintain and advance the Black Theological movement results in Black men no longer seeing value in the church. Since there is no struggle, there is no need to fight. Since there is no need to fight, there is no need to embrace the spiritual platform that challenged Black men to be strong leaders, husbands, and fathers. This is why we are developing mentoring for our young Black boys in Oxford, North Carolina. The struggle is not over. And it is the Black church's responsibility to continue the conversations that God will make a way in spite of the obstacles that we may face. Yes, it is a challenge, but a challenge that is worthwhile nonetheless. The Black Church must embrace the continuing struggles within its communities. God's revelation of God's self to the Black male empowers himself to recognize who he is. By instilling this value in our young Black men, we can truly make a difference.

Adam broke his relationship with God because of his disobedience. Even after his disobedience, God still gave him an opportunity to acknowledge his sins. Black men too have been naked because of their unwillingness to know themselves and to know God. Consequently, when humanity does not have a relationship with God, it is not able to embrace the Word of God as the foundation for life. What if the Black Church develops and train Black men to look at family through God's eyes? Would he look at the church as an extension to his family? According to Deotis Roberts, this is exactly what the Black church must do. "The Black Church also needs to define themselves as

the extended families. Black churches must provide knowledge, inspiration, and often the means to lift up families. Church should provide the programs and offer the space to enrich Black families.”¹¹

It becomes inevitable that if the Black Church is not fulfilling its obligation to inspire, lift up, enrich, and empower the Black family, the Black Church fails in its attempt to be what God has called the Church to be.

One could argue that time constantly evolves and changes; consequently, nothing stays the same. In part, that is a valid argument. Time does change and so does the plight of the Black man. However, the Word of God doesn't change. Since God is the same yesterday, today, and the days to come, His principles will always apply to any metamorphosis that life offers. The church leaders thought it not robbery to teach Black men the Word of God to fulfill his duties in the Black family in the Civil Rights era, so why haven't Black theologians revisited Black Theology for today's Black community? The Black man cannot relate to the church because the Black Church is not being accountable for the current struggles that Black America faces. Since life constantly evolves, our perception of life should change as well. Yes, we may have experienced success from the struggles of our forefathers, but that does not mean there isn't a new struggle. If God is the giver of life, shouldn't our relationship with God change as life changes? This would suggest that the Black Theological movement should also change to reflect the current state of the Black family and particularly the Black male. This would empower Black men and offer them the hope that is essential to please God.

11. Deotis J Roberts, *The Prophethood of Black Believers; An African American Political Theology For Ministry* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 57.

The principles of Cone, Wilmore, and Roberts are so valuable. Like any great movement, there should be a birth of new theologians who will pick up where they left off. The problem is that ministry has no social or political urgency. Wilmore reminds us that the role of Black Theology was to liberate Blacks from the White ideology of God they imposed on all believers. Black Theology's purpose is the development of an inner-directed, self-determined theology grounded in the praxis of liberation from white domination in all areas of faith and life.¹² Black leaders understood the need to be loosed from the domination ideology that White theology imposed. The problem today is that Black Church leaders have reverted back to White domination in theology, therefore, causing the Black male to disconnect himself from the church, his family, and God. There must be a revival--a revival of young Black theologians who will enhance Cone's work to reflect the dire need for empowerment in the Black family through the Black male. Now is the time for the Adams of this world to reconcile them to God through the Black Church.

Although the Black Church bears a lot of the responsibility to empower the family, after the completion of my project, I now believe that the Black male must also assume his share of the blame of his absence as well. Too often Black men relate their troubles to the oppression that is caused by those who have political and economic power. Black men should have an innate desire to excel in all of their endeavors. For the most part, Black men prefer to be influenced by the American dream rather than Martin Luther King's dream of equality and accountability. But how did they get to the point where rich Black history and Black Church culture are no longer important? The problem lies in the Black male failing to submit to the authority of another man.

12. Wilmore and Cone, 604.

Therefore, he turned himself off from the church. Trying to avoid shifting all the blame to Black clergy, one must conclude that the shift from authentic to coercive leadership in the Black Church created an environment that induced animosity between the church and the Black male.

While on a retreat, Kunjufu interviewed several Black men, who openly admitted they do not want to attend any church, to find out why they choose not to attend church. He wanted to explore deeper what caused the noticeable change in the structure of the Black family as it relates to the father being the spiritual leader of the house. He states, “Many of the brothers say there was too much contradiction between what was being said in the church and what was being done in the community.”¹³ To most Black men, there is no consistency with the preaching on Sunday and the actions on Monday through Saturday amongst Black Church leaders. Based on our survey findings, 77% believe that hypocrisy within the Black church is the reason why Black men avoid participating in religious activities. Kunjufu supports our data as he points out that hypocrisy keeps brothers from the Church.¹⁴ The contradictions many brothers witness in their communities could have been avoided if Black Church leaders would have adjusted their theology to reflect their changing community. As a result of a static theology, Black men began to view the church and its institutions as hypocritical. Ministers allowed themselves to be the focus rather than empowering God’s people to look to the hills from whence cometh their help. God was and still is the answer to all of the problems of Black America.

13. Kunjufu, 56.

14. Ibid.

Another concern that I was exposed to while talking with young Black men about what keeps them from being active in their faith community is their egos. With the advancement of education and the desire to achieve a piece of the American dream, Black men developed an ego that does not allow criticism or spiritual advice to influence his household and they become irritated by always being told what the pastor said about this and what the pastor said about that until he becomes frustrated by the pastor and what he represents. As a result, attending church becomes a major problem. His ego will not allow him to enter into the House of God. Men became frustrated with the Church when they constantly heard from their wives, “If you could be like the pastor...,” and “the pastor says real men do ...,” and their definition of a real man was the pastor.”¹⁵ Too often Black men are being redefined by the current situation. God intended for the Black man to be the head of his household. That is His divine order. Black men need to be held accountable for being responsible in doing the things of God as it relates to the Black family. This can only take place if he is taught how to be Black and in love with God.

A significant piece of information I learned about young Black men was what motivates them. Young black men become aware of self through the individual interaction with and reaction to other members of society, his peers, parents, teachers, church leaders, and others.¹⁶ Through identification and as a necessary means of effective communication, young men learn to assume the roles and attitudes of those with whom he interacts. The collective attitudes of others in the community give the

15. Jawanza Kunjufu, 57.

16. Reginald Jones, 113.

individual his identity of self. The individual's self is shaped, developed, and controlled by his anticipating and assuming the attitudes and definitions of others (the community) toward him. To the extent that the individual is a member of this community, its attitudes are his, its values are his, and its norms are his. His image of himself is structured in these terms. Young black men living in a white American society assume the attitudes of those with whom he identifies and the looking glass in which he gazes reflects both what he sees when he looks at himself and what he is perceived to be by those who gaze upon him.¹⁷ However, it is not just white America who looks upon him and sees the reflection of undesirability, it is also the community with which he once identified that looks upon him with indignation.

I have learned while conducting my project that there will be resistance from the faith community in shifting their theological views as it relates to embracing the possibility of seeing Black life through God's eyes. The problems that plague Black faith communities are fraught with many challenges and obstacles to overcome. There must be a comprehensive attempt to tear down the mentality of assimilation and recapture the African-American traditions that made the Black community strong; a community that was led by strong Black men who tore down racial, social, and economical barriers that were placed on them by a racist society.

What would the Black faith community look like if they took the necessary steps to eradicate the absence of the Black male? This project has taught me that the Black communities across our nation should first start by gathering its strength from within the Black church. If there is a divided community, there cannot be any growth. One of the functions of the church is to be a living organism design to mend brokenness back together and those who have been called by God

17. Reginald Jones, 114.

to be leaders should focus on bringing these young Black men into partnership with the church and in a relationship with God to regain the Black male's dignity. Too often churches talk about making a difference in the community but fall short on their practices.

Since life constantly evolves, the Black church must also realize the problems of Black America evolve as well. If God is the giver of life and life evolves, the Black church should teach our community that our relationship with God also changes. In order to bring the Black male back to the church, the church must be willing to evolve with the new paradigms of Black life and the failure to reunite the Black male with its roots, the Black church, will result in further separation of the Black family.

According to J. Deotis Roberts, the Black church should be defined as the extension of family. The extended family is one in which everybody counts and belongs. The oppressed, the downtrodden, the outcast, and the homeless need to look to the Black church as their extended family.¹⁸ That is, the church must stand in the gap for the Black family. It is evident that the Black community must be led by the leaders of the Black church. That means that the Black church must emphasize and foster the relationship between being a child of God and being Black in the 21st century.

Black theology must encourage the people of God that Jesus Christ exemplifies the life of Africans in America. The eschatological hope of things to come gives the Black community hope in a desolate situation. Black churches must provide knowledge, inspiration and programs that enrich Black families. It is sound and relevant doctrine that will attract Black men to the church--a doctrine that unites Black men and convicts their souls.

Another challenge to Black men coming back to the church is the demise of the Black family. The Black family is in dire need of restoration. The Black family must regain its prominence in society. This means the morality and the behavior of all characters in the family must change. Parents must behave as parents; children as children; and the household should fall

18. Deotis Roberts, 56-57.

under the authority of God rather than the world. It is the strength of the Black family or lack of it that has created a void in accountability of Black America. It is impossible for Black men to be responsible in the community when they are irresponsible in their homes. God is a God of order and not chaos. Therefore, Black men need to put life in its proper divine order. Indeed the plight deepens for the Black male. But it does not have to define a people. God reveals Himself through His words and actions. His majestic nature governs the earth. It is by the power of God, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the Black male finds his hope. It is in this Christian hope that God will resurrect the Black man from his worldly nature and raise up a community of leaders.

When ministry opportunities are created to speak life into the midst of death, there will be challenges that must be addressed. Our Black communities have become a community of people divided; divided by economics, politics, education, and religion. The suffering resulting from segregation was reinforcement that suppressed this great divide and gave the appearance of a unified people. Has this always been the case?

Carter G. Woodson once wrote that “When the free Negroes were advised a hundred years ago to go to Africa, they replied that they would never separate themselves from the slave population of this country as they were brethren by the ‘ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong. However, the Negro in the North turns up his nose at the crude migrant from the South who brings to the North the race problem as well as more thrift and actual progress than the Northern Negro ever dreamed of”.¹⁹ Before the division of the African American race, Blacks sought to stand in unity. However, when the great divide of the northern Negro, and their intellect, from the southern Negro and their ability to produce work, adapt, and excel with their labor, the Black community took on the culture of individualism and left its common fiber that held the race together--the need to be together as one.

19. Carter G Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1990), 97-98.

In the eyes of modern day segregation, Black communities must once again unite as one. The Black faith community once understood the struggle was not of the rich or the poor within the Black community, but the struggle of being a human with all substantial rights. The Civil Rights Movement was paramount in the quest to place Africans in America in a position of respect in society. However, on the backside of the same movement, Blacks replaced their African souls for the quest to reach the American dream. The Civil Rights Movement, led by the Black church and Black theology, was designed to progress the Black community and not to digress. Nonetheless, Blacks have done just that; wandered back into a Black world divided. No people can go forward when the majority of those who should know better have chosen to go backward, but this is exactly what most of our misleaders do.²⁰ In a sense, our community leaders have failed us in moving the race forward. More precisely, our Black church leaders have failed us in moving our race forward. Instead of embracing the theology of individualism, our church leaders should empower people with the theology of unity. God desires that His people press toward the mark of the high calling. He is calling the Black church to move forward and not backwards. This requires the Black church to unite with all despite their current conditions. Once the Black church has defeated the spirit of individualism, then, and only then, will the Black male return to the church.

The Black faith community has always relied on their God to deliver them from the hands of the enemy. Their theology has always been based on the God who delivered the Hebrews from the hands of Pharaoh. The historical struggle of Black people for liberation is inseparable from the struggles of Israel where God revealed Himself to the Hebrews. The history of revelation and the history of liberation are the same in the sense that both revelation and liberation are not possessed by man; rather, revelation and liberation both possess us. Therefore, the theology that is relevant to the Black church is that there is an intimate relationship between

20. Carter G Woodson, 125.

the family and the church in African American experiences. “The ‘family’ is one of the few ‘images’ that still has rich potential for communicating meaning to Black people...Family life is universal; it answers to universal human requirements...The family is not only a social and economic institution—it is also a moral and religious school for children when it functions properly. The Black church, as a social and religious body, has served as a kind of extended family for Blacks.”²¹

Evans agrees with J. Deotis Roberts in that the Black church must consider them as the extended family. A family where there are no exclusions. A place where the oppressed, the downtrodden, the outcast, the homeless can find shelter and safety. This theology then becomes relevant and reunites Black men to a loving God who reconciles them back to their place in His kingdom.

There should be less emphasis on praxis and more emphasis of relationship. Through sound doctrine, Black men can understand that God has called him to be in relationship with Jesus Christ, and it is through this relationship that the Black male began to understand who he is because he now knows who God is. It is the Christian hope that God will restore His people to their original creation with the anticipation of seeing God’s glory in God’s kingdom. This Christian hope is fostered, for the Black community, when the Black male is present and in his Godly position as the head of the household. It is very essential for the progress of the Black community and the eradication of the problems with our Black males that we empower the Black community, through our Black churches, by teaching a relevant theology.

21. James H Evans Jr, *We Have Been Believers* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1992), 130.

CHAPTER 6

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

So that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments (Psalm 78:7 NRSV).

There are many factors that devastate the Black community, none more impactful than the absence of the Black man. As before stated, there are many definitions of family. This project simply addresses the Black family in the context of the male-female relationship. Not to deny the other relationships that are equally important, this project's intentions is not to ostracize the same-sex relationships within the Black community; however this narrative focused on the relationship of the Black male returning from the destructions of life he once called home. Also, in a progressive society where independence is relevant, the language of a strong Black family with the male taking his rightful place as a husband and a father is not intended to alienate the many single mothers who raised and continue to raise productive and wonderful families to which I myself am a product of. Therefore when we begin to consider where we go from here, we will maintain the emphasis on the importance of the Black male becoming actively involved with his family.

As discussed previously the Black church functions at its best when it becomes an extension of the Black community as a result, the Black church then becomes a vehicle that promotes and sustains the presence and engagement of the Black male. The 21st

century church must be relevant to the Black community and must foster relationships with Black men. When a Black man is saved from destruction, his family is also saved. If men build their relationship with God, their family's relationship with God becomes strong. In a more antiquated era, the Black man was considered the head of his family—not to lord over and tear down, but to love and to build up. A more modern approach, due to the absence of the male figure in the household, is the independence of the Black woman who was forced to be both nurturer and provider as normal illustrations and nomenclature of family.

To the Christian, the separation of humanity from God results in death. This separation of God and humanity voids the hope of things to come and renders one powerless to deal with life's difficult challenges. Sin does not discriminate nor does it seek after its prey based on social, economic, or religious thoughts or ideas. Sin, which leads to death by separating one's relationship with God, shatters and destroys lives, and families; White or Black. However, through the lens of the Black faith communities, this separation leaves an inevitable mark on society; it destroys generations, uproots hope, leaves dreams into fragmented pieces of nothingness, and leads to the annihilation of communities. But when the Black man is in fellowship with God, he has power—Black power. This power lets the Black family know that they can do all things through Jesus Christ. This power reminds them that the Black family is more than a conqueror and is able to look into the eyes of oppression and have victory and not defeat.

Black men, come home is a call for action for the reconciliation of broken families through the reconciliation of broken Black men. Through the efforts of the ecclesia's relationship with God, reconciliation is a reality. You have been gone too long.

Black men, come home is a call that speaks to a void in communities of faith charging young Black men to return where they belong; with their family. When you are away, your sons grow up hating life, but when you are home, they look to you for guidance. It is a call to action for men to return to a place where your sons would rather be at home than the penitentiary. When boys see their fathers pray and worshipping God, they too begin to pray and worship God. Come home; to your rightful place at the table of life. A table where there is life, forgiveness, reconciliation, hope, restoration, and redemption; a table that God has prepared just for you in the presence of your enemies.

Consider this thought. What if there existed a community where men and women were given a second chance to recapture their opportunities to live as God intended them to live? What if it was the norm for families to worship and pray together, would homes be broken, families destroyed, and a generation of Black men absent from their homes?

There is a lot of work that we must do. Our project's desired results for the Black male is to have a complete, healthy, holistic family that honors and seek God's kingdom and righteousness can be achieved. When the Black male returns to his rightful place in the church, he will regain his value and develop an environment within his family that develops unity. The disparity of Black men in America compared to non-Black men in America is a result of the absence of the Black father in the life of the Black family. Although the church is not the only place where the Black male can find his way back into the life of his family and community, it is the preeminent place to begin.

As mentioned before, there are many definitions of family. The focus of the Black male as an intricate part of the family is just one aspect of family. There are healthy and whole Black families without the presence of the Black make, I myself am a

product of such a family. Nonetheless, there is a void in my life that I contribute to a family without a father. Therefore my hypotheses are birth from personal experiences that I believe could pay great dividends for Black families through the Black church.

Also contemplate on this thought; does ethics among church leaders produce unity within the faith community? Through the church, families become stronger when its leader exemplifies the moral and ethical values that will promote unity in the Black community. Christian ethics should never be substituted for personal positions. There are many concerns that continue to divide the Black church and demoralize the Black family to which the church looks to its leader for answers. And when men and women look to the church for answers, Black church leaders must be prepared with a moral response.

Also reflect on this thought; what if leaders led God's community through God's word and not their self-prophesying message laced with discrimination and oppression that's based on cultural, economic, sexuality, and religious mindsets. God's word gives its readers insight on and directives to all the issues that may divide the faith community. Can we hear what the Lord is saying about the need for Black men to return to their faith communities? Will we respond?

If our message align with our actions, would it be possible that we then become able to transform and reconcile broken lives. Wasn't it Jesus who said that, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor?"¹ If we are to be the church that Christ will be looking for when he returns, a church without spot or wrinkle, we must submit to the Spirit of God, preach the good news to the

1. Luke 4

poor, heal the broken hearted, recover sight to the blind, and preach deliverance to those who are enslaved physically and mentally.

Finally, consider this, what would our churches look like if we, as ministers of the gospel, would create and develop ministries that meet the needs of broken Black men? Finding creative ways to deliver a message that speaks to the desires of young Black men encourages young Black men to embrace the possibilities of being more than an individual without hope or purpose, but becomes one with a sense of direction and values that thrusts him into being an intricate member of his faith community.

Where does Belton Creek Baptist Church go from here? As a result of our ministry project, we have developed a nonprofit company to provide mentoring for young Black boys starting at the fifth grade throughout their completion of high school. This initiative will create partnerships with the local school district providing young men assistance in achieving academic goals. The men of Belton Creek will become mentors to these children and their goal will be to provide human and spiritual development that inspires boys to become men of valor.

This initiative will have four key components: (1) Saturday Academy Tutoring is the central education component of Belton Creek Ministries' Boys to Men initiative. Students may participate in structured tutoring designed to assist their achievement in the classroom. The Lay Advisory Committee felt the need to mentor young Black men with the basic skills that reduces barriers of engagement. They felt that if young Black men are educational inferior, they will remain in isolation which will eventually lead to destruction. The Saturday Academy allows the educators of Belton Creek to engage in ministry within the context of their expertise. (2) Camp David is another component of

the initiative that focuses on providing students with opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. (3) Camp Habakkuk is the third component of the initiative that will focus on providing students with opportunities in Language, Reading, and Writing. (4) Men of Valor is the final component of the initiative that will focus on providing human and spiritual development for students (See Appendix F). Deacon Cozart volunteered his time and efforts to develop a community basketball league which gave our young mentees the opportunity to build relationships with mentors.

This project's goal is not to stop at the local level, but to take this initiative throughout the state of North Carolina. During the implementation of our project, we had the pleasure of sharing my thoughts with the Executive Secretary of the North Carolina General Baptist Convention and they are interested in having me share my initiative with their member churches. Moving forward, the Belton Creek Community Initiative would like to take advantage of the opportunity to make a difference in the state of North Carolina. We plan to share our project with the masses. We are called to be co-laborers of the gospel to share and unite. This is what we intend to do. With the same principles that we are using within my faith community, we are confident that it will also be successful state wide.

As pastor of the Belton Creek Baptist Church, I set out to encourage each member to challenge themselves to become a part of the efforts to reconnect families to the church. I wanted to inspire to achieve new possibilities of ministry and encourage them to embrace their vital roles in advancing God's kingdom on earth by extending love to those who are lost as Jesus Christ extended his love to us when he delivered us from our transgressions.

Our Lay Advisory Committee's expectations will not be realized overnight. Understanding that the absence of the Black male did not happen overnight, we will not allow immediate gratification to dampen opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others. This task will mature over time and it is my goal and expectation for Belton Creek to make these efforts a way of life. God calls each of us to service. In fulfilling our calls, we must not lose focus on the purpose to which we were called; therefore, it is our contention that the church is called to reconcile the lost to a loving God who is willing to look beyond past disappointments and mistakes. This project was certainly not an indictment of Belton Creek Baptist Church. Belton Creek applauded the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of broken people. Also, this concern is not germane to just Belton Creek. It is a global issue that has to be addressed one church at a time.

As Pastor, I believe we can reduce the violence in our neighborhoods, curb the incarceration rate that plagues our communities, and give hope in areas where despair is rampant when we focus on the Black male's return to his faith community. It takes the efforts of churches working in concert with each other to make a difference; but it starts with one church.

Indeed, our communities are plagued by absent fathers who seem to prefer incarceration over family participation. This void affects not only Black communities but all communities. And I believe there is a great opportunity in today's ecclesia to address these concerns. We must be willing to address old ways and have the courage to make changes. We must not fall prey to the schemes of abusive powers that have shredded the fibers of unity in our communities. We must remove the mask of hypocrisy that serves as a barricade to authentic fellowship, so that one day, when Adam decides to return home,

we will be the church that celebrates his arrival. And we cannot shy away from the tough conversations of human sexuality. There is a reason why Black men are disengaged from faith communities, and it is my intention to understand why this is so within my own community.

As a result of this project, my Lay Advisory Committee and I were able to expand our thoughts throughout our community. We had the opportunity to engage in dialogue with various churches during their Men's Day celebration. Our committee took upon themselves to spread the word of what we were doing at Belton Creek. They were excited to be a part of what they considered to be a movement; a movement to bring Black men back to the church. They spread the word at the local barber shops, beauty salons, and the church associations. Relationships were building as a result of our team.

Our work caught the eye of Rev. Anthony Evans, founder and CEO of the Black Church Initiative in Baltimore, Maryland. His initiative focuses on bringing ten million Black men back to the church over a ten year period. Similar to what our focus was but on a larger scale. They ran into a glass ceiling in their efforts. They were successful in their efforts to bring Black men back to the church but they were failing in keeping them engage and subsequently losing them to the environments they once escaped. Our project addressed their concern. Since we focused on training the laity how to deal with them once they return, our efforts seemed to be a good fit to join their efforts. We partnered together to conduct a leadership workshop at Shaw University, in Raleigh, NC at their annual Leadership Conference in the School of Divinity. This opportunity for me to present my ideas to a group of local pastors, those who were training to become pastors, and educators. This was the ultimate litmus test for my project. The conference was a

major success and we received numerous offers to conduct workshops at various churches in the area. The divinity school invited me to return in the spring to facilitate a panel discussion during their annual Minister's Conference. Also, after the conference, the Black Church Initiative offered me an opportunity to work with them on a more permanent basis. However, after much prayer and contemplation, the Lay Advisory Committee and I decided to focus on our initiative and impact lives locally before we went abroad.

Our project allowed me to pursue my passion to pay it forward. I grew up in a single parent home and I can relate to the need for positive male role models for young Black men. My mother was a strong willed woman who was determined that my brother and I would have positive Black men that we could look to for guidance. When my father transitioned from earth to glory; my mother instilled in me the value to associate myself around people who could help me achieve my goals in life. As pastor of Belton Creek Baptist Church, I have followed my mother's advice. My Lay Advisory Committee has given me valuable support that made this project a success. Working together in to achieve a common goal, my Lay Advisory committee worked very hard to achieve our intended outcome. Their input was valuable and through prayer and fellowship this Lay Advisory Committee will transition to our new Ministry Advisory Committee advising me with future projects for our new initiative.

My hope is that when I look out at the congregation, there will be a large contingency of young Black men of all ages celebrating their spirituality, not in isolation, but in fellowship with all. When our forefathers addressed public issues, they used biblical messages to state their case. It was the echoes from the pulpit at Dexter Avenue

Baptist Church that the voice of hope rang out in a time of despair--where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. encouraged the nation to dream. It was also the esteemed pulpit at Concord Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York, where the embodiment of social justice became relevant and where Dr. Gardner C. Taylor spoke against the injustices that plagued Black communities. And so it will also be from the pulpit of Belton Creek Baptist Church, and prayerfully pulpits across the state of North Carolina, where the voice of reconciliation will blow its trumpet and I will invite all to sit at the table and tell their stories. We must let our voices be heard and speak against the forces of oppression that hinder our communities from experiencing the fullness of Christ.

APPENDIX A

C.G. CREDLE ELEMENTARY 2011-2012 END-OF-YEAR REPORT CARD

High Student Performance

Performance of students in Each Grade on the ABC's End-of-Grade Test
Percentage of Students' Scores at or above Grade level

	Grade 3	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 5	Overall	Overall
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
Our School	50.0%	56.1%	49.4%	68.4%	52.3%	60.5%	50.6%	61.9%
District	60.4%	74.8%	63.0%	78.0%	68.2%	76.5%	65.3%	75.0%
State	68.8%	82.8%	71.6%	85.1%	72.3%	82.1%	71.2%	82.8%

Performance of each student group on the ABC's End-of-Grade Tests
Percentage of students, grouped by gender, ethnicity, and other factors
who passed both the reading and math tests

	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	E.D	N.E.D
Our School	42.1%	48.2%	65.5%	35.9%	41.2%	37.9%	64.5%
# of test taken	121	110	58	142	17	169	62
District	56.0%	63.0%	72.1%	43.7%	46.4%	47.1%	75.6%
State	65.0%	70.1%	79.3%	49.4%	55.1%	54.2%	84.1%

C.G. Credle Elementary
Jennifer Carraway, Principal
Tonya Thomas, prior Principal
223 College Street
Oxford, NC 27565
(919) 693-9191
Grades PK-5
Regular School
Traditional Calendar
Title I
Granville County Schools

Quality of Teachers

	Number of classroom teachers	Fully licensed teachers	Teachers with advance degrees	National Board Certified Teachers	Teacher Turnover Rate
Our School	35	100%	24%	5	9%
District	28	99%	28%	4	15%
State	35	99%	30%	6	12%

More information about this school is available on the NC School Report Cards website at:
<http://www.ncreportcards.org>

APPENDIX B

PRISON INMATES AT MIDYEAR 2009 STATISTICS FROM THE BUREAU OF STATISTICS

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics



Bureau of Justice Statistics

Statistical Tables

June 2010, NCJ 230113

Prison Inmates at Midyear 2009 Statistical Tables

Heather C. West, Ph.D.
BJS Statistician

As of June 30, 2009, state and federal correctional authorities had jurisdiction over

1,617,478 prisoners, an increase of 0.5% (7,719 prisoners) since December 31, 2008.* Overall, 34 states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons reported increases in their prison population during this 6-month period. The Federal Bureau of Prisons reported the largest increase with a growth of 5,297 prisoners followed by Georgia (up 1,733), Pennsylvania (up 1,316), Indiana (up 1,207), North Carolina (up 1,062), and Florida (up 1,035). Of the

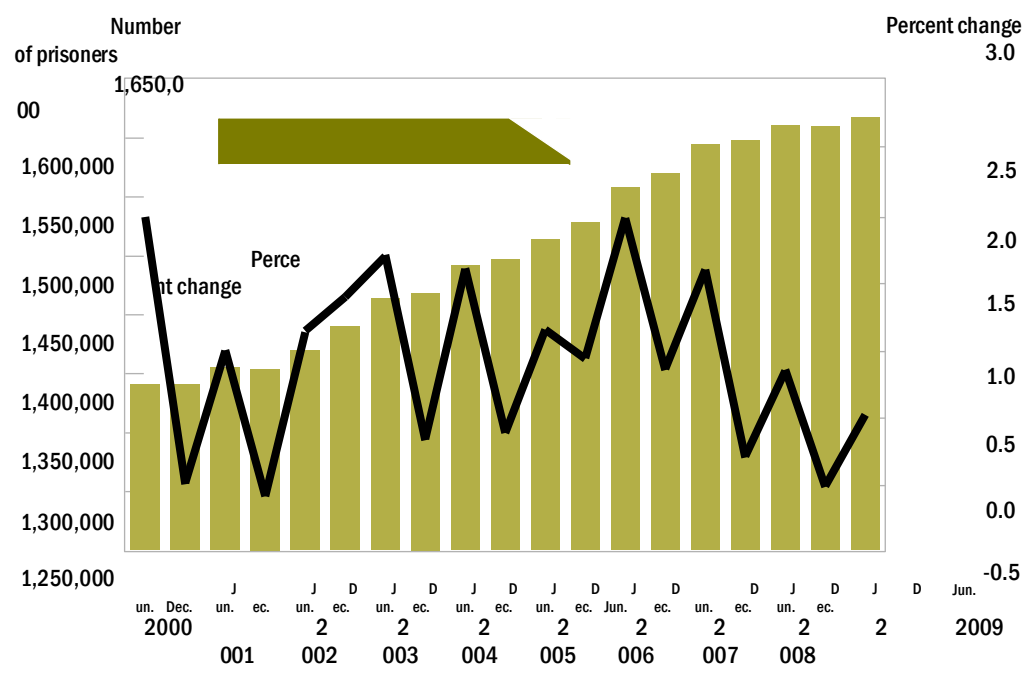
16 states reporting decreases, California (down 3,644), Texas (down 2,347), and Michigan

(down 1,554) reported the largest decreases. Eighteen states reported changes of less than

100 prisoners such as Nebraska (up 1) and Idaho (down 7). The statistical tables included in this report detail the characteristics of the U.S. prison population and provide data on the total custody population.

*Jurisdiction refers to prisoners under the legal authority of state and federal correctional officials, regardless of where a prisoner is held.

Six-month count and percent change of prisoners under state or federal jurisdiction, June 30, 2000-2009



Selected characteristics of prisoners under state or federal jurisdiction:

From December 31, 2009 to June 30, 2009—

- The U.S. prison population increased by 7,719 prisoners (0.5%), reaching 1,617,478 prisoners.
- About 70% (5,297 prisoners) of the prison growth occurred at the federal level. The remaining increase of 2,422 prisoners occurred at the state level.
- About 1 in every 198 U.S. residents was imprisoned with a sentence of more than 1 year, a rate of 504 prisoners per 100,000 U.S. residents.
- Males were imprisoned at a rate 14 times higher than females (954 per 100,000 U.S. residents compared to 68 per 100,000 U.S. residents, respectively).
- Approximately 8% (127,688 prisoners) of the prison population was housed in private facilities.
- Another 5.1% (82,370 prisoners) of the prison population was housed in local jails.

Selected characteristics of inmates held in custody in state or federal prisons or in local jails:

As of June 30, 2009—

- State and federal prisons and local jails had custody, or physical guardianship, over 2,297,400 inmates, a decrease of 0.5% since yearend 2008.
- The decrease in the custody population resulted from the 2.3% (17,936 inmates) decline of inmates held in local jails.
- About 1 in every 134 U.S. residents was held in custody in state or federal prisons or in local jails, a rate of 748 inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents.
- Black non-Hispanic males, with an incarceration rate of 4,749 inmates per 100,000 US residents were incarcerated at a rate more than 6 times higher than white non-Hispanic males (708 inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents) and 2.6 times higher than Hispanic males (1,822 inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents).
- One in every 300 black females was incarcerated compared to about 1 in every 1,099 white females and 1 in every 704 Hispanic females.
- Non-U.S. citizens made up 4.1% (94,498 inmates) of the state and federal custody population.
- Another 2,778 inmates in state custody were under age 18.

APPENDIX C

IMPORTANCE SCALE SURVEY

IMPORTANCE SCALE SURVEY

Name:
Age:
Gender:

For each question below, circle the number to the right that best fits your opinion on the importance of the issue. Use the scale above to match your opinion.

Question	Scale of Importance				
	Not at all	Not very	No Opinion	Some-what	Extremely
Is it important to you that black men attend church?	1	2	3	4	5
How important is it to you that black men have a relationship with God?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you think it is critical for black men to preserve the history and legacy of their faith communities?	1	2	3	4	5
How significant is it to vitality of the family for black men to be presence in the home?	1	2	3	4	5
Is it important for black men to be engage in a faith community to sustain the family?	1	2	3	4	5
Is it imperative that the church be held accountable for its actions to uphold a level of integrity?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you think hypocrisy is a reason why black men avoid faith communities?	1	2	3	4	5
Does homosexuality play in the why black men avoid attending church?	1	2	3	4	5
Does a person's background determine whether they are accepted in the faith community?	1	2	3	4	5
Is being transparent and open important in faith communities?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you believe the lack of jobs is a reason why black men fail to be active in faith communities?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you believe that young adult black men lost their faith in God or do not believe in God to be the reason why they do not attend church?	1	2	3	4	5

1. What would be your method to ministering to broken black men? _____

2. How words of encouragement would you offer to someone who just was released from prison? _____

3. What are the signs of depression? _____

4. How do you reach one who has no regards to authority? _____

5. What do you think when you see a young man with his pants sagging? _____

6. How has your relationship with your father impact your life? _____

7. What motivates young black men? _____

8. How does one's image relate to one's role in the family, community, and the church? _____

9. Is language a barrier for you (vulgar, slain, and hip-hop)? _____

10. What is your suggestion in connecting black men to the church? _____

APPENDIX D

RESULTS OF THE IMPORTANCE SURVEY

Surveyed 61 Females, 58 Males	Scale of Importance				
	Not at all	Not very	No Opinion	Some-what	Extremely
Is it important to you that black men attend church?	2	3	3	15	85
How important is it to you that black men have a relationship with God?	0	1	5	9	107
Do you think it is critical for black men to preserve the history and legacy of their faith communities?	0	1	5	32	84
How significant is it to vitality of the family for black men to be presence in the home?	0	3	5	20	90
Is it important for black men to be engage in a faith community to sustain the family?	1	1	3	32	81
Is it imperative that the church be held accountable for its actions to uphold a level of integrity?	0	4	10	32	73
Do you think hypocrisy is a reason why black men avoid faith communities?	9	9	10	66	26
Does homosexuality play in the why black men avoid attending church?	35	27	19	29	8
Does a person's background determine whether they are accepted in the faith community?	36	10	19	43	12
Is being transparent and open important in faith communities?	0	8	13	49	62
Do you believe the lack of jobs is a reason why black men fail to be active in faith communities?	44	24	7	38	10
Do you believe that young adult black men lost their faith in God or do not believe in God to be the reason why they do not attend church?	38	18	9	26	12

Inside the Numbers

- 84% agree that it is somewhat to extremely important for Black men to attend church.
- 97% agree that it is important for Black men to have a relationship with God.
- 97% agree that it is critical for Black men to preserve their legacy and history of their communities.
- 93% agree Black men are significant to the vitality of the Black family.
- 95% agree that it is important for Black men to engage in a faith community to sustain the Black family.

- 88% agree that it is imperative that the churches be held accountable for their actions to uphold a level of integrity.
- 77% agree that hypocrisy is the reason why Black men avoid their faith communities.
- 52% agree that sexual orientation is not the reason why Black men do not attend church while 16% surveyed had no opinion.
- 39% agree that a person's background should not determine if they are accepted in the faith community.
- 93% agree that it is important to be transparent and open in faith communities.
- 68% agree that the lack of jobs is not the reason why Black men fail to be active in their faith communities.
- 55% either had no opinion or agree that young Black men have not lost their faith in God.

APPENDIX E

ADAM COME HOW WORKSHOP PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Adam Come Home Workshop

Workshop Outline

- I. Welcome/ Introduction
 - a. Entry Survey
 - b. Purpose
 - c. Objective
 - d. Intended Outcome
- II. Black Men and their Mental Health
- III. Black Men and their Relationships
- IV. Black Men and the New Paradigms
- V. Black Church Initiative
- VI. Closing

Preparations and Materials

- Read workshop outline
- Pray for God's movement in the workshop's objective and intended outcomes
- Print the above workshop as an agenda
- Create surveys and evaluation forms based upon your goals for conducting the workshop. Make copies of forms for all participants.
- Make copies of handouts (Use different colors for each handout to that participants can follow with ease).
- Arrange for assistant to help greet, distribute handouts, record group comments, collect forms, and help clean up.
- Arrange for snacks during the break.
- Arrange for flexible space that can accommodate moving chairs in several formations.
- Set up room with projector, sign-in sheet, name badges, pen, and folder for handouts.
- Gather the following materials
 - Pens
 - Blank name badges and markers
 - Folders (to collect handouts)
 - Copies of handouts and evaluation forms
 - White/black board makers
 - Projector
 - Laptop
 - 3x5 cards

Conducting Workshop

VII. Welcome/Introduction (15 minutes)

Greet the participants. Have each participant complete out a name badge

- a. Purpose
 - i. Scripture Foundation
 1. Genesis 3:9; *Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"*
 2. Mark 5:9; *Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many."*
- b. Objective: To provide disciples the essential tools to be able to effectively minister to broken black men.
- c. Intended Outcome: Congregational laity would embrace the opportunities of ministry by sharing the love of Christ with broken men who have made the decision to return to the ecclesia void of any presuppositions.
- d. Survey
 - i. Entry survey will assess where congregational laity are before the workshops.

VIII. The Mental Health of Broken Black Men 9:00am—10:00am

"Jesus gave the benediction to the church, borrowed a boat, rebuke the winds and the ways to see one man, who is described with a mental disorder, living in the cemetery, wandering in the midst of death, cut off from his home, his family, and his community, possessed by unclean spirits." How does one find them in this state of existence?

- a. What causes men to become depress
 - i. Genes
 - ii. Stress
 - iii. Brain chemistry
- b. What are the signs and symptoms of depression in men?
 - i. Feeling sad or empty
 - ii. Feeling hopelessness, irritable, anxious, or angry
 - iii. Over eating
 - iv. Feeling tired
- c. What are the different forms of depression?
 - i. Dysthymic disorder, or dysthymia
 - ii. Minor and Major Depression
- d. What can we do?
 - i. Discussion questions to address statics related to men and treatment

IX. Male Relationships 10am—11:00am; Rev. Dr. Carl Kenney PhD

"...who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him." How do you reach one who has no regards to authority?

- a. **Part I: Imagines of Black Masculinity**

- i. **Cultural Icons.** A man learns masculinity primarily from his father. But generations of boys who grow up without caring fathers or male mentors to emulate are left to guess what "men" are really like. They rely on cultural icons--larger-than-life images--as models of masculinity. As a result, they grow up mirroring overblown myths of manhood. Obsessed with being "man enough," they become philanderers, controllers, and competitors--constantly overcompensating for their loss of a true role model, yet sorely unprepared for family life.¹
- ii. **Cool Pose.** Black men learned long ago that the classic American virtues of thrift, perseverance, and hard work did not give them the same tangible rewards that accrued to white men. Yet they have defined manhood in similar terms: breadwinner, provider, procreator, protector. Without the means to adequately fulfill these roles, many have become frustrated, impatient, angry, embittered, and alienated.
 - 1. The cool pose is a set of language, mannerisms, gestures and movements that "exaggerate or ritualize masculinity." The essence of cool is to appear in control, whether through a fearless style of walking, an aloof facial expression, the clothes you wear, a haircut, your gestures or the way you talk. The cool pose shows the dominant culture that you are strong and proud, despite your status in American society."
 - 2. Flashy or provocative clothes are part of the cool pose. An unbuckled belt, expensive sneakers and thick gold chains, for example, are part of the cool look.
 - 3. Some elements of the cool pose have been analyzed in terms of kinesics, the subtleties of body movements. One is a distinctive swaggering gait, almost a walking dance, which can include tilting the head to one side while one arm swings to the side with the hand slightly cupped while the other hand hangs to the side or is in the pocket.
 - 4. The cool pose is by no means found among the majority of black men but is particularly common among inner-city black youths as a tactic for psychological survival to cope with such rejections as storekeepers who refuse to buzz them into a locked shop.
- iii. **White enculturation.** Within the cultural framework of America, the systemic structure is characterized by White male patriarchy that allows for Black males to have the ability to negotiate the way in which they have been socialized and institutionalized to think, act, and behave because they are men. However, the reality of race and the lack of diversity in the purest sense impede upon this effort and cripple the black

1 . Pittman, Frank S. *Man Enough: Fathers, Sons, and the Search for Masculinity* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons), 1993.

male's ability to truly transition into manhood. He is left to constantly struggle and fight for an identity, for power, for respect, and for understanding of who he is versus what he is projected as: a nigger.

b. **Part II: The loss of Manhood**

- i. **Loss of authentic identity.** Modern-day discrimination manifests itself through institutional racism i.e. criminal justice system, the educational system, the healthcare system and the workplace. Black men have shifted from the institution of chattel slavery, to the institution of the prison industrial complex. Of the 2.3 million inmates in custody, 2.1 million are men of that Black male represent 35.4%, the largest percentage. Across all age categories, black males are incarcerated at higher rates than white or Hispanic males. Rising unemployment adds to the difficulties already affecting vulnerable families that live in communities plagued by poor educational outcomes, declining neighborhood quality, and high rates of incarceration. The legacy of racism's historic and contemporary effects on the ability of the Black male to fully function as a citizen of equal status in America, serves as the catalyst for the complex identity formation characterized by oedipal conflict, double consciousness, and a peculiar affinity for white male patriarchy.
- ii. **Double Consciousness:** Black men often reflect a duality of consciousness in understanding that their experience in America historically have not meet their basic needs (love, nurture, belongingness, acceptance) and have instead produced a diverse group of men in modernity, often homogenized into boxed identities [stereotypes] in American culture. The obtaining of power and the ability to enact traditional masculine roles is the striving for every male child. However, as the Black male transitions from childhood to adolescence, and unresolved conflicts related to psychosocial development are retarded due to insubstantial access to masculine status and the historical continuance of social, cultural, and economic disadvantages, it become increasingly evident that academic, career, and social prosperity in the later stages of development have the potential for negative outcomes
- iii. **Overcompensation.** In order to compensate for feelings of powerlessness, guilt, and shame, some Black males of lower socio-economic status have redefined masculinity to emphasize sexual promiscuity, toughness, thrill seeking, and the use of violence in interpersonal interactions. Observable mannerisms characteristic of this set of alternative masculine behaviors include physical posture, style of clothing, content and rhythm of speech, walking style, standing, form of greeting, and overall demeanor. In addition to denial, perhaps the most prevalent of all defense mechanisms in Black males is repression. Repression in the author opinions is the root cause of violence, exhibited by Black males, coupled with misogyny, and the difficulty in developing and maintaining healthy relationships especially with Black females.

Operating out of both denial and repression, it can only be assumed that the correlation between dysfunctional behavior not be consciously tied to social oppression, but rather acted out towards other victims of the same phenomenon.

- iv. **Castration** The impact of a young Black male bearing witness to the castration of the biological father [if present] and then other black males, literally and figuratively “suggests that their perspective as both witness and participant is an active even transformative experience. Castration symbolized a “feminine” position; in identity development the conflict begins to manifest as the adolescent male, in the stage of searching for an identity has to decide with whom he will identify. Gender implies identification with the “master’s” [White male patriarchy] authority; his race suggests identification with powerlessness and fear.
 - v. **Sex as conquest.** The Black males efforts to portray manhood premised upon learned behavior, is often defined by sexual conquests. Consciously aware of his pervasive castrated status, when challenged by other males of his race, it leads to an outward display of aggression and exertion of pseudo-masculinity in order to subconsciously satisfy the desire of denying his castrated position. For the Black male that obtains a conscious understanding of themselves and the dynamics of societal and institutional racism and its effect on their development, traditional standards of masculinity are undesirable, thus becoming redefined to be consistent with alienation from mainstream values and institutions.
 - vi. **The cycle of violence:** It has origins in the marginalization experienced by Black males in American society; thus leading to feelings of alienation from a society that projects citizenship and equality, while simultaneously contributing to the destruction of self-worth and infringement upon the ability of the black male to enter into manhood.
- c. **Part III: Overcoming Self-hate**
- i. **Confronting stereotypes.** It is essential to address the stereotypes that Black men have about others and then the stereotypes that exist about Black men. This should be followed up with accurate, relevant and affirming information. The aim is to reveal the pattern of behavior that is rooted in stereotypes and to empower them in shaping their own identity and their own reality.
 - ii. **Confronting systems of communication.** Important to consider how systems of communication are rooted in the absence of positive examples of effective communication. Black men have developed a system of communication that is rooted in the norms of Cool Pose. They include retribution, intimidation and other system based on the need to impose power to control to maintain distance. This has implication in the way Black men communicate in all forms of relationship
 - iii. **Confronting cycles of pain.** Engage with group.

1. Has your relations with your father, or lack of, impacted your relationships with women?
 2. How has it impacted the way you set goals?
 3. How does it impact relationships with other men?
 4. How does it impact your relationship with children?
- d. **Part IV: Spiritual inventory**
- i. How has your relationship with your father impacted your relationship with God?
 - ii. How has your relationship with your father impacted the way you view the Church?
 - iii. How has your relationship with your father impacted the way you regard yourself as one called to serve?
- X. The paradigm shift—the Hip Hop Generation 11:00am—12:00am
“And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.”
- a. Part I: The state of the black male
 - i. What does it mean when they say, “keeping it real”?
 - b. Part II: What Motivates Young Black Men?
 - i. Young black men become aware of self through the individual interaction with and reaction to other members of society, his peers, parents, teachers, church leaders, and others.²
 - ii. Through identification and as a necessary means of effective communication, young men learn to assume the roles and attitudes of others with whom he interacts. The collective attitudes of others and the community give the individual his unity of self.
 - iii. The individual’s self is shaped, developed, and controlled by his anticipating and assuming the attitudes and definitions of others (the community) toward him.
 - iv. To the extent that the individual is a member of this community, its attitudes are his, its values are his, and its norms are his. His image of himself is structured in these terms.
 - v. Young black men living in a white American society assumes the attitudes of that which he identifies with and the looking glass in which he gazes reflects both what he sees when he looks at himself and what he is perceived to be by those who gaze upon him.³
 1. However, it is not just white America who looks upon him and sees the reflection of undesirability, it is also the community in which he once identified with that looks upon him with indignation.

2. Jones, 113.

3. Jones, 114.

- vi. Given the impact of his negative self-image, how does the church begin to minister to broken black men?
1. A young black man acquires needs which motivate behavior and generate emotions.
 - a. The need for achievement⁴; his negative self-concept is further complicated by his internalization of white society's high-level goals and the need to achieve them with a true comprehension of how effectively to do so.
 - i. We must harness the concept of achievement through holistic values rather than world values. We must encourage our young black men that the American dream of prosperity is realized in community and not destruction. We must teach our young black men what it means to be successful in the eyes of God.
 - b. The need for self-assertion or aggression⁵; since slavery days to some extent present date, the black male has been taught by their parents not to be aggressive in their actions and their language. Blacks who were outspoken were considered radical and unreasonable or too sensitive. Ones assert oneself for self-expression, for achievement of one's goals, and for control of one's environment. Therefore an individual's success in satisfying his need for self-assertion is to some degree determined by the sense of control of his environment.
 - i. We must allow young black men to control his environment. Let's teach our men how to be men by our actions and not just by our words. We must welcome the voices of our young black men; not as a radical attempt to destroy our faith community but rather to listen to them at the levels of their anxieties and concerns. Their assertiveness and aggression can be used as fuel for ministry.
 2. The need for approval; with the development of the self and through the process of identification, the individual's need for approval develops and grows as does his need to avoid disapproval.⁶ An individual's behavior in accordance with society approving behavior which follows the achievement

4. Jones, 117.

5. Ibid.

6. Jones, 118.

motive and expresses the need for self-assertion is often tied to a need for approval.

- a. Black men seek approval from society in his actions. Whether they are good or bad, he finds solace in the approval of men. This is why our black men gravitate to gangs. He is seeking approval for his actions.
 - b. If we are to speak life into broken black men, we too must articulate and re-enforce our approval when his behaviors and actions lifted up and not tear down.
- c. Part III: Spiritual Awakening
- i. What role will you play in reclaiming black men to their faith community?
 - ii. What language will you implore to reach black men in the confinements of their brokenness?
 - iii. How can hip hop be used to regain black men confidence to embrace their rightful place in their come and faith community?
 1. How do we help black men connect the dots between family and faith community; between self-employment, between education and employment training?
 2. How does the church translate the language of the streets to biblical truths to remain relevant to young emerging black males?
 - i. How do we train laity to be able to encourage black males to learn the significance of celebrating themselves along with upholding the ideals of family, community, brotherhood, and fatherhood?
 3. How do we teach young men how to develop healthy, safe relationships with one another?

XI. National Black Church Initiative

- a. The goal of the Black Church Initiative is to usher 10,000,000 black men back to their faith community.
- b. Enroll local churches to become a part of the initiative.
- c. Provide transitional housing
- d. Provide Job Training in marketable skills
- e. Human and Professional development
- f. Community Involvement
- g. Church Ministry Involvement

XII. Conclusion

- a. Recap of purpose, objectives, and intended outcomes
- b. Deliver information on how to join initiative
- c. Exit survey
 - i. To determine where the congregation laity are after the workshops.

APPENDIX F

BELTON CREEK COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Belton Creek Community Initiative Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program

Executive Summary

The Belton Creek Community Initiative is a community-based entity (non-profit status pending) that partners with local school districts and organizations to provide mentoring, and educational and social enrichment programs to vulnerable populations in Granville County, North Carolina. One of its programs, the Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program, will provide effective supportive services to at-risk African-American boys during the tenure of their fifth through twelfth grade years of school. The mission of the Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program is four-fold: (1) to promote pro-social relationships and friendships; (2) to develop strong communication and decision-making skills; (3) to enhance academic achievement; and (4) to assert a sense of hopefulness in the lives of the youth whom the program serves. A guiding philosophy of the Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program is the notion of interpersonal connectedness; youth can only enter adulthood with a sense of pride and accomplishment through the development of healthy, nurturing peer and adult relationships.

The development of the Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program is in direct response to the growing number of young African-American boys who are either falling through the cracks at school or who are already engaged with the juvenile court system. According to the North Carolina Schools Report Card, elementary-aged African-American students in Granville County passed reading and math achievement tests at an average rate of 36% during the 2011-2012 academic year; their White and Hispanic counterparts passed these same assessments at rates of approximately 65% and 40%, respectively. Regarding children in the State of North Carolina, the Action for Children advocacy group conveyed similar findings during the same reporting period:

- 49.4% of Black students in grades three through eight passed all of their EOG (end-of-grade) exams, compared to 79.3% of White students;
- 68.6% of Black high students passed all of their EOC (end-of-course) exams, compared to 89.0% of White students;
- The four-year cohort graduation rate was 8.7 percentage points higher for White students than for Black students;

- The short-term suspension rate for Black students was 4.2 times greater than the rate for White students;
- The long-term suspension rate for Black students was 4.1 times greater than the rate for White students; and
- Black students were 26.3% of the total student population, but were 46.1% of student placements in alternative learning programs.

Further, in its *Annual Report*, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice reported that 18,035 and 14,414 criminal complaints were filed against African-American and White children, respectively, in 2011. However, 3,183 African-American children (61% of the total detention center population) were sentenced to serve time in a state juvenile detention center as compared to 1,424 White offenders (27% of the total detention center population).

The Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program will identify youths who are experiencing a turbulent transition to adulthood, and offer positive support systems and skills that will assist them in avoiding pitfalls that can derail their lives. To accomplish this goal, African-American boys must participate in meaningful activities in a nurturing, inclusive learning and social environment that promotes their best effort, reinforces personal respect, and offers opportunities for success. The focus of the Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program is slightly different at each programmatic level, but the goal remains the same: to empower young African-American boys to create positive outcomes in their lives.

The Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program will identify at-risk African-American boys, and monitor and provide services to them through the completion of their high school years and the attainment of their high school diploma. Youth will be paired with a mentor for a period of twelve months. During this time, the two will participate in weekly planned activities to strengthen their relationship, and enhance the young person's confidence and hopefulness. Mentors will receive continuous training throughout the year and will participate in monthly meetings in which they will report their mentee's progress.

Mission of the Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program:

1. To promote pro-social relationships and friendships;
2. To develop strong communication and decision-making skills;
3. To enhance academic achievement; and
4. To assert a sense of hopefulness in the lives of the youth whom the program serves.

Objective:

Belton Creek Community Initiative Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program is will provide opportunities for success to African-American Boys from their fifth through twelfth grade years. The program will create partnerships with the local school district, businesses, and community agencies. The program will match a caring adult volunteer to serve as a friend and role model to a referred youth.

The Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program will operate in four distinct capacities:

1. *Saturday Academy tutoring:* The Saturday Academy is the primary educational component of the Boys-to-Men program. Students will participate in a structured tutorial center designed to improve their academic achievement.
2. *Camp David:* Camp David will provide weekend and summer activities that provide students with opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math.
3. *Camp Habakkuk:* Similar to Camp David, Camp Habakkuk's focus is on Language Arts, Reading, and Writing.
4. *Men of Valor:* The Men of Valor pro-social group will focus on providing positive human development for participants.

Guiding principles:

The Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program will provide services to its participants that are based on the following values:

Commitment: The Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program will inspire pro-social friendships, positive interpersonal skills, and high academic achievement, and instill a sense of value and hope in young African-American males.

Responsibility: The Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program will empower young males to establish goals and follow through on commitments.

Support: The Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program will embrace under-represented African-American boys and work with them in a caring, inclusive, moral, and ethical learning and social environment.

Keys to Success:

In order to achieve its mission, goals, and objectives, the Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program will:

- Establish a strong network of support with the Granville County School Systems, local businesses, and community-based agencies;
- Launch a series of fundraising activities that will successfully finance service delivery and program expansion;
- Establish an effective training program for mentors that will increase their efficacy as role models; and
- Establish an effective monitoring system to protect both the youth and the mentor.

Organization Summary:

The Belton Creek Community Initiative's Boys-to-Men Mentoring Program is a nonprofit agency providing supportive services to vulnerable African-American males from the fifth through twelfth grades. The purpose of the program is to provide participants with essential tools that will equip them in obtaining educational opportunities and in becoming capable young men. Participants will be matched with a caring adult volunteer who is trained to provide positive reinforcement, to build trust, and to engage them in one-on-one interactions and group activities within the community. Ongoing training and workshops will provide mentors with information and oversight throughout the year. Positive outcomes and pro-social growth are expected of all participants.

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