

FROM PERPEUTAL STRUGGLE TO LIBERATION AND FREEDOM: AN ANALYSIS OF
TWO PREDOMINANT AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

African American Church Music has a unique and robust history dating back to the era of the African Slave Trade. This project will focus on African American Church Music and its effect on the African American worship experience in the 21st century. The creation of spirituals and gospel music helped shape the doctrine and identity in the African American Church. However, its message of suffering and “longing to go home” has limited the worship experience of the African American demographic. Musical style, historical significance, and racial issues have played a significant role in shaping the African American worship experience. These factors have caused a significant gap within the African American Church amongst the old and young generations in which worship has become stagnant. This qualitative research study will identify unknown perspectives concerning African American Church Music and how it has shaped the African American worship experience. By interviewing members of two predominant African American Churches located in Newport News, Virginia (First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church), this project will convey a plethora of worship experiences by different generations in the African American community. History shows how slaves were not able to worship freely. However, today’s African American Church is able to experience free, liberating, and multi-generational worship. The overall goal of this project is to convey how the historical and traumatic events faced by African Americans influences preferred music styles in two predominant African American churches.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

African American Church Music includes significant historical and cultural relevance in today's church. The history of the United States of America is the catalyst that has shaped the experiences of its citizens of African descent regarding music and worship, dating back as far as the Atlantic Slave Trade in 1526. African slaves only received information about Christianity from their slave masters. "The basic idea of the spirituals is that slavery contradicts God; it is a denial of His will. To be enslaved is to be declared a *nobody*, and that form of existences contradicts God's creation men to be his children."¹ Once they were introduced to Christianity by their captors, they used musical elements from their native land to create their own worship experience.

The creation of African American spirituals is an example of the act of conjuring that provided enslaved Africans with a tool of the spirit to make sense of the irrationality of evil and to preserve some modicum of sanity and wholeness in a strange land where they had to reconstruct a new rhythm of time and meaning for their bodies that were 'a long way from home.'²

The African American Church has been a pillar for hope and encouragement to the community since its conception. It has also been a beacon of love for those who accepted God into their lives. "The church brought the comfort and security of God's love and redemption into the hopelessness of abject dereliction. The black response – the prayer and the preaching, the singing, the moaning, the shouting or, as Du Bois put it, the frenzy – kept the human spirit alive and the presence of God an assured consolation."³ However, times have changed and the African

¹ James H. Cones, *Risks of Faith the Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998*. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 18.

² Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 192.

³ James Abbingtion, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), xiv.

American Church is not what it used to be. The reason being “few churches were offering music instruction and preparing the next generation of young people for church music. Nor were they willing to accept, teach, and adapt to the rise of gospel music.”⁴ Issues of this caliber influences the type of gospel music many African American churches use during worship services.

The preaching and the praying have also changed from its original form. “The Word of God heard and experienced in a free worshiping environment was the foundation for secret meetings of the Invisible Institution. Though not articulated in carefully worded formulas or creeds, the Word preached was clearly incarnate in Jesus.”⁵ Preaching in the African American Church today has shifted to draw the listener in.

While authentically biblically based, the messages live and breathe with the community. Through the use of descriptive imagery and tonal and word paintings, stories come to life in the imagination of worshipers, so that hope is portrayed in the bleakest of circumstances. Dialogical communication skillfully takes the place between preacher and the community, thus both must listen ardently to the other. This verbal call-and-response African form can easily evolve into a musical dialogue, sometimes with the aid of a skilled organist and pianist.⁶

Prayer is also an essential staple in the African American Church, prayer is an essential staple. It was established during the early worship history of the African slave:

Prayer was for the early worshipers, and remains today, “the most important way to remain in communication with Almighty God who, though in constant communion with them, could be reached in privacy.” The current African American prayer tradition, shaped during the early period of worship history, has been identified as a “prayer event.” Rather than passively listening to a prayer, the gathered community becomes involved with prayer leader, using a variety of responses.⁷

⁴ James Abbington, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), 1-2.

⁵ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chapter 3, Google Books.

⁶ *Ibid*, chapter 7, Google Books.

⁷ *Ibid*, chapter 3, Google Books.

It is still viewed the same in the contemporary African American church as well. “Prayer continues to be a basic form through which African American worshipers express their faith as they seek wholeness and affirmation for personhood. As a communal form, it provides affirmation, hope, and healing for all gathered, and the opportunity for intercession for those who are not in attendance.”⁸ The changes in music, preaching, and prayer have significantly shifted how the African American Worship Experience is viewed today.

Background of Topic

The African’s primary focus was praying to God to be free from a perpetual struggle. “A study of black singing, then, is in essence a study of how black people “Africanized” Christianity in America as they sought to find meaning in the turn of events that made them involuntary residents in a strange and hostile land.”⁹ Unfortunately, once they were free from their captors, they would continue to sing songs of struggle that incorporated prayers for God would see them through as they saw themselves in the Bible. According to Jerry Taylor:

Exodus tells the black church that their white Christian sisters and brothers are like Moses while he lived in Pharaoh's house as an heir of privilege. The exodus narrative gives little indication that Moses took interest in the deliverance of his fellow Israelites before his mysterious encounter with God. Certainly, the education of an Egyptian prince did not include learning to care about the slaves who built Egypt's palaces and pyramids. Just as Moses was conditioned to ignore the sufferings of his own people, many white Christians have been conditioned to ignore the history of oppression of African Americans. Even white education at its best often produces people claiming to be "colorblind," which is the equivalent of being historically blind to the long history of the oppression of black people.¹⁰

⁸ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chapter 7, Google Books.

⁹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 348.

¹⁰ Jerry Taylor, “The Roots of the Black Prophetic Voice: Why the Exodus Must Remain Central to the African American Church,” *Christianity Today* 64, no. 6 (2020): 57. https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=BIC&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE|A634871422&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon.

The oppression of African Americans would then gaslight the theme of a perpetual struggle that would continue through significant events of American and African American history such as the Reconstruction Era, The Great Migration, and the Civil Rights Movement. These events not only affected the way United States citizens of African descent saw themselves, but they also affected how they worshipped God.

During the Reconstruction Era after the United States Civil, the African American Church went through something known as the black sacred cosmos:

The black sacred cosmos or the religious worldwide view of African Americans is related to their African heritage, which envisaged the whole universe as sacred, and to their conversion to Christianity during slavery and its aftermath. It has only been in the past twenty years that scholars of African American history, culture, and religion have begun to recognize that black people created their own unique and distinctive forms of culture and worldviews as parallels rather than replications of the culture in which they were involuntary guests.¹¹

From this came the seven major historic black denominations: African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.), African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A. M. E. Z.), Christian Methodist Episcopal (C. M. E.), the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A, Incorporated (NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). So as history shifted, so did the way African Americans worship in services. Many African Americans moved north during the Great Migration and found that many of the churches had a different way of worshipping God.

In the 1920s, Chicago's first African American congregations were at a crossroads. After decades of investment, the churches and their musicians were proud of their accomplishments as they had "lifted the Negro race" to a position of separate but equal

¹¹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 2.

status with their white peers in worship. Worship in these churches largely mirrored worship in white churches in song and liturgy.¹²

Even though this was occurring, most African American Churches used the customs from their homeland of Africa. These customs would form a different genre heavily influenced by the sound of African spirituals.

Gospel music emerged during the “Golden Age of Gospel” in the 1930s from writers such as Kenneth Morris, Sallie Martin, and Thomas Dorsey, also known as “The Father of Gospel”, because of his tireless work in the genre. Gospel Choir Music played a significant role in African American Christianity; it “has a unique and powerful history. Although strictly speaking, gospel music emerged half a century after Emancipation and the end of the Civil War, gospel music is always considered a collective response to blacks’ oppressed status and experience.”¹³ The reason why many African Americans love gospel music is because of its distinct sound. “The relationship between the Spirituals and the Gospel is greatly pronounced in its musical modality, but there has been a severe departure from music of the thematic substance of spirituals in the Gospel music phenomenon of the last decade.”¹⁴ The Gospel Choir was a great asset, but it also had its flaws: “The transition from congregational hymns to songs for specialized soloists and ensembles had important sociological consequences. While the former united worshipers through the collective activity of singing and declaring theological and doctrinal commonalities, the new style required the congregation to assume the role of

¹² Katherine Kemps, “When Gospel Music Sparked a ‘Worship War’: How the Great Migration Changed Music in the Black Church Forever.” *Christianity Today* (December 2018): <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/december-web-only/gospel-music-great-migration-black-church.html>.

¹³ Gerardo Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multicultural Congregation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 57.

¹⁴ James W. Cobbs, “Music as Ministry in an Urban African -American Church.” PhD diss., United Theological Seminary, 2001. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

audience.”¹⁵ The sound of African American Gospel Music has made an impression in United States history. However, in today’s modern-day church, that sound seems to be less prevailing.

Braxton Shelly states:

I contend that the role music routinely plays in the experience of the holy uncovers sanctity in the sound itself, enabling it to function as a medium of interworldly exchange. As divine power takes an audible form, the faith that “comes by hearing” is confirmed by religious feeling—both individual and collective. This sacramentality of sound is buttressed by beliefs about the enduring efficacy of divine speech, convictions that motivate the intensive character of gospel’s songs, sermons, and shouts.¹⁶

The sound of African American Gospel Music has made an impression in United States history. However, in today’s modern-day church, that sound seems to be less prevailing.

Problem Statement

While African American Church Music has evolved so much over many decades, it seems that today’s churches are singing to a different tune. The infusion of Christian Contemporary Music (CCM) brings a modern sound into the African American Churches. The contemporary sound offers a more liberating and accessible sound, allowing worship to mirror a sense of freedom. This fact is unknown to many United States citizens of African descent. The exception has caused a generational rift amongst many congregations in African American Churches. Those born during eras such as the Great Migration and the Civil Rights Movement prefer the sound of spirituals and traditional gospel music. Everyone else born after the Civil Rights era prefers to worship gospel music infused with Christian Contemporary Music.

¹⁵ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 361-362

¹⁶ Braxton D. Shelley, “I Love it when You Play that Holy Ghost Chord: Sounding Sacramentality in the Black Gospel Tradition.” *Religions* 11, no. 9 (2020): 452. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11090452>.

Purpose Statement

The project aims to find how African Americans' historical and traumatic events influence preferred music styles in two predominantly African American churches. Worship in today's African American Church can be viewed as free, liberating, and multi-generational. However, older generations prefer more traditional gospel music while younger generations prefer contemporary gospel music. The concept is not new, but there has been little to no resolution to this issue in more traditional churches:

It appears that when African American gospel music moves too far beyond the walls of the “Black Church” and includes secular aspects, there is the perception by some that gospel music is no longer serving its intended function and is therefore no longer “gospel music.” However, the debate raised about such issues is not new. In fact, discussions concerning the definition of African American gospel music have occurred throughout the history of gospel music.¹⁷

Even with the different denominations, the idea of African American Christianity has been through much evolution. “African American Christianity is itself a unique expression, developed by the slaves and carried by their descendants into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The musical expressions that African Americans used to encode and express that interpretation of the Christian message were similarly reinterpreted to encapsulate a comprehension and elucidation of life that is uniquely African American.”¹⁸ There has to be a way for the traditional and contemporary sound of African American Church Music to co-exist in the modern-day church.

¹⁷ Raymond Wise, “Defining African American Gospel Music by Tracing its Historical and Musical Development from 1900 to 2000” (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2002), 1, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

¹⁸ Therese Smith, “There Is a Higher Height in the Lord: Music, Worship, and Communication with God,” *Religions* 6, no. 2: 544-545. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel6020543>.

Another main issue to bridging the generational gap in the African American Church is understanding the theology of African-American Worship. According to Melva Wilson Costen:

African-American Christians gathered and engaged in worship, regardless of denomination, share many things in common. First and foremost, they gather to offer thanks and praise to God in and through Jesus Christ, and to be spiritually fed by the Word of God! Second, they share the reality of a common historical taproot, which extends deep into the nurturing center of the African soil. A third common particularity of African-Americans gathered for worship is their history of struggle for survival as African people in America.¹⁹

The cultural context is the main component that should be looked at when choosing music for worship services. Sadly, while there is not a cultural divide, there is a generational divide.

First Baptist Church Denbigh in Newport News, Virginia, came into existence during the Civil War in 1862.²⁰ This church and its members has a consequential history of hardships and victories, worshiping with traditional hymn singing and standard gospel songs. Refuge Nation Church in downtown Newport News, Virginia, is a congregation with a younger generation of African Americans members. It was founded in 2008 by its presiding overseer, Bishop Joe Baker.²¹ The members of this congregation worship with a mixture of standard gospel songs and contemporary gospel music.

Qualitative narrative data will be collected by conducting a survey. The active members from both churches will be between the age range of 18 to 90. They will be asked a series of questions based on their perspectives and preferences of music during worship services. This

¹⁹ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 1, Google Books.

²⁰ "Church History," First Baptist Church Denbigh, accessed February 14, 2021. https://www.fbcdenbigh.org/church_history.

²¹ "About," Refuge Nation Church, accessed February 14, 2021. <https://www.refugenationchurch.com/about>.

approach will be taken based on the historical data of African American Church Music and how it has evolved over the years. This research includes books, journal articles, magazine articles, and dissertations. The historical information will be investigated thoroughly by comparing and contrasting to convey how each historical event plays a role in the created music.

This qualitative narrative study will collect various information from First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church members. After conducting a thorough review of the literature, the study will shift to looking at the perspectives of African Americans' old and young generations in more detail. "The relationship between the Spirituals and the Gospel is greatly pronounced in its musical modality, but there has been a severe departure from music of the thematic substance of spirituals in the Gospel music phenomenon of the last decade."²² By asking a series of questions, members of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church in Newport News, Virginia, will interview to compare and contrast the views of African American Church Music and how it has evolved over the years.

Significance of the study

Many African American Churches have adapted to either Traditional Worship Music or Contemporary Worship Music. Traditional Worship Music follows the methodology used by Africans transported in the diaspora known as "folk methods." "Music, song, and storytelling by the griot became the major means of shaping, documenting, and distributing folk theology."²³ Older generations of African Americans tend to want to experience traditional worship. This theology shaped how many African-Americans viewed worship.

²² James W. Cobbs, "Music as Ministry in an Urban African -American Church." PhD diss., United Theological Seminary. 2001, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

²³ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 1, Google Books.

The presence of music within the African worldview corresponded to the oppugnancy African-American slaves had toward the world. As a structuring principle for all reality and an inner force that yielded life and unity, music moved the community backward, away from the reality of the present into the time of deities. The same atavistic influence operated upon the adherents to Afro-Christian faith.”²⁴

Contemporary Worship Music emerged in the 1960s and has continued to evolve today. It has technological advancements and new inventions that created a plethora of possibilities for Black Gospel Music. “Contemporary Gospel music supplements other sounds heard in some Black worship services. The religious texts are often supported by the chordal harmonies that have not been in traditional music support for religious texts. Youth are finding worship more meaningful because they can identify with the sounds from their own context.”²⁵

The idea of bringing together the different generations in the African American Church is not new. Birgitta Johnson stated:

Recently, however, even greater musical diversity has been incorporated into the weekly worship services of many churches. Originally a product of the predominantly white contemporary Christian music (CCM) industry of the 1960s and 1970s, praise and worship music has become popular in black churches across America, and particularly in Los Angeles.²⁶

Unfortunately, not much has happened to solve the issue. This issue is ongoing because the older generations of African Americans are significantly dying out and many of the younger generations of African Americans in today’s modern church are unfamiliar and never heard spirituals or older gospel standards. It is imperative now more than ever to address the context of

²⁴ Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhoffer, and Maria M. Chow, *Music in American Religious Experience*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 45.

²⁵ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

²⁶ Birgitta J. Johnson, “Back to the Heart of Worship: Praise and Worship Music in a Los Angeles African American Megachurch.” *Black Music Research Journal* 31, no. 1 (2011): 108. <https://doi.org/10.5406/lacmusiresej.31.1.0105>.

the music written. The historical traumas of African Americans played a significant role in the music that was written, then and now. For example, the spiritual “Go Down, Moses”,²⁷ famously sung by Paul Robeson, illustrates the story of Moses and the Hebrews. It also served as a message for African slaves who desired to be free from their oppressors. Information like this is important for older generations to can pass down this information to younger generations.

As a theoretical basis, this study uses cultural identity to examine how African Americans’ connection to Black sacred music may inform utilization by African Americans. Generational and lifestyle differences have contributed to young people’s limited exposure to this music, and some who have a strong relationship with the sacred songs feel its continuance is threatened. Some African American churches seek to limit or eliminate the inclusion of Black sacred music for more contemporary or progressive styles of worship music.²⁸

Having the older generations in the church is very important to persevere the past and move forward to the future.

Research Questions

RQ1: How much of the historical trauma against African-Americans comprised in past and present music affect the African-American Worship Experience of the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church?

RQ2: Does the musical influences or historical influences take precedence in the selection of music in the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church?

²⁷ Paul Robeson, “Go Down, Moses,” by Michael Tippett, recorded 1943, YouTube Streaming.

²⁸ Henrietta Giles, “Cultural Heritage and the Responsibility of Edifying Black Sacred Music.” PhD diss., Middle Tennessee State University, 2015, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Hypotheses

H1: All of the historical traumas against African-Americans comprised in past and present music affect the African American Worship Experience of the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church. However, the generations are affected in a plethora of ways.

H2: The historical influences of the music take precedence in the selection of music in the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church.

Identification of Variables

This thesis recognizes the importance of musical style in the African American Church. The music styles of Spirituals, Old Gospel Standards, and Hymns gave the African American congregations a sense of unity with congregational singing.

Congregational singing is a well-known device for the temporary reduction of the social alienation and for the accomplishment of an ad interim sense of community. In the Black Church singing together is not so much an effort to find, or to establish, a transitory community as it is the reaffirmation of a common bond that, while inviolate, has suffered the pain of separation since the last occasion of physical togetherness. In the words of James Cone: Black music is unity music. It unites the joy and the sorrow, the love and the hate, the hope and despair of black people; It shapes and defines black beings and creates cultural structures for black expression. Black music is unifying because it affirms the black being is possible only in a communal context.²⁹

These musical styles helped to set the standard for an authentic worship experience in the African American Church.

A second variable is the music preference in the African American Church. Although many preferred the traditional sound of Spirituals, Old Gospel Standards, and Hymns;

²⁹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 347.

Contemporary Gospel Music has played a significant role in the evolution of the African American Church and interwoven sooner than many realize.

The contemporary period in gospel music dates from the late 1960s and early 1970s when the transition from the typical gospel chorus accompanied by piano and handclapping performing in a church had been superseded by ensembles featuring strings, brasses, synthesizers, and electronic instruments performing in a concert hall. The other thrust of the contemporary gospel expression is provided by a new generation of performers or presenters who use the gospel medium as a new homiletical instrument.³⁰

Along with the contemporary music of the 60s and 70s came the emergence of Christian Contemporary Music (CCM), typically used in churches with mixed or primarily white congregations.

Since the 1980s, CCM has become a global phenomenon, cutting across national boundaries and facilitating a move — even in some majority-black churches — away from traditional hymnbooks and toward a more modern, technology-driven reliance on big screens displaying feel-good lyrics. These catchy melodies bless the hearts and minds of Christians of all denominational and cultural stripes, but this musical universality must not come at the expense of gospel music styles rooted in the trials and triumphs of black heroes.³¹

This style of music is becoming the new preference in African American Churches today.

A third variable is the generational gap present in the African American Church. Young African Americans born after the Civil Rights Movement tend to have a different perspective from the older generation. They represent “this potentially large unchurched group. Not all of this generation is unchurched but, as we shall point out, certain growing segments of them are.”³² The young generation would not relate to the perpetual struggle conveyed in the Spirituals, Old

³⁰ Ibid, 362.

³¹ Melvin L. Butler, “Commentary: Why black gospel music still matters despite the rise of contemporary Christian music,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 2020, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-opinion-gospel-music-museum-20200302-wjr7hiwnygznlnsxottptd7gyi-story.html>.

³² Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 310.

Gospel Standard, and Hymns as they would with Contemporary Gospel and Christian Contemporary Music.

Core Concept

Many of today's African American Churches tend to market their worship services to one specific generation of African Americans. This tactic gives ample opportunity for confusion to arise. "One of the greatest causes of segregation, competition, discord, and quarrelling in our churches is not over how many souls are being won to Christ but among the choir as to who can out-sing who and who can get the house with what song and with what soloist leading the song!"³³ This practice has caused many African American ministries to lose track of what their congregations need. Along with catering to one generation, the worship music selection can decide how many African Americans worship.

The Current State of the Music Ministries at Both Churches

Musicians in the African-American Church are a necessity to have for worship service. However, the church musician is not conveyed as they once were.

Until the mid-1970s, church music programs seemed to be flourishing and productive for the time. Choir stands were full. Organ benches were occupied by trained musicians, the hymnal was being used extensively, and the European American musical culture that greatly influenced the black church had little or no tolerance for the emerging gospel music of James Cleveland, Andraé Crouch, and Edwin Hawkins, and only some arranged spirituals sung as anthems set the standards.³⁴

In the twenty-first century African-American Church, "changes in the national culture

³³ James Abbingtion, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), 34.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

have had a prodigious influence on the music and worship in the African American church in the past forty years.”³⁵ This statement holds true in both First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church.

The Music Ministry at First Baptist Church Denbigh has had the same Minister of Music for the past forty years. “In 1981, Mr. Anthony Witherspoon, after serving for several years as Director of the choirs, was named “Minister of Music.”³⁶ The researcher can recall the music ministry at First Baptist Church Denbigh being very lively as a child. However, as the years passed, the same energy that was once there was not present anymore. Mr. Witherspoon is still serving in the position. More than likely, he still is there because there is no one there to keep the legacy of the music ministry going. The researcher believes that mentoring may not have taken place. “Mentoring refers to a process, generally informal, in which experience and knowledge is transferred from mentor to protégé.”³⁷ It is essential for Mr. Witherspoon to find people to mentor who could potentially keep the ministry moving forward.

The congregation of First Baptist Church Denbigh loves to sing hymns such as “Lift Him Up”³⁸ in the African American Heritage Hymnal. Modern Gospel and Contemporary Gospel are also popular with this congregation. However, the researcher believes that if Urban Contemporary Worship Music were added to the worship set, more Millennials and Generation Z members would want to join their worship service.

The Music Ministry at Refuge Nation Church has been through many transitions since

³⁵ Ibid, 2.

³⁶ “Church History,” First Baptist Church Denbigh, accessed October 23, 2021. https://www.fbcdnbigh.org/church_history.

³⁷ Tim Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts: Helping Others Find Their Voice* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2011), 43.

³⁸ B. B. Beall, *Lift Him Up*. Score. 2001. Arranged by Nolan Williams, Jr. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications.

the researcher joined. Currently, the Bishop and a minister of the church are serving as pastoral musicians.

A pastoral musician is a spiritual leader with developed skill and God-given responsibility for selecting, employing, and/or leading music in worship in ways that serve the actions of the liturgy, engage worshipers as full participants, and reflect upon biblical, theological, and contextual implications, all for the ultimate purpose of glorifying God.³⁹

Refuge Nation Church has an overseer who is an experienced musician. So the relationship between the musicians and the Bishop is imperative to move the ministry forward. “Pastor and musician need to possess a rudimentary knowledge of the supplications, skills, and vocabulary of each other’s discipline. Without this knowledge, communication and partnership become difficult or even impossible, and even the best-intentioned efforts at collaborative ministry become strained.”⁴⁰ The best way to describe the music ministry at Refuge Nation Church is a melting pot of gospel genres. However, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, and Urban Contemporary Worship Music are popular amongst the congregation. The presence of Generation Y or the Millennials is the reason for this preference.

Bishop Baker challenges the leadership in the music ministry to be creative but also keep in mind who is in the congregation. Those on the worship team like to worship songs like “Satisfied”⁴¹ by Todd Dulaney. While the team loves it, it does not mean the congregation will love it.

³⁹ Constance M. Cherry, *The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 3.

⁴⁰ James Abbingtion, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), 27.

⁴¹ Todd Dulaney, “Satisfied,” featuring Smokie Norful, track 12 on *Anthems and Glory (Live)*, Entertainment One Music, YouTube Streaming.

Mature pastoral musicians will take time to discover many aspects that comprise the congregation; they will prayerfully discern the ways that congregational song is used to edify the community and to express meaning within it. Not every song is well suited for every community. Some that fit one church may not at all fit another, as a direct result of the differences in context.⁴²

It is all about getting to know who is in the congregation. “This process of discovering more about what the other person enjoys is a way of looking inside of someone’s else’s life. Each person has a litany of values and biases that defines and qualifies their personal preferences.”⁴³ Once the music leadership ministry knows the congregation, selecting music will be an easy process.

Prayer and Preaching in Both Churches

Prayer is a direct way to communicate with God daily. God wants us to talk to him so that He can hear our needs. When God's children worship and pray to other things or methodologies beside Him, they are displacing Him as to say they do not need God in their lives. Therefore, African American pastors and leaders need to make sure that the focus in the churches is intentional and ultimately leads people to a healthy praying relationship with God.

In the African-American Church, prayer continues to be an essential aspects of the worship experience. It gives hope to those who are worried and strengthens those who work tirelessly to communicate with God.

Inherent in the ongoing discovery and recovery of the Black prayer tradition is a natural, childlike, holy boldness to approach the throne of grace. This boldness is founded on an unwavering trust in the promises of God, which allows the community to unashamedly express its faith. One approaches God boldly, and yet stands as an empty pitcher before a full foundation. Open and vulnerable before the Divine, one is free to accept the in-filling power from a God who, in the words of a traditional African American prayer, “sits high

⁴² Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 186.

⁴³ Steven Michael Newby, *Worship Outside the Music Box: Theology of Music & Worship and Multi-Ethnic Ministry* (Enumclaw, WA: Redemption Press, 2015), 10.

and looks low...snatched our soul from the gates of hell, and put a new song and prayer in our hearts.”⁴⁴

Prayer at both churches is essential to their ministry. At the beginning of the year, Refuge Nation Church began holding prayer services every Tuesday. The prayer services have been vital to the spiritual growth that is occurring in the ministry. First Baptist Church Denbigh has had a foundation of prayer since its conception. During the coronavirus pandemic, prayer services have moved to stream platforms such as Facebook Live.

For worship to be effective, it is also imperative to have a solid understanding of scripture. When the believer is informed about the Word of God, it opens the door to more than just an encounter with the Holy Spirit, but a relationship with God. It is evident where Jesus states: “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”⁴⁵ Living a life that is pleasing to God is a daily practice for even the most seasoned Christians. The researcher personally feels that to witness to a non-believer effectively, we first must be willing to start a conversation and create a relationship with them. Once we have their trust and they know that we are Christians, we cannot force the bible on them, but we have to be prepared to confidently share our testimony along with His word when the opportunity presents itself.

Studying, meditating, and preaching Scripture is especially essential to African American preachers. Those who come to listen to them have an expectation to be hear an uplifting word. So those leaders responsible for delivering the Word of God have an obligation to uphold in the African American Church.

The preached word, presented so that it is heard and experienced, allows one to know that “there is a way out of no way,” and frees worshipers to celebrate this fact with the

⁴⁴ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chapter 7, Google Books.

⁴⁵ John 4:23 (English Standard Version).

preacher. The word from the Lord is heard with the ears of one's total being, and it is experienced in the poetic flow of the preacher. The word elicits holistic responses that may begin in the gathered community, and will continue with worshipers as they move into the world.⁴⁶

First Baptist Church Denbigh is currently looking for a new pastor, while Refuge Nation Church is still growing in both areas. But what do prayer and preaching have to do with the music ministry? The music ministry prepares us to pray and receive the Word from the preacher. "The purpose of the service of the Word is so people may be addressed by God through the Holy Scriptures and thereby changed for God's glory and kingdom."⁴⁷ If the ministers and leadership truly want to win souls, the music ministry is what helps to gather people to both churches.

Definition of Terms

Spirituals

A genre of music that is purely and solely the creation of generations of African Americans, which merged African cultural heritage with the experiences of being held in slavery. "Spirituals were created both inside and outside of the Christian worship environment. Some among the creators were, therefore, not oriented toward Christianity, whether in the hypocritical form taught or in what was being re-formed. Like other folk songs, Spirituals express the peculiar context, nature, experiences, values, and longings of the specific folk who created them."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chapter 7, Google Books.

⁴⁷ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 70.

⁴⁸ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

Traditional Gospel Music

A genre of gospel music that included elements of the blues. “The traditional period, also called the “golden age of gospel,” commenced around 1930 with the compositions of Thomas A. Dorsey. Other gospel composers and arrangers who help spread the gospel of the “gospel” are Kenneth Morris, Sallie Martin, Roberta Martin, Theodore Frye, Lucie Campbell and J. H. Brewster. These writers, along with Dorsey, transformed the congregational gospel hymns of Tindley into songs for church choirs, soloists, and ensembles.”⁴⁹

Modern Gospel Music

Modern Gospel Music, known as Contemporary Gospel during the time “dates from the late 1960s and early 1970s when the transition from the typical gospel chorus accompanied by a piano and handclapping performing in a church had been superseded by ensembles featuring strings, brass, synthesizers, and electronic instruments performing in a concert hall.”⁵⁰

Contributing artists included Andraé Crouch, James Cleveland, Richard Smallwood, The Clark Sisters, Edwin Hawkins, and Tremaine Hawkins.

Contemporary Gospel Music

A genre of gospel music that emerged from the 1980s through the 1990s. “The religious texts are often supported by chordal harmonies that have not been the traditional musical support doe religious text. Youth are finding worship more meaningful because they can identify with sounds from their own context.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 361.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 362.

⁵¹ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

Christian Rap Music

“Rap music, carrying forward elements of the earlier traditions of the sorrow songs and the blues, with complex polyrhythmic layering, repeated scratching, breaks, and pauses in the beat, is meant to create a sense of suspension and surprise in listeners, rupturing their regimented styles of being within the cultural matrices of power to which we are all adapted.”⁵²

Urban Contemporary Worship Music

A genre of gospel music that combines elements from Traditional, Contemporary, and Modern Gospel Music with other popular genres of Christian Worship Music.

Summary

African American Church Music is historically significant in the history of the United States of America. Spirituals and traditional gospel music helped to shape the overall sound of the church.

Music has voiced the spiritual imagination and serviced the religious objectives of African Americans ever since the first Africans encountered Christianity in the United States. In the process of creating and dancing spirituals, slaves embraced Jesus as friend and fellow sufferer. African religious traditions, rhythms and tunes mingled with western European hymnody and camp meeting fervor to express the burden and hope of a people oppressed.⁵³

The events that took place shaped the African American Church experience to be a perpetual struggle. However, as history evolved, so did the music.

⁵² Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 233.

⁵³Carolynne H. Brown, “Singing through Struggle: Music as a Mode of Cultural Exchange in African American Border City Churches After Emancipation, 1862–1890” (PhD diss., Boston University School of Theology, 2009), 1, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

There is a plethora of literature concerning African American Church Music. The purpose of chapter two is to examine the literature related to the evolution of African American Church Music and the influences of historical events and African American traumas that served as inspiration for these compositions. The literature in this chapter is portioned into five sections to convey a chronological timeline outlining the history of African Americans and the music written during these times: The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery in America, Antebellum Slavery through the Great Migration, The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement to the 1990s, Post-racial America and the African American Church, and Today's African American Church and the Black Lives Matter Movement.

A literature review discloses how the music composed during these various periods coincided with significant events that affected the African American community. These events documented played a significant role in the African American music and worship experience. However, as the music evolved, a generational gap was formed in the African American Church today.

The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery in America

Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion, written by Jon Michael Spencer, provides insight into the evolution of musical genres in the African American Church. The text is divided into two parts, differentiating between “protest songs” and “praise songs.” Spencer dedicates chapters 1 – 5 to “protest songs,” where he illustrates its development from spirituals to social-gospel hymnody. These songs were cultivated through rebellion and would lead to songs for the Civil Rights Movement and the blues.

Spencer conveys the beginning of African American Church Music in the first few chapters by comparing enslaved Africans to Hebrew slaves as illustrated in the book of Exodus in the Bible. Next, the author gives an account of the story of Moses and expounds on the moment where he kills an Egyptian:

“Moses’ killing the Egyptian was “the first blow of liberation from Egypt.” The ensuing exodus, the type of liberation unattainable by one raised as a slave or by one unconnected with the slaves, was possible only by one brought up in the midst of oppressors and who had been educated in the ways of their wisdom and power. Thereafter, Moses went out to his people and looked on their burdens.”⁵⁴

For the enslaved Africans, their idea of liberation and freedom mirrored the imagery written in the book of Exodus. We can look at the story of Moses and compare it to the historical facts about slavery in American. Field slaves did not have access to their oppressors while houses slaves were around them continually. “For the enslaved Africans, the first blows of liberation from bondage could only have been brought about by those liberated from a slave mentality – who, being brought up in the midst of oppressors, appropriated the power and wisdom of the gospel.”⁵⁵ House slaves had the advantage of listening to the wisdom and power of their oppressors and bringing that knowledge to the field slaves. However, some scholars believe that the imagery of the Exodus has been helpful and harmful to the African-American community simultaneously, such as Herbert Marbury:

The African American attachment to Exodus has been both helpful and harmful in black churches’ quest to discern and respond to the activity of the divine in history. No one can read the great orations of the African American past or listen to the spirituals without knowing that the Exodus has played a prominent role in our thinking about liberation, God, and history.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Jon Michael Spencer, *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), chap. 1, Google Books.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 93.

The enslaved Africans desire to run away from their oppressors was the liberation and freedom that they craved. First, however, they had to make sure that they kept what they knew hidden from their oppressors.

Enslaved Africans would use the Spiritual genre for a two-fold purpose, as conveyed in *African American Christian Worship*, written by Melva Wilson Costen. First, the author provides a historical and theological analysis of the African-American worship experience from slavery to the 21st century. Second, in the chapter describing how music, preaching, and prayer shaped Contemporary African American Worship, Costen provides a detailed description of how enslaved Africans used these songs.

The earliest Spirituals emerged during the antebellum slave period and have been identified as the first authentic American folk song form. Spirituals were created both in and outside of the Christian worship environment. Some among the creators were, therefore, not oriented toward Christianity, whether in the hypocritical form taught or in what was being re-formed. Like other folk songs, Spirituals express the peculiar context, nature, experiences, values, and longings of the specific folk who created them.⁵⁷

Spirituals were used for worship purposes as well as passing along secret messages.

John W. Work described these messages as the “wilderness” in *The Papers of the Hymn Society*. “The “wilderness” was the secret meeting place of the Negroes, and in the song it was the signal altering them to a pending meeting.”⁵⁸ These messages were signals between the enslaved Africans on when revolts would occur or an escape plan. Those who believed the enslavement of the Africans was wrong would also join the fight, in which slavery would become one of the main issues that led to the Civil War.

⁵⁷ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

⁵⁸ John W. Work, “The Negro Spiritual from The Papers of the Hymn Society.” in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, ed. James Abbingon (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001), 18.

Antebellum Slavery through the Great Migration

In the years leading up to the Civil War, enslaved Africans were antebellum slaves or pre-war slaves. These enslaved Africans would get the freedom to have their own religious meetings. However, they had to follow the rules of their oppressors. “Antebellum slaves were introduced to the somber and serious “lined-rote” method of psalm singing in religious and informal colonial gatherings. Religious instruction for the slaves included instruction in psalmody, which apparently appealed to the new converts.”⁵⁹ The slaves would be required to sing the hymns of Isaac Watts, a composer famous during the Great Awakening religious movement of the 1730s.

Rather than retaining the Euro-American structure, hymns were reshaped or improvised in a folklike manner or “blackened” as a means of contextualization. To sing hymns as they were heard in formalized settings did not lend itself to the social and spiritual bonding required of Africans in diaspora. The process of recreating and improvising hymns was a way of making the music their own.⁶⁰

Eventually, the enslaved Africans were also introduced to meter music. “The lined style of unaccompanied singing is called “meter music” because the hymn texts are constructed in poetic meter. The most frequently used meters in hymnody are *short*, *common*, and *long*.”⁶¹ The enslaved Africans would then add their cultural elements to this form of music. “Although this style of singing in Euro-American churches was discouraged and supplanted by the “proper way of singing” taught in singing schools, the tradition of lining hymns continued with fervor among

⁵⁹ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 356.

Black worshipers. It is not unusual to find the integration of meter music and Spirituals.”⁶²

During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln introduced the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Enslaved Africans and those who opposed slavery praised Lincoln for taking this step. However, many had miscomprehended what this action truly meant. “By declaring that the Federal government recognized the present freedom of all persons enslaved in the Confederacy, the Emancipation Proclamation made it clear that anyone who worked or fought for the Union was also working and fighting to bring freedom to every slave still in rebel territory as of January 1, 1863.”⁶³ Those enslaved Africans freed by the Emancipation Proclamation fled to the Union with the belief that they could work for the freedom of loved ones still in slavery. It is imperative to recognize how this action caused a divide in the African American community's view of liberation, freedom, and spirituals. As a result, those Africans who were freed began to look at spirituals from a different perspective.

The Black Church in the African American Experience, written by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, is the most extensive non-governmental study of black urban and rural churches ever undertaken. Lincoln and Mamiya illustrate an analysis of the Black Church related to African Americans' history and contemporary black culture. The authors examine both the internal structure of the Church and the reactions of the Church to external, societal changes. They also provide essential insights into the Church's relationship to politics, economics, women, youth, and music.

⁶² Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

⁶³ Burrus M. Carnahan, *Act of Justice: Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the Law of War* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 121-122.

Concerning spirituals that were introduced after the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln and Mamiya convey the thought of those freed African Americans: “Following emancipation some members of the African American elite refused to sing spirituals in their churches because they reminded people of the degradation of slavery and they were considered too crude for the formal worship exemplified by the white churches that blacks often sought to emulate.”⁶⁴ African American denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Union African Church, and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church began to formulate during the antebellum period. These were the main denominations that sought to emulate the White mother churches. These African American communities who were emancipated did not want the reminder of the pain and trauma they experienced as slaves. “The battles fought in the nineteenth century over the “respectability” of the spiritual foreshadow similar confrontations today between those who approve of contemporary gospel music and those who regard it as unacceptable in the formal worship service.”⁶⁵ Hymn singing was becoming popular during this time; in fact, “the hymnals published by the Black churches were hardly distinguishable from those of the White church in regard to repertory items, except for their inclusion of a relatively small number of Black-authored hymns.”⁶⁶

The Reconstruction Era came as soon as the Civil War ended in 1865. During this time, the Reconstruction Amendments of the United States Constitution were being formed. Then, on January 31, 1865, Congress introduced the thirteenth amendment.

⁶⁴ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 366.

⁶⁵ Eileen Southern, “Hymnals of the Black Church from The Black Christian Worship Experience: A Consultation.” in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, ed. James Abbingtion (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001), 144.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

According to this view, the thirteenth amendment's abolition of slavery and involuntary servitude were not merely negative prohibitions on certain institutions and practices. The amendment also affirmed the constitutionally enforceable judgement of political morality that made sense of these prohibitions, namely, a judgement about the substance, nature, and weight of the inalienable human rights of all persons subject to political power in the United States.⁶⁷

The fourteenth amendment would soon follow, granting citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States. Christianity also saw distinct changes during the Reconstruction Era. Hymn-lining was discontinued in the white church and most black churches as well.⁶⁸ The Social Hymnody Movement began, which dealt with the social concern of the white church from 1880 to 1930. "Because there was no social gospel hymnody written by blacks to accost their specific social circumstances, the social hymns of white writers had to suffice. But only some of their hymns were directly relevant to African American social concerns, while most were not."⁶⁹ This movement would cause the transition era, the creation of Gospel Music, and the Great Migration.

In the Reconstruction Era, more so in the twentieth century, the Great Migration was a movement that saw a vast majority of the African-American community relocate to the North of the United States.

At the turn of this century African-Americans comprised roughly 12 percent of the nation's total population of over 75 million. The 12 percent takes on particular significance when it is remembered the throughout the post-Civil War and late nineteenth century there was no lack of doomsayers predicting the numerical demise of the African-Americans. Indeed, among their white contemporaries, the conventional wisdom was that post-emancipation African-Americans were simply a doomed race – doomed because

⁶⁷ David A. J. Richards, *Conscience and the Constitution: History, Theory, and Law of the Reconstruction Amendments* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 114.

⁶⁸ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 356.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 359.

they did not possess the ability to provide for even their most basic needs and as a result literally would not survive until 1900.⁷⁰

Many were looking for a new way to live, “transforming the demographic landscape as millions of African Americans relocated in search of jobs and better life.”⁷¹ During this movement, Gospel Music began to become popular in many communities. It mainly flourished in urban settings and would be used by many traveling evangelists for revivals meetings and tours. “Black gospel quickly distinguished itself from its white counterpart by the body rhythms, the call and response patterns and the improvisations characteristics of African music.”⁷² Melva Wilson Costen illustrates the influences of Black Gospel Music in her book, *African American Christian Worship*:

Black Gospel music refers to both a genre (song form) of musical composition and a vocal or instrumental performance style. Both represent a composite of a variety of musical expressions: Spirituals, metered hymns, improvised hymns, blues, ragtime, jazz, and nineteenth century Euro-American gospel hymns. The folksy earthiness that distinguishes Black Gospel from other musical genres recalls primal empathetic features that are different from Euro-American aesthetics. For the African American, the aesthetic is integrally bound with feelings and emotions that allow the “beautiful” to emerge from the soul.⁷³

This genre of gospel music would be known as Traditional Gospel Music. “The traditional period, also called the “golden age of gospel,” commenced around 1930 with the compositions of Thomas A. Dorsey.”⁷⁴ Thomas A. Dorsey is considered “The Father of Gospel”

⁷⁰ Demoral Davis, “Toward a Socio-Historical and Demographic Portrait of Twentieth Century African-Americans.” in *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South*, ed. Alferdteen Harrison (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 1.

⁷¹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 95.

⁷² *Ibid*, 359.

⁷³ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

⁷⁴ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 361.

because of his contributions to the genre. “Dorsey, a talented blues and jazz musician, was influenced by the style of the religious compositions of Charles A. Tindley, a Black Methodist pastor. Dorsey’s text, as well as those of subsequent Gospel musicians, are commentaries on personal religious experiences in a society that is most often hostile.”⁷⁵ Dorsey's contemporaries such as Kenneth Morris, Sallie Martin, Roberta Martin, Theodore Frye, Lucie Campbell, and J. H. Brewster would help shape the sound of Traditional Gospel Music with innovative changes such as the church choirs and ensembles. Elizabeth C. Parker described how included choirs and ensembles changed the African American worship experience in her article: *A Phenomenology of One Southeastern African American Church Choir*.

In African American choirs, participants described that by learning the roots of gospel and spiritual traditions, they told important stories of people who had come and gone, thus developing ethnic pride. Participants also reported they experienced a unique type of music-making because they could express relief during stressful times and gain resilience from the lyrics, lyrics with spiritual meaning.⁷⁶

Let Mt. Zion Rejoice: Music in the African American Church, written by James Abbingdon, is an essential guide for those dedicated to achieving musical excellence in the African American worship experience. The author provides examples and applications of developing music directors for the church, choosing styles and repertoire, and recognizing a congregation’s identity and worship needs. Abbingdon conveys that the responsibility of the African American church choir is to lead worship. “The first task of the choir is to lead the

⁷⁵ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Cassidy Parker, “A Phenomenology of One Southeastern African American Church Choir,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 212 (Spring 2017): 58.

congregation in worship, and this leadership begins with the choir's first audible or visible activity at the beginning of worship and continues as long as the choir can be seen or heard."⁷⁷

The composers of Traditional Gospel Music had this idea of worship in mind. Many who attended worship experiences like this would be influenced by the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 led by William Joseph Seymour. "The crowd at Azusa Street was multiracial. People of different ethnicities and cultures worshipped side by side. There was no segregated seating. Seymour preached that the dissolution of racial barriers was the surest sign of the Spirit's Pentecostal presence and the approach of a New Jerusalem."⁷⁸ The revival caused the formation of new denominations such as the Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

Other composers during the period began to rediscover Spirituals. While many African American churches still did not want to hear these songs in their services, musically-trained composers like Nathaniel R. Dett, Hall Johnson, and William Dawson would pioneer this movement. "Acceptance of these songs came only after they were embellished and rendered in the sophisticated idiom of the European anthem. These anthemized spirituals were a novel development in the Black church, for they constituted the first substantial body of composed Black sacred music not categorized as folk song."⁷⁹ These spirituals would be composed chorally and would inspire the creation of anthems in the more conservative African American churches such as African Methodist Episcopal and the Union African Church.

⁷⁷ James Abbington, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), 35-36.

⁷⁸ Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2012), 226.

⁷⁹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 366.

It is logical to associate the use of anthems in the African American church with the introduction of choral singing in African Methodist churches. Whereas some Northern black ministers modified the structure of traditional Protestant services to meet the special cultural and religious needs of their congregations, other elected to structure their congregations around the doctrines, literature, and musical practices of white denominations.⁸⁰

The elements of spirituals, anthems, and gospels were straightforward to recognize and compose. African Americans would use many of these elements to write songs that inspired the Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement consisted of protests by African Americans and their allies to end legalized racial discrimination, disenfranchisement, and racial segregation in the United States. During this movement, protest songs helped stabilize the movement. In addition, these songs emulated the abolitionist movement in the United States, which was against slavery. “In this collection were both authentic abolitionist hymns and adaptations of extant evangelical hymns. Of the latter, key words and phrases were altered in order to superimpose meaning relative to abolition.”⁸¹ The protest songs used during the Civil Rights Movement are called freedom songs.

Freedom songs divide into two basic categories: (1) group participation song, often extemporaneously adapted from existing material by a group involved in civil rights activities, and (2) professionally composed topical songs, which comment on protest events from the sideline. Many freedom songs were adaptations from traditional spirituals and gospel songs. Typically these forms, especially gospel songs, were brought down to the mundane by textual modifications.⁸²

⁸⁰ James Abbington, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), 70.

⁸¹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 369.

⁸² Jon Michael Spencer, *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), chap. 4, Google Books.

African Americans desperately wanted to be liberated from the segregation in the United States. *Risk of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998*, written by James H. Cone, conveys many African American infatuations. The author focuses on the birth of black theology and explores its issues with violence, the developing world, and the theological touchstone embodied in African American spirituals. Cone also includes the theology of Martin Luther King, Jr., the philosophy of Malcolm X, and the roots of black theology. The theologies and philosophies of King and Malcolm X were praised and scrutinized by many in the African American community. Cone, for example, had different ideas than King.

Although our differences on violence versus nonviolence, love and reconciliation, and the possibility of change in the white community are real, they are differences between two persons who are deeply committed to the same faith of the Black Church. Our differences are not so great as is usually believed. They are more semantic than substantive, and can best be understood by investigating our different circumstances in the black community and the audiences to which we address our viewpoints.⁸³

While Cone may not have agreed with King's theology and tactics to deal with racial discrimination, it was clear that his roots in the African-American Church were displayed clearly. "The influence of the Black Church and its central theme of freedom and hope can be seen in the language of King's speaking and writing. Everything he said and wrote sounds like a black sermon and not rational reflection."⁸⁴ King's message would reflect the freedom songs during the Civil Right Movement as conveyed in *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* by Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya:

⁸³ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith, The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 76.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 78.

The singing of particular songs during a sit-in, protest march, freedom ride, mass meeting, or other protest activities, typically lasted twenty to twenty-five minutes. This necessitated the composition of new verses for the sake of textual variety during these lengthy involvements. Sometimes the verses were prepared for a specific protest occasion; other times they evolved extemporaneously from the emotion generated by the occasion.⁸⁵

Malcolm X, however, can be seen as King's opposing commentary. "Malcolm represents an abrasive, "in-your-face" assertion of blackness, a "don't mess with me" attitude. Young blacks love Malcolm's courage to speak the truth that whites did not want to hear. They love his righteous and fearless anger, his eloquence, wit, and self-confidence."⁸⁶ King's influence in the Black Church and Malcolm X's "in your face" approach were present on the street of African American communities, the church, and the music. The Black Theology of Liberation will continue to expand and develop even in the post-Civil Rights Movement era.

The Black Power Movement to the 1990's

When the attempts of the peaceful Civil Rights Movement did not work, the Black Power Movement formed in 1960. The movement got mixed reviews, mainly because the purpose of the organization was not clear. "It means nothing other than the full emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary. The methods may include selective buying, boycotting, marching, or even rebellion."⁸⁷ Those who were in the African American Church had fear about what this movement would do. "Some religionists would consider Black Power the work of the Antichrist. Others would suggest that such a

⁸⁵ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 369.

⁸⁶ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith, The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 98.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 4.

concept should be tolerated as an expression of Christian love to the misguided black brother.”⁸⁸

This is when the viewpoints of African-American communities began to differ from those in the church.

Readings in African American Church Music and Worship, edited by James Abbington, is a collection of essential articles and essays on music and worship by some of the most influential voices in African-American history. One of those voices is Portia K. Maulsby, who would distinguish the difference between Traditional Gospel Music and Modern Gospel Music in her article, *The Use and Performance of Hymnody, Spirituals, and Gospels in the Black Church*.

The music found in the earliest autonomous Black church at the turn of the century consisted of spirituals and lined-out hymns. The addition of tambourines, drums, piano, horns, and later guitar and Hammond organ to the traditional accompaniment of hand clapping and foot stomping led to the emergence of an original body of Black religious music known as gospel.⁸⁹

Modern Gospel Music, known as Contemporary Gospel Music, brought a different sound to the African-American worship experience. “The contemporary period in gospel music dates from the late 1960s and early 1970s when the transition from the typical gospel chorus accompanied by a piano and handclapping performing in a church had been superseded by ensembles featuring strings, brass, synthesizers, and electronic instruments performing in a concert hall.”⁹⁰ Contributing artists included Andraé Crouch, James Cleveland, Richard Smallwood, The Clark Sisters, Edwin Hawkins, and Tremaine Hawkins. It did not just differ from Traditional Gospel Music because of its sound, but its message, too. Traditional Gospel

⁸⁸ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith, The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 3.

⁸⁹ Portia K. Maulsby, “The Use and Performance of Hymnody, Spirituals, and Gospels in the Black Church,” in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, ed. James Abbington (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001), 91.

⁹⁰ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 362.

Music “portrays the Christian’s principal vocation as one of mere “watching and waiting” for the Savior’s return because he finds that life is “uncertain” and full of confusion.”⁹¹ Modern Gospel Music focused on the idea that “no longer are Christians enjoined to turn heavenward from hatred, sadness, madness, and confusion, but rather to be reconciliatory, to “do something good” by applying real love.”⁹² Melva Wilson Costen conveyed how Modern Gospel Music impacted in her book, *African American Church Worship*.

Black worship was affected by this new phenomenon, not only because of the “show dimension,” but because of the societal context. Racial tensions were eased as people resorted to achieving freedom and bonding through music. The latest Gospel “hit” often became the special music for worship, if it could be learned from the record fast enough. Large, elaborately robed “stage” choirs, popularized by the Edwin Hawkins singers, became the models for church choirs. A new “rock” permeated worship, with lots of hand clapping, keyboard accompaniment, and trap drum sets to help make a joyful noise unto the Lord!⁹³

However, just because racial tensions did ease does not mean there was no injustice. For example, the case of the Wilmington Ten emerged in 1971, where eight black men and one white woman were accused wrongfully of arson, conspiracy, and shooting at the police and firefighters at the scene. This conviction sparked outrage not only in Wilmington, North Carolina, but a movement would also form demanding the false convict’s freedom. “This movement attracted support from religious institutions, black nationalists, leftists, and civil libertarians.”⁹⁴

Movements and the music of the African American Church would continue to evolve and remain separate into the 1980s and 1990s.

⁹¹ Jon Michael Spencer, *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), chap. 9, Google Books.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

⁹⁴ Kenneth Robert Janken, *The Wilmington Ten: Violence, Injustice, and the Rise of Black Politics* (Wilmington, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 12.

The 1980s and 1990s would not see any improvement to racial injustice. Many would say it had gotten worse. Affirmative Action is one of the many injustices that was supposed to help African Americans with obtaining employment. However, it did absolutely nothing. “In reality, as social policy, it has had very little effect on the employment profile of most blacks and women. However, most Americans have deluded themselves into believing “the lie.” Generally speaking, the only “unqualified persons” who have received a job as the direct result of affirmative action have been the affirmative action officers.”⁹⁵ An injustice that affected the 1990s was the Los Angeles Riots in 1992. “Many who watched the oft-televised videotape of the 1991 Rodney King beating expected the four Los Angeles Police Department officers charged with excessive force to be convicted. Thus, when a jury acquitted all four officers, outraged Los Angeles citizens immediately began to protest.”⁹⁶

In the African American Church, Contemporary Gospel Music began to become popular amongst the young generations. Melva Wilson Costen illustrated its effect in her book, *African American Church Worship*.

Contemporary Gospel music (which emerged during the 1980s) supplements other sounds heard in some Black worship services. The religious text are often supported by chordal harmonies that have not been the traditional musical support for religious texts. Youth are finding worship more meaningful because they can identify with sounds from their own context. The contention is that the work of God’s people in worship (*leitourgia*) should not be limited to ritual action that is not contextualized.⁹⁷

Gospel artists such as Kirk Franklin and Fred Hammond used chordal harmonies to identify with Post-Racial America.

⁹⁵ Alphine W. Jefferson, “Black America in the 1980s: RHETORIC VS. REALITY,” *The Black Scholar*, no. 3 Blacks and the Law (May/June 1986): 5.

⁹⁶ Charles Rosenberg, “Los Angeles Uprising,” in *The 1992 Los Angeles Riots*, ed. Louise I. Gerdes (New York, NY: Greenhaven Publishing, LLC, 2014), 15.

⁹⁷ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

Post-racial America and the African American Church

The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-racial America, written by Walter Earl Fluker, conveys the historical and current role of the Black Church and argues that the old language and metaphors have long become outdated. The author offers a vision of the Black Church involving the young black man and other disenfranchised groups dismissed by globalized capital. Fluker argues that the Black Church has to find new ways to use race issues as an emancipatory instrument to continue being a beacon of African-American life.

The phrase “Post-racial America” seems to project a perspective of positive change. “Post-racialism, like post-nationalism and “color blindness,” suggests that the world’s people have moved beyond racial subjectivity and group identity.”⁹⁸ However, anyone with this perspective attitude may be willfully ignorant or prejudiced toward the reality of African Americans. Many would say this is a haunted reoccurrence of the history in America. “At the heart of these cultural hauntings is a revelation of how deeply race is embedded in American culture, and of the ways in which race as a cultural and social ghost shape-shifts and re-invents itself in myriad figurations.”⁹⁹ Tragic circumstances such as police brutality and the unjustified killing of African American men and women have sparked many marches and protest demonstrations throughout the country, including the call for a response from the African-American Church.

There are a plethora of issues that African American Churches have addressed very poorly. One of those issues about its response to post-racialism:

⁹⁸ Clarence Earl Walker and Gregory D. Smithers, *The Preacher and the Politician Jeremiah Wright, Barack Obama, and race in America* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 36.

⁹⁹ Walter Earl Fluker, “Shape-Shifting: Cultural Hauntings, Contested Post-Racialism, and Black Theological Imagination” in *Contesting Post-Racialism: Conflicted Churches in the United States and South Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 38-39.

There is an uncanny correspondence between the experience of returning home to Frogbottom and the task of reimagining black religious practices for this new time of fragmented discourse about the meaning and role of black churches in the United States. The memories of the past are no longer adequate to sustain the mission of black churches in these turbulent times.¹⁰⁰

The leadership and clergy of African American Churches kept the members of their congregations in this state of a “perpetual struggle.” While the idea of struggle is not new, most of the music used in African American worship services today comes from the Traditional and Modern Gospel eras. “Many problems arise concerning the church and its ministry, because we forget what these terms mean in the context of the gospel of Jesus.”¹⁰¹ Since the Church continues to portray a struggle with the music and liturgy used in worship services, having worship that is liberating and free is impossible. We end up staying in a place that we should not be occupying in the first place. “But only through remembering, retelling, and reliving our story, appropriating language, signs, and symbols that conjure new practices for this new rhythm and time in which we live, can we receive a glimpse of a hopeful future.”¹⁰² Another issue that has haunted the African-American Church is the United States’ first African American President, Barack Obama. While this groundbreaking moment in United States history was a joyous occasion, it was the precursor for events that would challenge the African American Church.

The inauguration of our first African American president was hailed as a proud moment for the United States, a jubilant moment for the world, and a surreal, fantastical, disembodied experience for many who live and breathe, work in, and think about the black church. And yet there was a troubling dimension to this incredible passage: something said to me – maybe to many of us – that the *ground has shifted*, and that maybe African Americans had lost something precious even as we gained what so many

¹⁰⁰ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 16.

¹⁰¹ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith, The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 111.

¹⁰² Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 166.

had fought for, prayed for, hoped for, and died for. For some, the moment was, and still is, strange and mixed with anxiety (*angst*), a distrust of feelings that were too joyful, too hopeful, and perhaps deceptive.¹⁰³

Unfortunately, many look at the inauguration of the first African American president, Barack Obama, as their “Savior” and worshipped the idea of what he could do for the African-American community and the church. This event in history emulates the story of the Golden Calf and how the Israelites worshipped the figure. “While we have not collected gold from our church members to use un forging literal idols, far too many of us have elevated our methodology of worship to golden calf status, sanctimoniously placing it on the alters of our churches. Our intentions may be honorable, but an idol is still an idol, and the end is exactly the same!”¹⁰⁴ The Bible clarifies this in the Ten Commandments, stating: “You must not have any other god but me.”¹⁰⁵ The election of Barack Obama also conveyed a reality that the African-American community had to face; the dilemma. “The dilemma is hardly resolved; it still exists at the heart of African American life and practices and has far-reaching implications for the ways African American church leaders understand and participate in civil-life, and how they interrogate the ghost of post-racialism.”¹⁰⁶ One of the most pressing issues that haunt the African-American Church is the absence of holiness teaching. The Bible states: “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a

¹⁰³ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 44.

¹⁰⁴ Frank S. Page and L. Lavon Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today's Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2014), 24.

¹⁰⁵ Exodus 20:3 (New Living Translation).

¹⁰⁶ Walter Earl Fluker, “Shape-Shifting: Cultural Hauntings, Contested Post-Racialism, and Black Theological Imagination” in *Contesting Post-Racialism: Conflicted Churches in the United State and South Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 43.

living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him”.¹⁰⁷ Walter Ear Fluker conveys this idea in the following way:

A critical dimension of this *shape-shifting* will involve a new aesthetic sensibility and appreciation of the *body*, the many colored, crip, queered, and estranged bodies that are heirs to *somebodyness*. The reevaluation of *somebodyness* places emphasis on the *body* as a critical source for somaesthetic investigations that challenge dominant cultural, political, legal, theological, and ethical perceptions of religious experiences. One can hardly imagine having a religious experience without a *body*.¹⁰⁸

With the African American Church not addressing who we are in God’s image, many African Americans are liable to believe anything. “By failing to identify the universal dimension of the gospel and to subject it to the judgment of Scripture and the traditions of church, we leave ourselves vulnerable to the charge of ideology, that is, allowing the gospel to be defined by our cultural and political interests.”¹⁰⁹ Many generations today do not know who they are not just as a cultural, but as believers in the body of Christ.

Today’s African American Church and the Black Lives Matter Movement

The African American Church is plagued with a plethora of issues rooted from the beginning of the history of the United States.

Today’s Black Church is struggling for relevance in the resolution of today’s black problems: racism; drug abuse; child care; health and wealth; housing; counseling; unemployment; teenage pregnancy; the false securities of conspicuous consumption; and the whole tragic malaise with which society in general is burdened. It must address all these social challenges with abandoning its distinctive mandate to assist human beings in their efforts to find conciliation and comfort with their Creator. There is no moratorium on the human need for spiritual and moral nurture.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Romans 12:1 (New Living Translation).

¹⁰⁸ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 121.

¹⁰⁹ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith, The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 113.

¹¹⁰ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 398.

The African American Church is supposed to share the good news of the Gospel of Christ. However, it has evolved into different “Golden Calf” idols. “Our church is an imposter, because we no longer believe the gospel we proclaim. There is a credibility gap between what we say and what we do.”¹¹¹ African Americans are conscious of the church's reality that there is work to do if liberation and freedom genuinely want to be realized. It will require us to acknowledge that many of us are “dead” in the spirit and need to awaken.

Waking up the dead in black churches in the United States will mean bringing to the fore of our collective consciousness the possibility that we can claim agency and responsibility for our own lives, especially for the future of our youth. To *congregate*, *conjure*, and *conspire in common(s)* in the early decades of the twenty-first century is a dangerous and costly proposition because it demands that we confess our traditions.¹¹²

One of the issues we will need to recognize is the killing of African Americans by police officers, which sparked the creation of the Black Lives Matter Movement. “*Black lives matter* served as a rallying cry for protests, but it also acted as an assertion of the image of God in black people. In Christian anthropology, saying that black lives matter insists that all people, including those who have darker skin, have been made in the image and likeness of God.”¹¹³ The *Black Lives Matter* Movement emerged from this ongoing issue after the killings of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

As a grassroots movement it bears similarities with the prophetic cadence of an earlier era when younger black activists, many of them college and university students, were able to produce a critical tension among the black leadership of the civil rights movement and

¹¹¹ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith, The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 111.

¹¹² Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 224-225.

¹¹³ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity of Race* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 179. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5702721>.

the larger society. In doing so, they elevated the struggle for freedom and jobs to a cultural revolution of black consciousness and political awareness.¹¹⁴

The communities were outraged and disgusted after witnessing Martin and Brown's death and would protest spontaneously. Marc Lamont Hill, scholar and journalist, states: "To be Nobody is to be considered disposable... Underneath each case (of state violence) is a more fundamental set of economic conditions, political arrangements, and power relations that transform everyday citizens into casualties of an increasingly intense war on the vulnerable.".¹¹⁵ Freddie Gray's death in Baltimore, Maryland, was another killing that shook the United States to its core. He was arrested on a minor infraction and died in police custody. "It was immediately clear to them that the problem was structural racism, which included profiling and harassment of a certain type of poor or working-class Black youth, an aggressive policing style in poor Black communities."¹¹⁶ African American Churches should get involved with the Black Live Matter Movement, and thankful many do so. "Every church leader and scholar who is involved in the work of social and political transformation should follow the lead of these youth in being committed to placing his or her body on the line and putting some flesh in the game in new ways."¹¹⁷ However, some African American Churches need to reevaluate their values of the organization. "It may be helpful for Christians to distinguish between *Black Lives Matter* as an

¹¹⁴ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 231.

¹¹⁵ Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 50.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 83.

¹¹⁷ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 232.

organization and *black lives matters* as a concept and movement.”¹¹⁸ Many African American Christians, especially those with conservative views, have issues with the organization's advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community. However, these Christians need to remember what the Bible says: “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.”¹¹⁹

The police killing that struck a chord with everyone in the United States was the death of George Floyd. The Coronavirus Pandemic had everyone quarantined at home, which is why everyone witnessed this senseless killing.

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 was not new information. It was the same suffering and struggle of one fifth of the population of the United States set against the backdrop of American life: the militarization of that life and of our police, the privatization of our prisons, the debasement of our journalism and our media, the corporatization of our professions, and the commercialization of our culture.¹²⁰

These issues are often present in rap music, whether if it is secular or gospel. “Rap music, carrying forward elements of the earlier traditions of the sorrow songs and the blues, with complex polyrhythmic layering, repeated scratching, breaks, and pauses in the beat, is meant to create a sense of suspension and surprise in listeners, rupturing their regimented styles of being within the cultural matrices of power to which we are all adapted.”¹²¹ In the African American Church, millennials and younger generations tend to gravitate to Urban Contemporary Gospel Music. It is a gospel music genre that combines elements from Traditional, Contemporary, and Modern Gospel Music with other popular genres of Christian Worship Music. “Originally a

¹¹⁸ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity of Race* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 179. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5702721>.

¹¹⁹ Romans 3:23 (New Living Translation).

¹²⁰ Michael Fine, “George Floyd (October 14, 1973 – May 25, 2020): Make Future Public Health Better Than the Past,” *American Journal of Public Health* 111, no. 5 (May 2021): 758.

¹²¹ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 233.

product of the predominantly white contemporary Christian music (CCM) industry of the 1960s and 1970s, praise and worship music has become popular in black churches across America, and particularly in Los Angeles.”¹²² All Nations Worship Assembly is a church with branches across the United States which create and worship Urban Contemporary Gospel Music.

As a whole, the culture of All Nation’s have the DNA of being dynamic New Testament congregations with a vision and mission centered on discipling families, raising up world leaders, and social transformation. Our services are marked by powerful praise and worship expressions, strong prayer, and revelatory teaching through the Word of God. It is a place where everybody belongs and where we are committed to developing strong covenant relationship to see our world radically changed.¹²³

One of the main issues in today's African American Church is why congregation members come to the services. Many African Americans come to church looking for hope and a way to escape the traumas of daily life. However, the underlying issue why the African-American Church has had issues serving the community is because of the origins of its nativity.

It is curious that black churches today have become naïve about the fact that from the beginning colonial Christian reasoning sanctioned violence against black bodies, while infusing the religious imagination of black people with the necessity of assuring the salvation of their souls. Many black churches uncritically complicit with a theological framework antithetical to black people’s experience and struggle for justice and liberation. The result is that these black churches take their place alongside traditional white churches where, historically, Christianity has been largely privatized within a cultural value system supporting white supremacy.¹²⁴

Many come to see and witness the “Performance-Driven” worship service. “The major problem with performance-driven worship is that the congregation is robbed of the opportunity

¹²² Birgitta J. Johnson, “Back to the Heart of Worship: Praise and Worship Music in a Los Angeles African American Megachurch.” *Black Music Research Journal* 31, no. 1 (2011): 108. <https://doi.org/10.5406/blacmusiresej.31.1.0105>.

¹²³ Biography,” All Nations Worship Assembly, accessed July 18, 2021. <https://www.multitracks.com/artists/All-Nations-Worship-Assembly-Atlanta/biography/>

¹²⁴ Forrest E. Harris, Sr. “Pursuing American Racial Justice and a Politically and Theologically Informed Black Church Praxis,” in *Contesting Post-Racialism: Conflicted Churches in the United States and South Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 179.

to respond directly to God.”¹²⁵ Churches that market themselves this way will have a hard time retaining their members. “All the singing, prompting, clapping, and rhythmical and melodically intense repertoire won’t lift the conservative, traditional worshiper in most mainline churches.”¹²⁶ Another issue is being able to retain the younger generations of African-Americans in the church. Many of the younger generations are used to the “noise” of everyday life. “But what might the sound of the genuine mean for a new generation of young men and women who live daily with noisy intersections of market-stimulated media and surreptitious sound-games and stereotypes?”¹²⁷

Summary

African American Churches have to meet the older and younger generations where they are to work toward a multi-generational worship experience. However, they also must recognize that the struggles that everyone has experienced are different depending on the traumas of African American history. It includes figuring out how to “assist and empower youth to rename and re-language their world, beginning with their own black, bestialized, sexualized, and criminalized bodies.”¹²⁸ Until the traumatic issues are addressed, the leadership of African American Churches and the surrounding communities will continue to protest and demand change just like our ancestors during the time of slavery.

¹²⁵ Frank S. Page and L. Lavon Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today’s Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2014), 58.

¹²⁶ James Abbingon, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), 8.

¹²⁷ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 233.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 232.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this social and behavioral research study is to find how African Americans' historical and traumatic events influence preferred music styles in two predominantly African American churches. This chapter will expound on the methodology used to conduct this study, including the research design, participants, instrumentation, procedures, and methods for data analysis, all to answer the research questions.

Design

An anonymous survey was conducted to convey the views and opinions of the participants. The particular process supports different narratives. According to Creswell, “the narrative combines views from the participant’s life with those of the researcher’s life in a collaborative narrative.”¹²⁹ The process also supports the possibility of a transformative worldview. “The research contains an action agenda for reform that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life.”¹³⁰ The survey was the most appropriate approach for this study.

The 10 research questions for this study were:

1. What generation do you fall under? (Check the box that applies.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Traditionalist or Silent Generation (1945 and before/Ages 76+)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964/Ages 57 – 75)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Generation X (1965 – 1976/Ages 45 – 56)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Millennials (1977 – 1995/Ages 44 – 26)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Generation Z (1996 – 2003/Ages 23 – 18)

¹²⁹ Creswell, John C. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 13.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

2. Check the boxes of the church music you prefer to listen to.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Spirituals & Hymns (e.g., Call and Response, Meter Music, African-American Hymns)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Traditional Gospel (e.g., Thomas A. Dorsey, Sallie Martin, Kenneth Morris, Roberta Martin, Theodore Frye, Lucie Campbell, J. H. Brewster)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Modern Gospel (e.g., Andraé Crouch, James Cleveland, Richard Smallwood, The Clark Sisters, Edwin Hawkins, Tremaine Hawkins)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contemporary Gospel (e.g., Kirk Franklin, Fred Hammond, Byron Cage, Hezekiah Walker, Donald Lawrence, Kurt Carr)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Christian Rap (e.g., Lecrae, Trip Lee, Bizzle, Aaron Cole, Swoope)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Contemporary Worship Music (e.g., All Nations Music, Maverick City Music, Travis Greene, Jonathan McReynolds, Tye Tribbett, Jonathan Nelson, Anthony Brown)

3. Why do you prefer the music you selected? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It is easy to worship when I hear this music.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It helps me get through a tough situation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It's the only music I listen to.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I love how the music sounds.

4. Which of the following does your music preference allow you to do? (Choice one answer.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Worship God freely.

5. Which of the following historical events, that caused African American traumas, did you witness in your lifetime? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	The Great Depression
<input type="checkbox"/>	The treatment of African-Americans during World War II
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Civil Rights Movement (e.g., bus boycotts, segregation in schools, unfair treatment of African-Americans)
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Black Power Movement
<input type="checkbox"/>	The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action
<input type="checkbox"/>	Los Angeles Riots in 1992
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Million Man March in 1995
<input type="checkbox"/>	Barack Obama becoming the 44 th President of the United States
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Black Lives Matter Movement (created to address the unjust killings of African-Americans)
<input type="checkbox"/>	The killing of George Floyd

6. Did these historical events affect you in a negative way? (Circle one.) Yes or No

7. If you answered “Yes” to the last question, have you experience any of the following as a result of the historical events and African American traumas? (Check all that apply.)

	Re-experiencing of distressing events
	Recurrent and multiple medical symptoms with no discernible organic cause (e.g., stomach ache, headache, rapid heartbeat, etc.)
	Abuse Issues (e.g., physical, mental, drug, alcohol, etc.)
	Behavioral Issues
	Chronic Stress
	Depression & Anxiety Issues
	Hypervigilance (A state of increased alertness)
	Avoidance
	None of these apply

8. Do you believe the historical events and African American traumas you experienced in your lifetime is related to the type of music you prefer to hear in church services? (Circle one and briefly explain you answer.) Yes or No
9. Are you affected by the historical events and African American traumas that you did not experience in your lifetime (i.e. Events that happened before you were born)? (Circle one and briefly explain your answer.) Yes or No
10. Referring back to questions 5 – 7, do you believe the African American Church can get to a place where all forms of Christian Music can be used in worship services? (Circle one and briefly explain your answer.) Yes or No

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Research Question 1: How much of the historical trauma against African Americans comprised in past and present music affect the African American Worship Experience of the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church?

Research Question 2: Does the musical influences or historical influences take precedence in the selection of music in the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church?

The hypotheses for this study were:

H1: All of the historical traumas against African Americans comprised in past and present music affect the African American Worship Experience of the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church. However, the generations are affected in a plethora of ways.

H2: The historical influences of the music take precedence in the selection of music in the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were recruited through a recruitment letter read aloud by the primary researcher, in which 15 volunteers were asked to participate at both churches. Participants must be 18 years of age or older, African American, and a First Baptist Church Denbigh or Refuge Nation Church member. This study will use First Baptist Church Denbigh; a church founded during the time of post-slavery; rooted in traditional worship music, and Refuge Nation Church; a church founded in the 21st century with a contemporary style of worship music, to compare and contrast how different generations are affected by the traumas of African-American history and worship. The appropriate church leadership passed out the survey at both churches.

SETTING

The site of this study took place at both churches after the worship services. The surveys were placed in white envelopes and a copy of the recruitment letter and the consent form.

Procedure

Before the study, university permission was secured to conduct the survey. The Institution Review Board (IRB) approved the social and behavioral study, study procedures, and required documents (e.g., consent form). Additionally, permission from Deacon Linwood Wright

of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Bishop Joe Baker of Refuge Nation Church was obtained to conduct the study.

Recruitment

The recruitment letter was distributed to the church membership/participants of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the study will be analyzed to convey how the traumas of African Americans influenced the preferred music styles of each participant. The study will also analyze how African Americans feel about all forms of Christian music being used for worship in the African American Church. Finally, the data will be analyzed for specific themes found in participants' responses.

The key to this social and behavioral research is that the data obtained from the participants will show that they either lived through specific traumas of African American history or are knowledgeable about specific events. Additionally, the research will provide possible solutions to making worship free, liberating, and multi-generational in the African American Church.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The chapter describes the analyses conducted to test the hypotheses that (a) all of the historical traumas against African Americans comprised in the past and present music affect the African American Worship Experience of the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church. However, the generations are involved in a plethora of ways, and (b) the historical influences of the music take precedence in the selection of music in the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church. This chapter conveys the different generations in the African American Church views of trauma and worship in various ways. Finally, the findings are presented, and the results are discussed.

Results

A social and behavioral study was conducted to assess how to find a way to bridge the gap between the different generations in the African American Church to allow worship to be free, liberating, and multi-generational. Study participants answered ten questions that address the historical traumas against African Americans and the African American worship experience. Fourteen members from each church submitted their responses.

Survey Question #1: What generation do you fall under? (Check the box that applies.)

	Traditionalist or Silent Generation (1945 and before/Ages 76+)
	Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964/Ages 57 – 75)
	Generation X (1965 – 1976/Ages 45 – 56)
	Millennials (1977 – 1995/Ages 44 – 26)
	Generation Z (1996 – 2003/Ages 23 – 18)

Participants Responses:

FBCD Participant 1.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 2.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 3.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 4.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 5.	Traditional or Silent Generation
FBCD Participant 6.	Generation X
FBCD Participant 7.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 8.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 9.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 10.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 11.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 12.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 13.	Baby Boomers
FBCD Participant 14.	Baby Boomers

RNC Participant 1.	Baby Boomers
RNC Participant 2.	Generation X
RNC Participant 3.	Generation X
RNC Participant 4.	Millennials
RNC Participant 5.	Generation X
RNC Participant 6.	Millennials
RNC Participant 7.	Millennials
RNC Participant 8.	Traditional or Silent Generation
RNC Participant 9.	Millennials
RNC Participant 10.	Millennials
RNC Participant 11.	Millennials
RNC Participant 12.	Millennials
RNC Participant 13.	Generation X
RNC Participant 14.	Millennials

Survey Question #2: Check the boxes of the church music you prefer to listen to.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Spirituals & Hymns (e.g., Call and Response, Meter Music, African-American Hymns)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Traditional Gospel (e.g., Thomas A. Dorsey, Sallie Martin, Kenneth Morris, Roberta Martin, Theodore Frye, Lucie Campbell, J. H. Brewster)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Modern Gospel (e.g., Andraé Crouch, James Cleveland, Richard Smallwood, The Clark Sisters, Edwin Hawkins, Tremaine Hawkins)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contemporary Gospel (e.g., Kirk Franklin, Fred Hammond, Byron Cage, Hezekiah Walker, Donald Lawrence, Kurt Carr)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Christian Rap (e.g., Lecrae, Trip Lee, Bizzle, Aaron Cole, Swoope)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Contemporary Worship Music (e.g., All Nations Music, Maverick City Music, Travis Greene, Jonathan McReynolds, Tye Tribbett, Jonathan Nelson, Anthony Brown)

Participants Responses:

FBCD Participant 1.	Spirituals & Hymns
FBCD Participant 2.	Spirituals & Hymns
FBCD Participant 3.	Spirituals & Hymns, Traditional Gospel, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
FBCD Participant 4.	Spirituals & Hymns, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel
FBCD Participant 5.	Spirituals & Hymns, Traditional Gospel, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
FBCD Participant 6.	Contemporary Gospel
FBCD Participant 7.	Contemporary Gospel
FBCD Participant 8.	Spirituals & Hymns, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
FBCD Participant 9.	Modern Gospel
FBCD Participant 10.	Modern Gospel
FBCD Participant 11.	Traditional Gospel
FBCD Participant 12.	Spirituals & Hymns, Traditional Gospel, Modern Gospel, Christian Rap
FBCD Participant 13.	Spirituals & Hymns, Traditional Gospel, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
FBCD Participant 14.	Traditional Gospel and Modern Gospel
RNC Participant 1.	Spirituals & Hymns, Traditional Gospel, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel
RNC Participant 2.	Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 3.	Contemporary Gospel and Urban Contemporary Worship Music

RNC Participant 4.	Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 5.	Spirituals & Hymns, Traditional Gospel, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 6.	Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Christian Rap, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 7.	Contemporary Gospel and Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 8.	Modern Gospel
RNC Participant 9.	Contemporary Gospel, Christian Rap, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 10.	Christian Rap and Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 11.	Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Christian Rap, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 12.	Spirituals & Hymns, Traditional Gospel, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music
RNC Participant 13.	Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Christian Rap
RNC Participant 14.	Spirituals & Hymns, Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, Urban Contemporary Worship Music

Survey Question #3: Why do you prefer the music you selected? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It is easy to worship when I hear this music.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It helps me get through a tough situation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	It's the only music I listen to.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I love how the music sounds.

Participants Responses:

- FBCD Participant 1. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology.
- FBCD Participant 2. I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life.
- FBCD Participant 3. It is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, and it helps me get through a tough situation.
- FBCD Participant 4. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, and it helps me get through a tough situation.
- FBCD Participant 5. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, It is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, and its helps me get through a tough situation.
- FBCD Participant 6. It is easy to worship when I hear this music.
- FBCD Participant 7. It is easy to worship when I hear this music.
- FBCD Participant 8. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, It is easy to worship when I hear this music, and its helps me get through a tough situation.
- FBCD Participant 9. I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, and its helps me get through a tough situation.
- FBCD Participant 10. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology.
- FBCD Participant 11. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology.
- FBCD Participant 12. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, It is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.
- FBCD Participant 13. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, It is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.

- FBCD Participant 14. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, It is easy to worship when I hear this music, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.
- RNC Participant 1. I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, and it helps me get through a tough situation.
- RNC Participant 2. It's easy to worship when I hear this music.
- RNC Participant 3. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, and it helps me get through a tough situation.
- RNC Participant 4. It's easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.
- RNC Participant 5. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, it is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.
- RNC Participant 6. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, it is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.
- RNC Participant 7. It is easy to worship when I hear this music, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.
- RNC Participant 8. I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life.
- RNC Participant 9. It's easy to worship when I hear this music and I love how the music sounds.
- RNC Participant 10. It is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.
- RNC Participant 11. It is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, and I love how the music sounds.

- RNC Participant 12. It is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.
- RNC Participant 13. I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life and it helps me get through a tough situation.
- RNC Participant 14. It aligns with Biblical scripture and theology, it is easy to worship when I hear this music, I grew up listening to this music and it's a part of my life, it helps me get through a tough situation, and I love how the music sounds.

Survey Question #4: Which of the following does your music preference allow you to do?
(Choice one answer.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Worship God freely.

Participants Responses:

- FBCD Participant 1. Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
- FBCD Participant 2. Worship God freely.
- FBCD Participant 3. Worship God freely.
- FBCD Participant 4. Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
- FBCD Participant 5. Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
- FBCD Participant 6. Worship God freely.
- FBCD Participant 7. Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
- FBCD Participant 8. Worship God freely.
- FBCD Participant 9. Worship God freely.
- FBCD Participant 10. Worship God freely.
- FBCD Participant 11. Worship God freely.

FBCD Participant 12.	Worship God freely.
FBCD Participant 13.	Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
FBCD Participant 14.	Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
RNC Participant 1.	Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
RNC Participant 2.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 3.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 4.	Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
RNC Participant 5.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 6.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 7.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 8.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 9.	Remember perpetual struggles you have been through or you're going through.
RNC Participant 10.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 11.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 12.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 13.	Worship God freely.
RNC Participant 14.	Worship God freely.

Survey Question #5: Which of the following historical events, that caused African-American traumas, did you witness in your lifetime? (Check all that apply.)

	The Great Depression
	The treatment of African-Americans during World War II
	The Civil Rights Movement (e.g., bus boycotts, segregation in schools, unfair treatment of African-Americans)
	The Black Power Movement
	The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.
	The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action
	Los Angeles Riots in 1992
	The Million Man March in 1995
	Barack Obama becoming the 44 th President of the United States
	The Black Lives Matter Movement (created to address the unjust killings of African-Americans)
	The killing of George Floyd

Participants Responses:

- FBCD Participant 1. Los Angeles Riots in 1992, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd.
- FBCD Participant 2. The Civil Rights Movement
- FBCD Participant 3. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and the Killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 4. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, The Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 5. Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States and the Black Lives Matter Movement

- FBCD Participant 6. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 7. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, The Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 8. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, The Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 9. The Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 10. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, The Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 11. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, The Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd

- FBCD Participant 12. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, The Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 13. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, The Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd
- FBCD Participant 14. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., The Bakke Decision and Affirmative Action, Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, The Black Lives Matter Movement, and the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 1. The Black Power Movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 2. The Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 3. The Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Los Angeles Riots in 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 4. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 5. Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States and the Black Lives Matter Movement

- RNC Participant 6. Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 7. Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 8. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- RNC Participant 9. Los Angeles Riots of 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 10. Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 11. Los Angeles Riots of 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 12. Los Angeles Riots of 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 13. Los Angeles Riots of 1992, the Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd
- RNC Participant 14. The Million Man March in 1995, Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the killing of George Floyd

Survey Question #6: Did these historical events affect you in a negative way? (Circle one.) Yes or No

Participants Responses:

FBCD Participant 1.	Yes
FBCD Participant 2.	No
FBCD Participant 3.	Yes
FBCD Participant 4.	Yes
FBCD Participant 5.	Yes
FBCD Participant 6.	No
FBCD Participant 7.	No
FBCD Participant 8.	Yes
FBCD Participant 9.	Yes
FBCD Participant 10.	No
FBCD Participant 11.	Yes
FBCD Participant 12.	No
FBCD Participant 13.	Yes
FBCD Participant 14.	Yes

RNC Participant 1.	Yes
RNC Participant 2.	Yes
RNC Participant 3.	Yes
RNC Participant 4.	Yes
RNC Participant 5.	Yes
RNC Participant 6.	Yes
RNC Participant 7.	Yes
RNC Participant 8.	No
RNC Participant 9.	Yes
RNC Participant 10.	Yes
RNC Participant 11.	No
RNC Participant 12.	Yes
RNC Participant 13.	No
RNC Participant 14.	No

Survey Question #7: If you answered “Yes” to the last question, have you experience any of the following as a result of the historical events and African-American traumas? (Check all that apply.)

Participants Responses:

FBCD Participants:

4	Re-experiencing of distressing events
1	Recurrent and multiple medical symptoms with no discernible organic cause (e.g., stomach ache, headache, rapid heartbeat, etc.)
1	Abuse Issues (e.g., physical, mental, drug, alcohol, etc.)
0	Behavioral Issues
0	Chronic Stress
3	Depression & Anxiety Issues
4	Hypervigilance (A state of increased alertness)
1	Avoidance
2	None of these apply

RNC Participants:

4	Re-experiencing of distressing events
1	Recurrent and multiple medical symptoms with no discernible organic cause (e.g., stomach ache, headache, rapid heartbeat, etc.)
3	Abuse Issues (e.g., physical, mental, drug, alcohol, etc.)
1	Behavioral Issues
2	Chronic Stress
8	Depression & Anxiety Issues
6	Hypervigilance (A state of increased alertness)
4	Avoidance
2	None of these apply

Survey Question #8: Do you believe the historical events and African-American traumas you experienced in your lifetime is related to the type of music you prefer to hear in church services? (Circle one and briefly explain you answer.) Yes or No

Participants who responded:

FBCD Participant 4. At this moment, I cannot connect these experiences to the type of music I like. The type of music I like is related to my personal life experiences and moment in time.

FBCD Participant 5. I grew up with this type of music.

FBCD Participant 8. The music is what gives me the desire and strength to remain positive and hopeful.

FBCD Participant 12. I like many types of music and many of my feelings have nothing to do with the music I chose to listen to.

RNC Participant 2. African-Americans developed their worship style and sound out of necessity/trauma. However, it grew into an uplifting form of music, not just trauma.

RNC Participant 4. Music is often a vessel in which someone is able to express their heart songs free from judgement, which allows the listener to connect on deeper levels.

RNC Participant 5. It helps me remember that God is still in control.

RNC Participant 7. I definitely prefer more encouraging music to counter the negatives in life.

RNC Participant 8. Music is used as an outlet.

RNC Participant 13. Black people being killed and mistreated.

Survey Question #9: Are you affected by the historical events and African-American traumas that you did not experience in your lifetime (i.e. Events that happened before you were born)? (Circle one and briefly explain your answer.) Yes or No

Participants who responded:

FBCD Participant 3. Slavery

FBCD Participant 4. The experiences before my birth affect me only as a historical reference.

FBCD Participant 12. I'm sure all/many of the events that have happened to my people have affected me because they have influenced how I was raised.

RNC Participant 2. Trauma is rooted in the DNA of people who experience it.

RNC Participant 4. I understand history gives way to the future and seeing the ways of old have influenced how I look at current events.

RNC Participant 5. Trauma influenced how I was raised.

- RNC Participant 7. The habits and mindsets of the elders around me and in my family. I have learned how to use the healthy and progressive information rather than the broken and destructive thinking. Be the progress is my goal!
- RNC Participant 8. It happened to my ancestors.
- RNC Participant 9. To learn about the historical events were painful.
- RNC Participant 13. The history of it. All of my children have had to go through segregation.
- RNC Participant 14. In a positive way because without Martin Luther King, Jr. we would not be here today.

Survey Question #10: Referring back to questions 5 – 7, do you believe the African-American Church can get to a place where all forms of Christian Music can be used in worship services? (Circle one and briefly explain your answer.) Yes or No

Participants who responded:

- FBCD Participants 2. When worship has nothing to do with age and God is the total focus.
- FBCD Participant 4. I say yes because generations die and time changes.
- FBCD Participant 5. Music is a part of life!
- FBCD Participant 8. When we use all forms of Christian music we are touching the heart and soul of more of our worshippers who come to be spiritually fed.
- FBCD Participant 12. We must be able to share and learn from all of our experiences.
- FBCD Participant 14. It's all of God and our faith in Him!
- RNC Participant 1. In time, but the things Africans had to go through can't compare in times past.
- RNC Participant 2. I think many African-American Churches already do. I think it is based on what is offered by the Worship Leader.
- RNC Participant 4. I believe the church has to be completely selfless and open to all forms of worship.
- RNC Participant 7. There is something for everyone.

RNC Participant 9. It depends on the level of relationship with God to hear the words and not just the music.

Discussion

Research questions asked the following:

Research Question 1: How much of the historical trauma against African Americans comprised in past and present music affect the African American Worship Experience of the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church?

The information received from the participants indicates that many believe that most, if not all historical traumas against African Americans comprised in the past and present music affect the African American Worship Experience. Moreover, the congregation of Refuge Nation Church believed this idea more than the congregation of First Baptist Church Denbigh. Many believe that “black churches were conceived in race and birthed into a struggle for an institutional identity and social space that was not controlled by the dominant gaze of white authority and legitimacy.”¹³¹ The results of the respondents align with hypothesis one.

Research Question 2: Does the musical influences or historical influences take precedence in the selection of music in the congregations of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church?

The information received from the participants indicate that the musical influence take precedence in the selection of music. Participants at both churches expressed the importance of having the music they prefer played in the worship services they attend. If it goes unchecked, music selection will become more of a ritual than a worship practice. Many African American

¹³¹ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 23.

Church leaders make this mistake. “If the minister has had theological training in a seminary or divinity school, it is likely that neither music and worship nor liturgy were required courses of study. Therefore the rituals that are repeated week after week, month after month, and year after year are associated with or defined by the pastor as worship.”¹³² The results of the respondents align with hypothesis two.

Summary

A social and behavioral study was conducted to convey how the historical and traumatic Events faced by African Americans influences preferred music styles in two predominant African American churches. It was found that most participants at Refuge Nation Church believed that most, if not all historical traumas against African Americans comprised in the past and present music affect the African American Worship Experience. It was also found that participants at First Baptist Church Denbigh prefer to hear Spirituals and Hymns, Modern Gospel, and Contemporary Gospel; while participants at Refuge Nation Church prefer to hear Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, and Urban Contemporary Worship Music.

¹³² James Abbingon, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), 46.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter will present a summary of the study, purpose, and procedure utilized in this study. Next, the findings and limitations of the study are discussed, related to prior research. Finally, chapter five concludes with an analysis of how the traumas against African Americans and the gospel music preference aligned with the findings at both churches.

Review of Methodology

An anonymous survey was conducted to convey the views and opinions of the participants. Participants were recruited through a recruitment letter read aloud by the primary researcher, in which 15 volunteers were asked to participate at both churches. Participants must have been 18 years of age or older, African American, and a First Baptist Church Denbigh or Refuge Nation Church member. This study used First Baptist Church Denbigh; a church founded before the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862; rooted in traditional worship music. This study also used Refuge Nation Church; a church founded in the 21st century with a contemporary style of worship music. Both churches were compared and contrasted to view how different generations are affected by the traumas of African American history and worship. The appropriate church leadership passed out the survey at both churches.

First Baptist Church Denbigh is located Newport News, Virginia. It was founded in 1862 during the Civil War.¹³³ This church and its members have a consequential history of hardships and victories, worshiping with traditional hymn singing and standard gospel songs. Refuge Nation Church is located in downtown Newport News, Virginia. It has a congregation with

¹³³ "Church History," First Baptist Church Denbigh, accessed February 14, 2021.
https://www.fbcdenbigh.org/church_history

younger generations of African American members founded in 2008 by its presiding overseer, Bishop Joe Baker.¹³⁴ The members of this congregation worship with a mixture of standard gospel songs and contemporary gospel music.

Data collected from the study was analyzed to convey how the traumas of African Americans influenced the preferred music styles of each participant. The study also analyzed how African Americans feel about all forms of Christian music being used for worship in the African American Church. Finally, the data will be analyzed for specific themes found in the response of the participants.

The key to this social and behavioral research is data obtained from individuals of different generations who either lived through specific traumas of African American history or are knowledgeable about specific events. Personal responses from both churches will convey how these traumas shaped individual worship experiences.

Significance of Project Review

The researcher aimed to find how African Americans' historical and traumatic events influence preferred music styles in two predominantly African American churches. Worship in today's African American Church can be viewed as free, liberating, and multi-generational. However, older generations prefer more traditional gospel music while younger generations prefer contemporary gospel music. The concept is not new, but there has been little to no resolution to this issue in more traditional churches.

African American Church Music includes significant historical and cultural connections in today's church. The history of the United States of America is the catalyst that has shaped the

¹³⁴ "About," Refuge Nation Church, accessed February 14, 2021.
<https://www.refugenationchurch.com/about>.

experiences of its citizens of African descent regarding music and worship, dating to the Atlantic Slave Trade in 1526. The African slaves only received information about Christianity from their slave masters.

For the enslaved Africans, their idea of liberation and freedom mirrored the imagery written in the book of Exodus. We can look at the story of Moses and compare it to the historical facts about slavery in American. Field slaves did not have access to their oppressors while house slaves were around them continually. “For the enslaved Africans, the first blows of liberation from bondage could only have been brought about by those liberated from a slave mentality – who, being brought up in the midst of oppressors, appropriated the power and wisdom of the gospel.”¹³⁵ House slaves had the advantage of listening to the wisdom and power of their oppressors and bringing that knowledge to the field slaves. The African American Church has been a pillar for aspiration and encouragement to the community since its conception. It has also been a beacon of love for those who accepted God into their lives.

The oppression of African Americans gaslighted the theme of a perpetual struggle that would continue through significant events of American and African American history such as the Reconstruction Era, The Great Migration, and the Civil Rights Movement. These events affected the way United States citizens of African descent saw themselves and how they worshipped God.

So as history shifted, so did the way African Americans worship in services. Many African Americans moved north during the Great Migration and found that many churches had a different way of worshipping God. Gospel music emerged during the “Golden Age of Gospel” in the 1930s from writers such as Kenneth Morris, Sallie Martin, and Thomas Dorsey, also known

¹³⁵ James Abbingtion, *Let Mt. Zion Rejoice!: Music in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001),

as “The Father of Gospel,” because of his tireless work in the genre. Gospel Choir Music played a significant role in African American Christianity; it “has a unique and powerful history. Although strictly speaking, gospel music emerged half a century after Emancipation and the end of the Civil War, gospel music is always considered a collective response to blacks’ oppressed status and experience.”¹³⁶ The reason why many African Americans love gospel music is because of its distinct sound. “The relationship between the Spirituals and the Gospel is greatly pronounced in its musical modality, but there has been a severe departure from music of the thematic substance of spirituals in the Gospel music phenomenon of the last decade.”¹³⁷ The Gospel Choir was a great asset, but it also had its flaws: “The transition from congregational hymns to songs for specialized soloists and ensembles had important sociological consequences. While the former united worshipers through the collective activity of singing and declaring theological and doctrinal commonalities, the new style required the congregation to assume the role of audience.”¹³⁸ The sound of African American Gospel Music has made an impression in United States history. However, in today’s modern-day church, that sound seems to be less prevailing. Braxton Shelly states:

I contend that the role music routinely plays in the experience of the holy uncovers sanctity in the sound itself, enabling it to function as a medium of interworldly exchange. As divine power takes an audible form, the faith that “comes by hearing” is confirmed by religious feeling—both individual and collective. This sacramentality of sound is buttressed by beliefs about the enduring efficacy of divine speech, convictions that motivate the intensive character of gospel’s songs, sermons, and shouts.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Gerardo Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multicultural Congregation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 57.

¹³⁷ James W. Cobbs, “Music as Ministry in an Urban African -American Church.” PhD diss., United Theological Seminary, 2001. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

¹³⁸ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 361-362

¹³⁹ Braxton D. Shelley, “I Love it when You Play that Holy Ghost Chord: Sounding Sacramentality in the Black Gospel Tradition.” *Religions* 11, no. 9 (2020): 452. <https://doi.org/10.3390/re111090452>.

The sound of African American Gospel Music has made an impression in United States history. However, in today's modern-day church, that sound seems to be less prevailing. While African American Church Music has evolved so much over many decades, it appears that today's churches are singing to a different tune. The infusion of Christian Contemporary Music (CCM) brings a modern sound into the African American Churches. The contemporary sound offers a more liberating and accessible sound, allowing worship to mirror a sense of freedom. This fact is unknown to many United States citizens of African descent. The exception has caused a generational rift amongst many congregations in African American Churches. Those born during eras such as the Great Migration and the Civil Rights Movement prefer the sound of spirituals and traditional gospel music. Everyone else born after the Civil Rights Movement prefers to worship gospel music infused with Christian Contemporary Music.

Even with the different denominations, the idea of African American Christianity has been through much evolution. Therefore, there has to be a way for the traditional and contemporary sound of African American Church Music to co-exist in the modern-day church.

Many African American Churches use either Traditional Worship Music or Contemporary Worship Music. Traditional Worship Music follows the methodology used by Africans transported in the diaspora known as "folk methods." "Music, song, and storytelling by the griot became the major means of shaping, documenting, and distributing folk theology."¹⁴⁰ Older generations of African Americans tend to want to experience traditional worship. It "portrays the Christian's principal vocation as one of mere "watching and waiting" for the

¹⁴⁰ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 1, Google Books.

Savior's return because he finds that life is "uncertain" and full of confusion."¹⁴¹ This theology shaped how many African American viewed worship.

Modern Gospel Music, known as Contemporary Gospel Music, brought a different sound to the African American worship experience. It emerged in the 1960s and has continued to evolve today. "The contemporary period in gospel music dates from the late 1960s and early 1970s when the transition from the typical gospel chorus accompanied by a piano and handclapping performing in a church had been superseded by ensembles featuring strings, brass, synthesizers, and electronic instruments performing in a concert hall."¹⁴² It has technological advancements and new inventions that created a plethora of possibilities for Black Gospel Music. "Contemporary Gospel music supplements other sounds heard in some Black worship services. The religious texts are often supported by the chordal harmonies that have not been in traditional music support for religious texts. Youth are finding worship more meaningful because they can identify with the sounds from their own context."¹⁴³ Contributing artists included Andraé Crouch, James Cleveland, Richard Smallwood, The Clark Sisters, Edwin Hawkins, and Tramaine Hawkins. It did not just differ from Traditional Gospel Music because of its sound, but its message, too. Modern Gospel Music focused on the idea that "no longer are Christians enjoined to turn heavenward from hatred, sadness, madness, and confusion, but rather to be reconciliatory, to "do something good" by applying real love."¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately, not much has happened to

¹⁴¹ Jon Michael Spencer, *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), chap. 9, Google Books.

¹⁴² Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 362.

¹⁴³ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chap. 7, Google Books.

solve the issue. This issue is ongoing because the older generations of African Americans are significantly dying out. Many of the younger generations of African Americans in today's modern church are unfamiliar and never heard spirituals or older gospel standards.

The leadership and clergy of African American Churches kept the members of their congregations in this state of a “perpetual struggle.” While the idea of struggle is not new, most of the music used in African American worship services today comes from the Traditional and Modern Gospel eras. “Many problems arise concerning the church and its ministry, because we forget what these terms mean in the context of the gospel of Jesus.”¹⁴⁵ African American Churches continues to portray a struggle with the music and liturgy used in worship services. Therefore, having worship that is liberating and free is impossible. We end up staying in a place that we should not be occupying in the first place. “But only through remembering, retelling, and reliving our story, appropriating language, signs, and symbols that conjure new practices for this new rhythm and time in which we live, can we receive a glimpse of a hopeful future.”¹⁴⁶

The African American Church's mission should be to share the good news of the Gospel of Christ. However, it has evolved into different “Golden Calf” idols. “Our church is an imposter because we no longer believe the gospel we proclaim. There is a credibility gap between what we say and what we do.”¹⁴⁷ African Americans are conscious of the church's reality that there is

¹⁴⁴ Jon Michael Spencer, *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), chap. 9, Google Books.

¹⁴⁵ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith, The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 111.

¹⁴⁶ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 166.

¹⁴⁷ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith, The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968 – 1998* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 111.

work to do if liberation and freedom genuinely want to be realized. It will require us to acknowledge that many are “dead” in the spirit and need to awaken.

Waking up the dead in black churches in the United States will mean bringing to the fore of our collective consciousness the possibility that we can claim agency and responsibility for our own lives, especially for the future of our youth. To *congregate*, *conjure*, and *conspire* in *common(s)* in the early decades of the twenty-first century is a dangerous and costly proposition because it demands that we confess our traditions.¹⁴⁸

One of the issues we will need to recognize is the killing of African Americans by police officers, which sparked the creation of the Black Lives Matter Movement. “*Black lives matter* served as a rallying cry for protests, but it also acted as an assertion of the image of God in black people. In Christian anthropology, saying that black lives matter insists that all people, including those who have darker skin, have been made in the image and likeness of God.”¹⁴⁹ The researcher believes these issues, along with his findings, should be address by the African American Church.

Qualitative data conveyed that most participants at Refuge Nation Church believed that most, if not all historical traumas against African-Americans comprised in the past and present music affects the African American Worship Experience. It was also found that participants at First Baptist Church Denbigh prefer to hear Spirituals and Hymns, Modern Gospel, and Contemporary Gospel; while participants at Refuge Nation Church prefer to hear Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, and Urban Contemporary Worship Music.

This qualitative narrative study collected various information from First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church members. After conducting a thorough review of the

¹⁴⁸ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 224-225.

¹⁴⁹ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity of Race* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 179. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5702721>.

literature, the study will shift to looking at the perspectives of African Americans' old and young generations in more detail. "The relationship between the Spirituals and the Gospel is greatly pronounced in its musical modality, but there has been a severe departure from music of the thematic substance of spirituals in the Gospel music phenomenon of the last decade."¹⁵⁰ By asking a series of questions, members of First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church in Newport News, Virginia, will complete a survey to compare and contrast the views of African American Church Music and how it has evolved over the years.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this social and behavioral study was to find how African Americans' historical and traumatic events influence preferred music styles in two predominantly African American churches. This study provided personal feelings and convictions from First Baptist Church Denbigh and Refuge Nation Church members. It was found that most participants at Refuge Nation Church believed that most, if not all, historical traumas against African Americans comprised in the past and present music affect the African American Worship Experience. It was also found that participants at First Baptist Church Denbigh prefer to hear Spirituals and Hymns, Modern Gospel, and Contemporary Gospel. In contrast, participants at Refuge Nation Church prefer to hear Modern Gospel, Contemporary Gospel, and Urban Contemporary Worship Music. The researcher used two predominantly African American Churches, which he attended at different periods in his life. Throughout the chapter, he will recall his experience as a child at First Baptist Church Denbigh and his recent experience at Refuge Nation Church.

¹⁵⁰ James W. Cobbs, "Music as Ministry in an Urban African -American Church." PhD diss., United Theological Seminary. 2001, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

“Deep Time” vs. Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome

The participants were asked if they believed the historical events and African American traumas they experienced in their lifetime are related to the type of music they prefer to hear in church services. They were also asked if they were affected by the historical events and African American traumas that they did not experience in their lifetime. In the researcher’s findings, both churches had participants agree that historical events negatively affected them. However, when participants were asked if they experienced any of the listed traumatic responses, such as chronic stress and depression, the results differed. According to the survey, Refuge Nation Church had more participants who experienced African American trauma caused by historical events in the United States. These results surprised the researcher since First Baptist Church Denbigh was founded during the Civil War.

History indicates that, during the days before the Civil War, our forefathers worshipped at the churches of their white masters. Many of our churches that exist today grew and developed from a small group of Black worshippers who sat in some designated section of the “white peoples” church. Our first documented history indicates the churches invited to attend the Recognizing Council were First Baptist Church of Hampton, Zion Baptist Church of Chesapeake City Council, and Morning Star Baptist Church of James City County. However, since there is no way to substantiate the accuracy of whether these churches were a part of the council, we have accepted the history as documented by our forefathers.¹⁵¹

Most of the participants from First Baptist Church Denbigh belong to the Baby Boomer generation. According to Cheryl Russell, “The Baby Boomer generation numbers 76 million, a figure that includes everyone born from 1946 to 1964.”¹⁵² The Baby Boomer generation had the largest percentage of people in the history of the United States. “The birth of the boomer

¹⁵¹ “Church History,” First Baptist Church Denbigh, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.fbcdnbigh.org/church_history.

¹⁵² Cheryl Russell, *Baby Boom: Americans Born 1946 to 1964* (Amityville, New York: New Strategist Press, 2015), 258.

generation was arguably the result of the interplay of several significant social forces.”¹⁵³ These significant events, such as the Great Depression and World War II, were primary causes for the rapid birth rate.

Upon doing further research, the researcher believes that there has been a shift in most Baby Boomers' thinking. Ultimately, this is known as a theory called deep time. “Deep time is the melding of the postwar generation’s witness to longevity within their own psyches. Deep time is the embodied knowing that death may not be imminent and that there are many more years to be lived – longevity, not as a faraway wish but a real possibility.”¹⁵⁴ The deep time theory seemed to be very present in First Baptist Church Denbigh than Refuge Nation Church. The researcher believed more people from First Baptist Church would acknowledge or be transparent about traumatic experiences because of the church’s history. Based on the collected survey, one Baby Boomer at Refuge Nation Church experienced something that left a lasting effect.

A Baby Boomer at Refuge Nation Church was more vocal about having negative responses to African American traumas. The researcher believes this participant was more vocal because of the young and free environment at Refuge Nation Church. The participant stated that not only did it affect them, but their family as well. The researcher believes this is the textbook definition of Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome:

Slavery disconnected the slaves from our culture and heritage. Once slavery had ended, we had no economic, political, social, or educational base from which to begin; this caused us to be severely hampered in our attempt to function as other Americans. This

¹⁵³ Melvin Delgado, *Baby Boomers of Color: Implications for Social Work and Practice* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014), 5.

¹⁵⁴ Naomi Woodspring, *Baby Boomers: Time and Aging Bodies* (Chicago, IL: Policy Press, 2016), 144.

situation only furthered the Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome. Every attempt was made to frustrate the newly-freed slave's ability to gain true equality.¹⁵⁵

After doing further research, the researcher overwhelmingly believes that many participants from First Baptist Church Denbigh are suffering from Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome but are choosing to move on. According to Jay Thomas Willis, "Blacks were unconsciously programmed from our first contact with other groups to become vulnerable to the Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome. We have continued to be programmed on a daily basis to manifest the Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome."¹⁵⁶ This syndrome is caused by the cultural asylums that have worked against the African-American communities. It is "a metaphor for the various institutions of social control created to maintain the child/savage imagery of African American and other marginalized groups in a market economy."¹⁵⁷ Ultimately, the researcher believes that African Americans of the Baby Boomer generation can be conveyed as a forgotten group. "Baby boomers of color face two concurrent challenges: they have been subsumed under the general dialogue on baby boomers and thus become invisible and, the few times they are specifically addressed, they are often viewed as an added burden because of their unique cultural and linguistic needs."¹⁵⁸ These unfortunate institutions are very present in today's society with certain television shows, movies, and social media platforms. But, the generation that came before them had a much rougher time.

¹⁵⁵ Jay Thomas Willis, *Got My Own Song to Sing: Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome in My Family* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2020), chap. 4, Google Books.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, chap. 1, Google Books.

¹⁵⁷ Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*. (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016), 199.

¹⁵⁸ Melvin Delgado, *Baby Boomers of Color: Implications for Social Work and Practice* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014), 9-10.

The Traditionalist/Silent Generation

The Traditionalist or Silent generation are “people who were born 1900-1945 and comprise the oldest generation in American culture. Typically, Traditionalists respect authority and possess family values that keep their work and family lives separate.”¹⁵⁹ While there were not many participants from both churches who come from the Traditionalist or Silent Generation, there were enough to volunteer to take the survey. The question remains, why? Let’s analyze how people in the Traditionalist/Silent Generation see life:

The Silent started out as the children of crisis. They grew up while older people were fighting wars and making great sacrifices on their behalf. Childrearing in America, already more protective for the G.I.s, approached the point of suffocation. When the Silent began coming of age after World War II, they tiptoed cautiously in a post-crisis social order that no one wanted to disturb. Unlike the G.I.s, they rarely talked about “changing the system,” but instead about “working within the system.” Because they didn’t want anything to go on their “permanent records” and kept their heads down during the McCarthy era, *Time* gave them the label “Silent” in a famous 1951 essay.¹⁶⁰

The researcher believes that those in the Traditionalist/Silent Generation opted not to take the survey because they do not want to relive the traumas of segregation and racism. “One aspect of the knowledge inhering in the black body as conscripted by racialized oppression is the recognition of death’s impending presence.”¹⁶¹ Some African Americans of the Traditionalist/Silent Generation had to learn to deal with the mistreatment because they felt that was the only way, while others found ways to fight back.

¹⁵⁹ Terry Wiedmer, “Generations Do Differ: Best Practices in Leading Traditionalists, Boomers, and Generations X, Y, and Z,” *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (Fall 2015): 51-58. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1770514324/fulltext/A00FEA52C43B4612PQ/1?accountid=12085>.

¹⁶⁰ Neil Howe, “The Silent Generation, The Lucky Few,” *Forbes*, August 13, 2014, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/neilhowe/2014/08/13/the-silent-generation-the-lucky-few-part-3-of7/?sh=1ea903dd2c63>.

¹⁶¹ Erica Still, *Prophetic Remembrance: Black Subjectivity in African American and South African Trauma Narratives* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 126.

Generation X

Generation X are individuals born between 1965 to 1976 and are often referred to as “the “lost” generation – the first generation of “latchkey” kids exposed to lots of daycare and divorce.”¹⁶² Most Generation X participants from both churches stated that African Americans' historical events and traumas negatively affected them. However, when asked about current traumas that affected them in their lifetime, most stated they were not affected. The researcher believes that recent historical and traumatic events do not faze African Americans of Generation X. Vena Moore confirms the researcher's findings by stating:

Black Gen-Xers, more than anyone else, start out knowing that life isn't fair. We don't expect a handout or a hand up. We learn well before adulthood that we have to work twice as hard to get half of what the dominant society has. Our resilience and adaptability have helped us withstand adversity not just for belonging to a generation that is forgotten but for the oppression that we are still subjected to.¹⁶³

Most are focused on past historical events and traumas against African Americans. It is almost as if they share this thought: “Black Americans toil under practically the same conditions we always have, and many things really haven't changed. We're treated much the same as always. We got behind a long time ago, and now find it difficult to catch up and keep up. Things have not changed throughout the country.”¹⁶⁴ However, the generation behind Generation X has different ideas.

¹⁶² Terry Wiedmer, “Generations Do Differ: Best Practices in Leading Traditionalists, Boomers, and Generations X, Y, and Z,” *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (Fall 2015): 51-58. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1770514324/fulltext/A00FEA52C43B4612PQ/1?accountid=12085>.

¹⁶³ Vena Moore, “The Invisible Black Gen-Xer: The current generational war not only erases Gen-Xers but Black ones as well,” *Medium* (blog), November 8, 2019, <https://medium.com/the-forgotten-generation/the-invisible-black-gen-xer-80fd7a420c40>.

¹⁶⁴ Jay Thomas Willis, *Got My Own Song to Sing: Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome in My Family* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2020), chap. 5, Google Books.

Millennials and the Twenty-First Century

According to Michael Dimock, Millennials are considered to be anyone born between 1981 to 1996.¹⁶⁵ All of the Millennials who participated in the survey are members of Refuge Nation Church, founded by Bishop Joe Baker. “Pastor Baker was released in 2008 by Pastor Dwayne Seals to start Refuge Nation Church. Since the formation of the church, Pastor Baker has been noted as one of the most inspirational leaders in Hampton Roads by Blessed Magazine.”¹⁶⁶ The Millennial members at Refuge Nation Church are more affected by the current traumas of African Americans than past historical events and traumas. In fact, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Millennials have been very vocal about these events. For example, let us look at the election of the first African American President of the United States, Barack Obama. Refuge Nation was founded during one of the most historic political races in the United States. It was a historic achievement for the country that came with its share of controversies and disappointments. One of those most talked about controversies in the African American community involved Obama’s former pastor, Jeremiah Wright.

The Reverend Jeremiah Wright, the former pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ on the South Side of Chicago, sparked outrage in large sections of the United States in February and March 2008, after the contents of his post-9/11 sermons were made public by Internet sites, the print media, and television news outlets. Wright’s sermons, which can be found in selectively edited formats on the Internet site YouTube, depict the former Trinity pastor excoriating the United States for its historical injustices against racial minorities.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Michael Dimock, “Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins,” Pew Center Research, accessed January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

¹⁶⁶ “About,” Refuge Nation Church, accessed October 21, 2021. <https://www.refugenationchurch.com/about>.

¹⁶⁷ Clarence Earl Walker and Gregory D. Smithers. *The Preacher and the Politician: Jeremiah Wright, Barack Obama, and the Black Church* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 13.

Wright's sermons were so controversial because he belonged to a predominantly white denomination. He "inherited black Christian nationalism, Black Theology of Liberation, and the black church's social activism from a long lineage of African American ministers who believed that white interpretations of Christianity had failed the people they represented."¹⁶⁸ As a result, Barack Obama would distance himself from Wright and Trinity United Church of Christ during his 2008 presidential campaign. The controversy ultimately conveyed that racism "remains the central fissure in the United States." The controversy did not hinder Obama's campaign, and he would be elected to serve two terms as President of the United States. However, by the end of his first term, some African Americans were disappointed in Obama's progress and began to criticize every resolution he would create.

The African American community felt like a president would change the way they were being treated. However, by the end of the Obama presidency, African Americans were left upset and perplexed that nothing changed under the first African American President of the United States.

To have an African American as president gave the new black freedom movement both a sense of hope and a target on which to train its frustrations with the slow pace of change. Many lashed out at the president and other members of the black elite, in and out of government, for preaching to young African Americans in poor communities the gospel of "respectable" speech and dress instead of enacting policies that would give them a good education and secure jobs at living wages.¹⁶⁹

No matter who occupies the presidency of the United States, racial injustices and discrimination will continue to exist until most Americans come together to fix these issues. They go beyond one seat in government and are the primary reason the Black Lives Matter

¹⁶⁸ Clarence Earl Walker and Gregory D. Smithers, *The Preacher and the Politician: Jeremiah Wright, Barack Obama, and the Black Church* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 32.

¹⁶⁹ Julian E. Zelizer, *The Presidency of Barack Obama: A First Historical Assessment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 251.

Movement was created. The Black Lives Matter Movement is a cause many African American Millennials support; however, many in the African American Church oppose what the movement is trying to accomplish.

The Black Lives Matter Movement was created to stop the brutal and unjust killings of African Americans. However, many African American Christians view the movement as a second coming of the Black Power Movement, the exact opposite of the Civil Rights Movement – in which they have a “de-Christianization” approach.

It is on this dichotomous premise that some commentators distinguish Black Lives Matter from earlier civil rights campaigns. In describing Black Lives Matter as not “your grandmother’s civil rights movement” they allude – at least in part – to a departure from an organizing tradition focused on the black church that is imagined to have begun in the Black Power era.¹⁷⁰

Millennials in the 21st century African American Church are helping to reshape many viewpoints on worship and community outreach during civil unrest. However, the question is, where is Generation Z?

Where Is Generation Z?

The researcher noticed that there were not that many people in Generation Z present at both churches. Based on the results, African Americans between the ages of 18 to 24 (born between the years 1997 – 2003) were not present at both churches. The researcher came across different resources with opposing years for Generation Z. According to James Emery White, Generation Z is approximately between the years of 1995 to 2010.¹⁷¹ One of the reasons both

¹⁷⁰ Kerry Pimblott, “Beyond De-Christianization: Rethinking the Religious Landscape and Legacies of Black Power in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter.” In *Race, Religion, and Black Lives Matter: Essays on a Moment and a Movement* by Christopher Cameron and Philip Luke Sinitiere, 39-66. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2021.

¹⁷¹ James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 35. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4901240>.

churches are not seeing members in this generation has a lot to do with parenting style. “One of the marks of Generation Z is that they are being raised, by and large, by Generation X – a generation that was warned repeatedly not to become “helicopter” parent (i.e., always hovering over their children). As a result, Generation Z has been given more space and independence than any other generation. This means that Generation Z is very self-directed.”¹⁷² Another reason for the absence of Generation Z in both churches is the intermingling of religion and politics. “Perhaps the heated polarization of religion and politics that continues today may not be a draw of Christianity, especially for younger people. Instead, many of those in Generation Z appears to want to situate themselves somewhere in the middle or not participate in Christianity at all.”¹⁷³ It is the responsibility of the leadership of both churches to address this issue head-on. Otherwise, both ministries will not see any growth.

Personal Evaluation

As African Americans, we face opposition daily. It includes living in single-parent households, perpetually grieving the loss of parents and loved ones to alcohol and drug addictions, and a host of other psychological, economic, and sociological traumas that plague those who grew up in poverty in the United States. Nevertheless, courage, perseverance, trusting in God, and many influences helped shape the researcher into today's man. The impetus that has been one of the most significant influences in African Americans’ lives is the art form of music.

¹⁷² James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 36. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4901240>.

¹⁷³ Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z: A Century in the Making* (Abingdon, OX: Routledge, 2019), 169. <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/books/mono/10.4324/9780429442476/generation-corey-seemiller-meghan-grace>.

Music has been a part of the lives of African Americans since the beginning of time. For many African Americans – their love for music, God, and the African American Church had on them conflates to create the reason why many join choirs and praise teams. Regardless of background, culture, or life aspirations, music can physiologically change an individual's mindset and being. It also inspires hope during tribulation, fuels health during disease and sickness, and uncovers strength during times of sadness and despair. The researcher believes that music is a universal language that can be used to reach everyone. The Bible states: “Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.”¹⁷⁴ God’s people are His instruments, created to sing and praise his name. The researcher strives to do this not only in his private and public worship life.

There are a plethora of things that many in African American Church Leadership should want to work on to develop themselves. The first thing is recognizing that they have to let people speak positively about them and not did it themselves. The Bible says: “Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”¹⁷⁵ Unfortunately, African American Christians live in a culture that doesn’t practice this proverb. The issue is not whether or not you want to worship but “who’s going to get the credit.” It is a whole lot easier to let other people say good stuff about you than you saying it yourself. When leadership lets others celebrate them, that is a part of spiritual formation. Dwelling on the honors that are deserved can only be harmful. It can make the people bitter, discouraged, or angry, and it will not bring anyone the rewards that they think should belong to them. Pining for what should have received may make leadership miss the satisfaction of knowing they did his best.

¹⁷⁴ Psalm 95:1 (New Living Translation).

¹⁷⁵ Proverbs 27:2 (Amplified Bible Version).

Secondly, African American Church Leadership must work to incorporate the practices of scripture memory and biblical meditation in his daily life. The Bible says: “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”¹⁷⁶ God has good, pleasing, and perfect plans for his children. He wants us to be transformed people with renewed minds, living to honor and obey him. Since He wants only what is best for us and he gave his Son to make our new life possible, we should joyfully give ourselves as living sacrifices for His service. So, “as we ponder, picture, and personalize God’s Word, we begin looking at life through His lens, viewing the world from His perspective. Our thoughts become happier and holier and brighter – and so do we.”¹⁷⁷

Lastly, African American Church Leadership should seek God for the vision He has over my life. The Bible says: “Therefore be imitators of God as well-beloved children.”¹⁷⁸ Salvation is God’s work and not our own doing. In his infinite love, God has adopted us as his own children. Through Jesus’ sacrifice, he has brought us into his family and made us heirs along with Jesus. In Roman law, adopted children had the same rights and privileges as biological children, even if they had been slaves. Paul uses this term to show how strong our relationship with God is. This also goes along with what was stated in the twelfth book of Romans about living for God. Jesus provides insight on how the process will take place by stating: “By your steadfastness and patient

¹⁷⁶ Romans 12:1-2 (Amplified Bible Version).

¹⁷⁷ Robert J. Morgan, *Reclaiming the Lost Art of Biblical Meditation: Find True Peace in Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 9-10.

¹⁷⁸ Ephesians 5:1 (Amplified Bible Version).

endurance, you shall win the true life of your souls.”¹⁷⁹ He will comfort us, protect us, and give us the words we need. This assurance can give us the courage and hope to stand firm for Christ no matter how difficult the situation.

It is the responsibility of Ministers of Music to teach choirs and praise teams to sing to God and express our devotion to Him. A big part of that responsibility is being familiar with the scriptures of the Holy Bible, especially the prophetic books. As we sing, it is important to use the prophecies outlined in the Bible to relate with the songs of praise that we offer up to God. Ministers of Music should be determined to do their part in making sure the worship experience at my church includes the teaching that the prophets have documented in the Bible so that everyone can enjoy and learn something from it. In this, we must desire to hear from God and will relay His message with sincerity and intention. The Bible says: “A time will come, however, indeed it is already here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking just such people as these as His worshipers. God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”¹⁸⁰ In order to reach God’s people, it is very important to seek His face. When we go to church, we may look at the people in the congregation as well as the people leading praise and worship for all of the answers. However, that should not be our primary focus. We must focus on hearing from God. Every time we worship God, we should have an expectancy that He will speak to us, lead us, and move in our lives in miraculous ways. We as Christians are responsible for always looking for the Day of the Lord and to be present in how we act with one another as well as other people. Jesus is the

¹⁷⁹ Luke 21:19 (Amplified Bible Version).

¹⁸⁰ John 4:23-24 (Amplified Bible Version).

beginning and the end. Because he gave his life for us, we must sacrifice our lives in such a way that God gets the glory.

Most African Americans comes from a family background that is rooted in African American Christian traditions. Most of their Christian upbringing was solely the responsibility of their parents or grandparents. These African American Christians would attend church daily and was heavily involved in the youth choir and youth ministry growing up. However, as many grow older and their own faith starts to develop, African Americans come to realize that although their parents or grandparents did the best they could. We have to find the salvation of God on our own. The Bible says: “There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”¹⁸¹ Many African Americans react negatively to the fact that there is no other name than that of Jesus to call on for salvation. It is not something the African American church decided; it is the specific teaching of Jesus Himself. If God designated Jesus to be Savior of the world, no one else can His equal. African American Christians have to be open-minded on many issues but not on how they are saved from sin. The focus should be on Jesus, whom God provided as the way to have an eternal relationship with Him.

Before a Minister of Music could begin working with a music ministry at an African American Church, they would have to get the leadership, choir, and worship team to buy into the vision. “Every message that people receive is filtered through the messenger who delivers it. If you consider the messenger to be credible, then you believe the message has value.”¹⁸² The researcher believes that the church leadership and worship team would have to know their leader’s character to buy into the vision he conveys. To accomplish this task, Christians would

¹⁸¹ Acts 4:12 (New Living Translation).

¹⁸² John C. Maxwell, *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 172-173.

have to allow for the Holy Spirit to come into us as Apostle Paul stated: “But I say, walk and live in the Spirit, then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh.”¹⁸³ The main goal should be to establish corporate worship. “Corporate worship is not a self-guided tour where we enter when we want and do as we wish until we leave. Corporate worship involves doing things together as we carry on the corporate conversation with God.”¹⁸⁴ This involves having good leadership skills.

To build successful worship ministry teams, the first principle one should possess is respect. “As a leader, you must gain the respect of those following you. For this to happen, one must have natural leadership ability, respect for others, courage, success, loyalty, and adding value to others. I believe adding value to others is the key component to gaining respect. “You can be sure that followers value leaders who add value to them.”¹⁸⁵ Secondly, one should possess a sense of intuition. Natural leaders can look beyond what is obvious. “They evaluate everything according to their leadership bias.”¹⁸⁶ Lastly, leaders should possess the principle of magnetism. “Believe it or not, who you attract is not determined by what you *want*. It is determined by who you *are*.”¹⁸⁷ This means that you are whom you attract.

The Minister of Music should also want to convey the mission to the music ministry. First, the researcher would have to explain the “WHY?”. “We do what we do to fulfill the call of God on our lives and seek His kingdom. If you are in a band and really want to hit the target you

¹⁸³ Galatians 5:16 (Amplified Bible Version).

¹⁸⁴ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 262.

¹⁸⁵ John C. Maxwell, *21 irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 81.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

were designed for, then do all you can to understand what that target is according to God’s word.”¹⁸⁸ To be effective, the researcher and the music ministry must recognize the African religious heritage and how everything began.

African recipients were expected to receive the message with its distortions, be “saved,” and demonstrate their new Christian state by being “good” slaves. In such an environment the seeds of African American worship were sown. The slaves’ reception of the gospel message and their understanding of worship were not as the colonists presumed they would be. The liberating Word of God freed the slaves to respond in new and creative ways in the midst of their human bondage. A glimpse of this history begins with the shaping of African American communities in colonial America.¹⁸⁹

The Minister of Music then must establish the importance of doing everything in God’s way.

Next, the music ministry and the Minister of Music would talk about the legacy. “There’s a lot God can do through creative people who dare to dream and build something. Build a legacy of holiness! Be the best band you can be, but be who and what God wants you to be first.”¹⁹⁰

Finally, the researcher will talk about the importance of working together because: “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”¹⁹¹ True collaboration occurs when groups of people work with those who are interested in the same thing. “Working with those who are interested in working with us is the prerequisite for establishing a successful working environment for collaboration.”¹⁹² It is essential to consider the environment around the worship

¹⁸⁸ Tom Lane, *The Worship Band Book: Training and Empowering Your Worship Band* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Books, 2012), 3-4.

¹⁸⁹ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), chapter 2, Google Books.

¹⁹⁰ Tom Lane, *The Worship Band Book: Training and Empowering Your Worship Band* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Books, 2012), 10.

¹⁹¹ John C. Maxwell, *17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player: Becoming the Kind of Person Every Team Wants* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 16.

¹⁹² Tim Sharp, *Collaboration in the Ensemble Arts: Working and Playing Well with Others* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2014), 81.

ministry when collaboration is occurring. There have to be opportunities for everyone to share their thoughts and ideas within the team without feeling ridiculed. Being in an environment where forced collaboration is taking place will not result in a positive outcome. When everyone is involved, everything will flow naturally, and the desired outcome will not be hard for the worship ministry to achieve. Collaboration requires everyone involved to have discipline.

“Collaboration is more noun than verb. The verb that moves us to successful collaboration is through the application of discipline.”¹⁹³ In other words, to be a successful worship team, a good leader must remember these biblical principles: “unity commands a blessing; worship is for God alone, not men; self-promotion is not good; considering other more important than yourself is important; stewardship is a must; and God values relationships, integrity, humility, and a broken spirit.”¹⁹⁴

Finally, Ministers of Music would want to focus on is laying the foundation for how the worship band should function in the service. The Minister of Music must conduct rehearses so the worship band knows what and what not to do. “Sometimes people say a band feels more rigid and performance-like than worshipful. That can happen when we approach the music like most bands do – playing what we want to play no matter what. This approach dictates how and where the service goes, in spite of who’s leading.”¹⁹⁵ The Music Ministry can learn a lot from dialing it down. “It makes a band better for sure, transforming individuals into a team.”¹⁹⁶ The Minister of Music should teach the Worship Band how to make worship relevant: “Being relevant is

¹⁹³ Tim Sharp, *Collaboration in the Ensemble Arts: Working and Playing Well with Others* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2014), 111.

¹⁹⁴ Tom Lane, *The Worship Band Book: Training and Empowering Your Worship Band* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Books, 2012), 42.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 79.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 84.

certainly critical for impacting our world with the gospel. To be relevant, we must be in the world and living loud enough for others see our light.”¹⁹⁷

Those who are new to African American Church Music Ministries have so much that they will have to learn. The experience is like being new music teacher; there’s so much information that will come as Ministers of Music learn and grow. Looking toward the future, Ministers of Music will need to strengthen their weak areas while as continuing to develop their strong areas. Being in ministry is not for self, but to glorify God and to equip others who desire a relationship with Him. If a Minister of Music is able to accomplish that then his living will definitely not be in vain.

Conclusion

The researcher has concluded from this study that the Frist Baptist Church Denbigh has unaddressed traumas that have been swept under the rug. On the contrary, Refuge Nation Church has acknowledged the traumas of past and present historic events and believe that their music preference is connected to them. As a millennial, the researcher believes it is important for the African American Church to address the racial issues that are happening every day. He also believes the older generations have the knowledge that Millennials and younger generations need. However, he believes that the older generations need to open to how younger generations think. Ultimately, the researcher believes that it is important for all the generations in the African American Church to listen to each other because one day, the younger generations will be the leaders of the African American Church. He plans to use the research he has found to have meaningful dialogue with African Americans of all generations.

¹⁹⁷ Tom Lane, *The Worship Band Book: Training and Empowering Your Worship Band* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Books, 2012), 98.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

September 8, 2021

Stanley Baldwin
Wayne Singleton

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY21-22-76 From Perpetual Struggle to Liberation and Freedom: An Analysis of Two Predominant African American Churches

Dear Stanley Baldwin, Wayne Singleton:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: September 8, 2021. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office