

## Repairing the Breach Part 1

### By Tony Campolo

Tony Campolo:

Whenever we talk about integrated churches, we've got a problem on our hands, you know what it is? It's always like this. There are white pastors and white churches that think they've done a big thing if they've passed a resolution that says we'll accept black members. Whenever white churches accept black members, what it means to black pastors is we lose members to white churches. What we really need is an integration system in the churches where white people leave white churches and join black churches, and humbly serve under the leadership of black pastors. It's a completely different thing.

[Audience member applauds]

Tony Campolo:

It's a completely different thing. We're quite willing to bring black people into our churches as long as we are the pastors. Are we willing to go into white--black churches and serve under the leadership of black people? Are we willing to become servants in the name of Jesus Christ? Prejudice is a bad thing. I'm not sure that we can eliminate prejudice that easily, but this we can do. We can eliminate injustice. We can eliminate injustice. I hope, I hope that young men and women from this school go out and become lawyers. But not the kind of lawyers that get rich, but the kind of lawyers that will speak for the poor, and the oppressed, and the downtrodden. William Stringfellow in in Harlem for years, a graduate of Yale Law School, working among the poor who could not afford good representation. I hope some students from this school become doctors and go into the black community where there isn't adequate medical care, and set up

clinics, and be missionaries, and offer medical care. It bothers me. Proposition 187 bothers me. I mean, I know that California cannot accept any more Mexican people into a piece of land that we stole from them fair and square.

[Audience murmurs in agreement and some applaud]

Tony Campolo:

It's funny, isn't it? I'm an Italian, you know what I am? I'm a WAP. Most of you don't even know what that word means. You know what it means? WAP? It means my parents came in here without papers. I am the child of illegal immigrants. If they got rid of all the people who came into this country illegally, the Native Americans would be thrilled.

[Audience laughs and applauds]

Tony Campolo:

Please, I'm not even going to get into the politics of this thing because I don't understand the politics. I do know this, that when Proposition 187 was passed and the government said, if you're sick, you can't come to our hospitals. If you're an illegal immigrant, your kids can't come to our schools. If you're hungry, don't come, if you're an illegal immigrant and get some food from our food banks, I can understand that. I can understand that. What I don't understand is why the evangelical community did not stand up and say, that's okay. If they won't feed you, we'll feed you. If they don't educate you, we'll educate you. If you're sick, we'll take care of you, whether you're an illegal immigrant or not. Because Jesus said what we do to the least of these, my brothers and sisters, we do to Christ.

[Audience applauds]

Tony Campolo:

You can't talk about racism when you do not treat the alien who is in your gates as the Bible instructs you to do it. Incidentally, when we speak on Sodom and Gomorrah and talk about all their homosexual sins, in Ezekiel, it cites those homosexual sins, but it also says that the greater sin is that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did not treat the aliens with justice, did not feed them or show them hospitality. Please, I'm not going to get into the legal side because it's all too complicated for me. But I do know what the Church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be about. And I hear this crap all the time of church people standing up and saying, "The government shouldn't be involved in this sort of thing. It's the church's job to provide welfare." Well, if it is, then why doesn't it? Please, if the church started doing it, do you think the government would? We work in 14 low cost government housing projects in Philadelphia. In every case, when we moved in and began to provide the social services, you know what the government did? Pulled out. They got enough to do without providing services that the church will provide. It's time for the people of God to rise up and to recognize we got problems on our hands.

I'm calling for the following, two things. I'm calling for the Christian church to produce schools like Biola. Biola is so important. I mean, you think it's just a college, it's not just a college. There are only a handful of schools like this one in the whole country, evangelical to the core, with the guts to stand up and say we've had a racist tradition and we want to change. And we not only want to change, but we want to become a presence in America that will change this nation. Praise God for that. But we need not only doctors and lawyers, we need this. Listen, we need people in business. I don't even have to ask when I come to a gathering like this, because in most Christian college campuses, if you were to take a study, the business department tends to be the

least committed to religious values. Please don't argue with me on that. I haven't done a study on your campus. I know what it is on my campus. The business students are the ones who kind of get caught up in the values of the culture. At [unintelligible], we have done our best to say to business students, "Your job isn't to go out and make money. If you're going to be trained in business, this is your responsibility. To go into poor communities, into African-American communities especially."

Where unemployment among the male population can run as high as 50 percent as it does in Camden, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. And you're to go in there, and using the church as a base, to start businesses and cottage industries. When there were no schools, who created the schools? The church. When there were no hospitals, who created the hospitals? The church. If you were to go into L.A. and south-central L.A. and ask the brothers and sisters there, what do you need? You need hospitals? You need schools? They would say no more than anything else, we need jobs. They need jobs, so we set up-we build basketball courts. They say we need jobs and we set up counseling centers. They say we need jobs and we don't do it. We need a breed of young men and women who see business as a missionary enterprise, and go in, and here's this church building that is largely unused. From Sunday to Sunday, you could house five, six, seven small businesses. Here's an office in the church that could, in fact, serve as the office for all of these businesses. That each church in the inner city could be an incubator for five, six small businesses. There are people in the church could serve as consultants because they've had experience.

The church has the money, it can mortgage its building to put in resources into these businesses. You say, why should the church create businesses for the poor? Because it's the only way to help the poor while maintaining their dignity. And so I call upon the school, if it's going to really overcome racism, to train up people, to go to the poor and the oppressed, lawyers, and doctors, and teachers, and entrepreneurs. As the religious right has emerged in America, I'd gotten alarmed because a lot of people think that the answer to the religious right is to create a religious left. If some evangelicals want to get in bed with the Republican Party, God keep the rest of us from getting in bed with the Democratic Party. For Jesus is neither a Democrat nor Republican. What I think we really need in America is a new kind of politics. We've begun to experiment with this in Philadelphia and in Boston. It's called the Progressive Evangelical Network. And what we're doing is we're using the church as the convener at the town meeting. Instead of talking about Democrats, and Republicans, and policies, and funding, and all of that stuff. What we've begun doing is this. We've gone to the people in the Democratic Party and we say we're holding a meeting at church, going to the meeting the Republican committee, and say we're having a meeting at church. You've got to be there because we've invited the other party people. And if you're not there, we will take this as a bad omen.

We want both parties there. We want Jews, we want Catholics, we want atheists, we want everybody there for the meeting. And we're going to say something like this. There's gangs on the street, there's pushers on the corner. There's violence in the homes. There's premarital pregnancies everywhere. Forget Washington, forget the state government. This is our neighborhood. What are we going to do to solve the problems of this neighborhood? And let's not talk about any solution that requires that we get resources from outside of this neighborhood.

We can do it! Such a politics does not polarize people as what is presently happening in society. It brings people together. What we need is Christians who will go and make the church into the convener of the town meeting that brings people together to address the painful problems of the community. Our black brothers and sisters are more and more becoming an urban phenomenon. It behooves those of us who are evangelicals to go into urban churches, and make urban churches the convener of the town meeting so that the neighborhood people can get together and address the problems of their neighborhood.

Forget trying to get people elected. Let's get to work where we live. Let's not get involved in partisan politics. Let's get involved in the kind of politics that says, look, we don't care whether you're Republican, you're a Democrat, we don't care whether you are, if you want to solve the problems of this community, come together. In every meeting that we've had, we've come up with solutions to the problems. And you know what? When the vote was taken, the one hundred and thirty four people that were there always voted unanimously. Isn't it interesting? They forgot that they were Democrats, Republicans, they forgot what they were. They just knew that the answers to the problems were pragmatic, not ideological. We need that kind of politics. We need a church that creates employment because that has become a biggest problem among our African-American brothers and sisters. And we need a church that teaches people to look into each other's eyes and see Jesus staring back at them. The Bible challenges our understanding of God. We need to get back to the Bible. And get away from all the images of God that our artists have created for us, all of them. No idolatry anymore.

The Bible gives a special view of human nature, in which it says to black people, "You are not intellectually inferior, and don't think you're physically superior." It says to whites, "You're physically able to compete. But don't think you're intellectually superior." We are all one in Christ Jesus. And we need a church that tears down the barriers. Stands for justice. And speaks to the needs of the oppressed. That's the kind of dream that Martin Luther King had. And I believe, I believe we're on our way, I believe this school is on its way. The school is not what it ought to be, but praise God, it's not what it was. It's not what it ought to be, but with the apostle Paul in Philippians 3:13 and 14, we can say about these stupid remarks that Talbot made, that we can forget those things which are behind. And that's what we've got to do. Amen?

[Audience applauds]

Tony Campolo:

This stuff here, let's forget the stuff that lies behind, and let's press towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[Audience applauds]

[Audio fades out and comes back in]

[Audience applauds]

Speaker 1:

It is time for us to go. There is something I would like for us to do in the next two, or three, or four minutes. I want, wherever we are, to mingle. Can we come into the center of the gymnasium.

[Audience shuffles around]

Speaker 1:

Hallelujah.

[Piano begins playing]

Speaker 1: Hug at least three people.

[Sings song]

[Piano continues playing]

Tony Campolo:

I would be remiss if I did not give this opportunity. Every summer, hundreds of young people come and join us in Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey, to work in the African-American community. We learn a lot about ourselves, about the needs of the poor. We find Jesus among them. We work with children in the morning, teenagers at night. We do relational stuff all afternoon. If you want to come and work with us, you don't have to raise any fu-money. We'll take care of feeding you and giving you a place to live. We'll take care of your expenses once you get there. And if you need money to come back to school, we'll they even write letters to your home church, and your family, friends, etc. to try to raise some money for you so you can come back to school. But we won't-you don't have to raise any money for your room and board. We just need you to be among the boys, and girls, and the teenagers. We'll have about three hundred in Philadelphia and Camden, working in 19 communities, and you'll learn a lot. It's a good way to begin to bridge that gap, to begin to be reconciled. To love people and walk with



people as brothers and sisters. If that turns you on, give me your name and address on a slip of paper at the end of the meeting. I'd love to have you come. You give me your name and address, I'll send you all the material so that you can pray about this and see if this is where God wants you to be. John, would you lead us?

John:

This is what we're going to do. I'd like to ask that we would do it together. Maybe you can pair off in groups of no more than four, in a circle. And I want you to tell, if you don't know, one another's names. My name is Evangelion. My name is John. My name is Joe. My name is Susan. And then I just want you to pray a brief prayer about what this meeting was about this week, and what it means to you in terms of your personal walk with Christ, to be reconciled within the body of Jesus Christ. And we'd like to do this, and just take about three or four minutes, and do that. So let's get in a circle of three or four persons, and then before we close, we're going to ask the president of the university to close us out. Get in a group of three or four, wherever you are. It may be two, it may be four. Shh. No talking, introduce yourself if you don't know one another. Shh. This is not fellowship. This is prayer. And I want you to pray about what you heard tonight in terms of your walk with Christ. Nobody should be outside the circle of fellowship. And let's just take a moment of brothers and sisters praying together, right now.

[Sings song]

John:

If you need to confess and say, Lord, I have harbored bad attitudes, I have said things about people of the opposite race, Lord, cleanse me with Your blood. Heal me, create in me, oh God, a

clean heart, and renew within me a right spirit. Lord, bring healing to my life. Lord, help me, lead me, and guide me the way that which is right that I may not prejudicially hold anything against another, that I may not be an oppressor. Lord, that I may not produce a Christ that is an extension of my personality, but Lord that I worship Christ, that You may make and reshape my personhood into Your own image.

[Sings song]

John:

Dr. Cook, will you come?

[Piano continues playing through silence]

Dr. Cook:

Father, we thank You for this week. It's been so rich, we've learned so much. Thank You for those that have come and shared out of their wisdom and experience from Your work. Thank you for our students that organized, planned, and implemented this. Father, tonight in this holy moment, we want to be like Jesus. To be like Jesus, all I ask, to be like Jesus. Father, I thank You for that day when we will be around that throne, and there will be those of every tribe, race, and nation. Where we'll experience in fullness and unity that You've bound us together by the death of Your Lord Jesus, Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father we pray that we might be vessels in Your house, that we'll stay away from sin, whatever form that sin takes, that we might be used for Christ's highest purposes. Father, we don't want to be vessels for garbage, but for honor. So help us, through the power of Your Spirit. Thank You, Father, for You have allowed us and enabled us to live supernatural lives, to do all these things that are against culture. That are-that's

wrong and sinful. So empower us by Your Spirit, Father. Encourage our hearts. Thank You for such love, such encouragement, and such bright hopes. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

[Silence]