

## **WHAT SHOULD THE BLACK CHURCH DO ABOUT RACISM? (PART I)** (Opinion, *The Community Informer*, Greenville, SC, September 24, 2014, 2B.)

Having argued why the Black Church is still needed in our society today, I left us in the last article several questions to consider based on the Black Church's historical significance: what are we going to do with this history (our history)? How will we use it to reclaim, recover, and redeem the Black Church's activist role in our world? How will we equip, educate, and empower our people for selfless service inside and outside the church? How will this tradition meet and respond to the social ills around us today (i.e.: racist violence, economic inequality, family stability, etc.)?

Now in contemplating these thoughts, several events from the media have surfaced concerning a particular issue in our country. From ongoing police murders to bigotry in the entertainment and sporting industries, we need to begin unraveling the obstacles and challenges to the Black Church's vision and mission to become a re-invigorated source of ethical and moral leadership. Hence, I will start by engaging the question: What Should the Black Church Do About Racism?

In order to bring awareness and understanding of what this is and its impact, Dr. Frances Cress Welsing, a Black psychiatrist and a critical race theorist, defines racism best below:

Racism is the local and global power system and dynamic, structured and maintained by persons who classify themselves as white, whether consciously or subconsciously determined; which consists of patterns of perception, logic, symbol formation, thought, speech, action, and emotional response, as conducted simultaneously in all areas of people activity (economics, education, entertainment, labor, law, politics, religion, sex and war); for the ultimate purpose of white genetic survival and to prevent white genetic annihilation on planet Earth – a planet upon which the vast and overwhelming majority of people are classified as nonwhite (black, brown, red and yellow) by white skinned people, and all of the nonwhite people are genetically dominant (in terms of skin coloration) compared to the genetic recessive white skin people (Welsing, 1991).

Is this point significant? Yes, because our world is dominated by this type of thinking. And it is this type of fear that has influenced slavery, the implementation of Jim Crow laws, and even a deadly version of what we know as

religion. Carter G. Woodson, in his book *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, points out that the Black Church “has failed to do so [develop the institution in its own way]” (Woodson, 2000, p. 57). He goes further to say the following:

[The Negro’s] religion is merely a loan from the Whites who have enslaved and segregated the Negroes; and the organization, though largely an independent Negro institution, is dominated by the thought of the oppressors of the race...the dominant thought is to make use of the dogma of the Whites as means to an end (Woodson, 2000, p. 58).

What is Woodson saying here about the impact of racism in the Black Church? To me, he is saying that it has gone unnoticed. Additionally, we have not been made aware that it is within us. Furthermore, we have not been curious enough to delve into our history and find out why and how we worship, serve, and live out the way we operate. We have also not realized what it has done to create hostility within the Black Church for its influence to become positively productive and meaningful. Woodson concludes that the “Negro has been so busy doing what he [she] is told to do that he [she] has not stopped long enough to think about the meaning of these things” (Woodson, 2000, p. 61).

Thus, where do you stand on the role of racism in the Black Church? Does it or does not exist? If so, where have you seen examples of such? If not, am I in an illusion? As I realize that this information may be new, thought-provoking, or even crazy, it is essential for us to look at these charges closely. Therefore, in the next article regarding this issue and its relationship to the Black Church, I invite you to join me on this journey with an open mind, a reflective soul, and an eager heart. Let us become comfortable to feel uncomfortable. This way, this world, regardless of our social status and ethnic background, can reclaim, recover, and redeem our role for a beloved, healthier world.