

Abstract

This study seeks to examine the role of the African American church from a contemporary perspective. The purpose of this project is to explore how the roles of African American church leaders within the community has evolved from the Civil Rights Era until today. The intended audience of this study is academics and anyone involved in, interested in, or studying social justice. Social Justice is a concept that promotes that every member of society, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, education and so forth is afforded equal opportunities, privileges, and protections as everyone else. This concept exists when members of society share a common humanity and therefore, have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights, and a fair allocation of community resources. When society notices injustice taking place, some members form group action which leads to a social movement. Social movements are led by organizations focusing on specific political or social issues which are carried out to resist or undo a social change. In the case of this study, the group action is called Black Lives Matter. In addition, Social Justice in relation to current events involving police shootings has been a key aspect in Criminal Justice and the center of our legal system. While conducting interviews in Ferguson, Missouri for an immersive learning course last semester, I noticed that the role of black churches seemed to differ from their role during the civil rights era in the 1960's. This observation led me to pursue this research project. In this research, I interview leaders within African American churches in St. Louis, Mo to gauge their perspective on the churches involvement in the Black Lives Matter movement and if their views outline a modern day social movement.

Key words: Social Justice, Black Lives Matter, Leaders, Black Church, Civil Rights, Ferguson, MO.

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