

DIDACTIC APPROACHES FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNITY CHANGE AGENTS FOR THE RESTORATION OF PAN-AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This essay shares invaluable information of approaches to social justice issues of two dissimilar institutions namely, the Community Change Agent Ministry (CCAM) and Mount Pleasant Baptist Church (MPBC) of Herndon, Virginia in Fairfax County, USA. The information garnered from the institutions is relevant for addressing social justice concerns of disenfranchised, marginalized Pan-African¹¹ communities within Herndon, but is also relevant for use anywhere injustice prevails. It contains statistical data and information obtained from government resources, interviews

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¹¹ Pan-African means anyone of African descent or indigenous people of America.

conducted with MPBC leadership, randomly chosen MPBC congregants, and Herndon residents.

The researcher finds that social-economic disparities and violations of human rights continue to be major concerns within Pan-African communities, poignantly in the Herndon area. While MPBC has made great strides with answering the call for biblical knowledge, spiritual growth, and creating diverse ministries under its Missions Ministry, the socio-economic growth for some Pan-Africans in Herndon continues to lag. This leads one to ask, how well are MPBC and social justice advocates complying with and honoring Romans 12:1-8¹²? This scripture reminds all that every individual is significant for the wholeness of the community; unlike the worldly mind desiring to cast the

¹² James R Edwards, *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”, (Romans 12:1-8 NRSV), 2028.

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perceived least aside, which is not acceptable to God. The researcher surmised that a strategic approach for developing Community Change Agents (CCAs) was imperative because Pan-Africans are innately communal people with an ancestral history of unity, strength, power, ingenuity, and faith. This dogma must be imbued and regenerated in the communities. Community Change Agents assist in restoring Pan-African communities by dismantling derogatory stereotypical perceptions, such as, Pan-Africans have inferior minds; therefore, they perform best in subservient roles. Pan-Africans are lazy, always seeking handouts, are not trustworthy, preferring to steal rather than work for what they need and want. Community Change Agents assists with restoring Pan-African communities by encouraging them to embrace the rich culture, which values family, community, and unity. Community Change Agents assists with restoring Pan-African communities by educating, coaching, and mentoring them about the importance of building socio-economic prosperity and mandating social justice.

Introduction

Although this research and work focused on Herndon, VA, the communal need to advance social justice for Pan-Africans resurfaced when the researcher visited Richmond, VA, to expand her education. The journey to and from Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology (STVU) to attend classes in pursuit of a Master

of Divinity degree, exposed an unexpected level of poverty. Because of the school's location, this devastating picture was unavoidable.

It was an eye-opening experience to observe the number of homeless and impoverished Pan-Africans roaming the streets of Richmond. They were sitting on street corners, near gas stations, waiting for customers to buy gas, so they could run up to cars and beg for money. They were often dirty and unkempt. Many were sitting on partial-concrete walls slumped over like all hope was gone. Some often gathered outside the Starbucks near the school, seeking a handout or was it a desperate cry for help? At times, one or two of them would enter Starbucks and quietly sit in a corner, as the stinch filled the area where they sat, until asked to leave. The sight was often unbearable.

There now existed a silent cry, an uncontrollable mourn within the spirit of the researcher for these homeless people and others who were not readily in view. This disturbing sight reignited a passion for helping those in need. Coming to the daunting realization that Richmond was not the only city with visible

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disenfranchised, marginalized Pan-African areas, her curiosity instigated the mission to learn of like areas closer to home. The inquiries matured into a passion for liberation and social justice for disenfranchised marginalized Pan-African communities of Herndon. However, the researcher could not solely look at the social condition of those communities, but it was vital for her to look at MPBC, as well.

Using the Mixed Method of the Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis, this paper contains scientific data and reveals the results of 200 potential CCAs' feedback from interviews, discussion panels, questionnaires, polls, reviews, and surveys. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, telephone conversations and virtual community discussions were also administered. The target audiences are MPBC members and residents of disenfranchised, marginalized Pan-African communities in Herndon.

MINISTRY CONTEXT

This research began with inquiring about disenfranchised marginalized Pan-African communities

in Herndon, VA, near the researcher's home church, MPBC. Demographical data reveals that the church is not a true reflection of its surrounding community. Mount Pleasant Baptist Church is located on several acres surrounded by large well-manicured townhomes, in a predominantly upper-middle-class Mid-eastern community. Although, MPBC has a multi-cultural congregation, its congregants are predominantly Pan-African, 98%. The church has a membership of 2,187, twelve supporting ministries, with a combination of forty licensed and ordained ministers. There are male and female members from newborn to the late-nineties. Married versus single members somewhat balance out with approximately 55% married and 45% single adults. The socio-economic status of MPBC members is mainly middle to upper class, with many members owning businesses, employed by the government, are doctors, lawyers, or have jobs with benefits. Although some members have financial struggles and employment concerns, the average annual salary is approximately \$80,000.

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From researching the church's demographics, it was disturbing to learn that the average income of \$80,000 portrays a false picture for those genuinely in need. It was even more disturbing to learn that there also exists social justice concerns within churches, from the pew to the pulpit. Although affluent church members do not live in Herndon's disenfranchise communities, some pass by at least one of them every time they travel to and from Sunday morning services, Wednesday evening Bible Studies, or any event held at the MPBC. Inexcusably, it is poignantly unusual for the researcher to know of these low-income residential areas, as most MPBC congregants live in nice homes, drive nice cars, and enjoy all the common amenities associated with middle to upper-class living, which often encloses them in a cocoon of comfort. The perceived lack of concern for the least of these faithfully enters the church when the doors are opened.

The researcher learned the magnitude of the need for soci-economic equality and social justice by traversing Herndon's low-income Pan-African areas and observing their physical environment. She became very concerned about the devastation and hopelessness seen in certain

areas of Herndon. The impact encouraged her to redirect her focus and mission to empower the powerless.

As she entrenched her thoughts in the ailments of the communities, the researcher cringed in her spirit from what she viewed as an unacceptable state of being. It grieved her heart to see the mentality of the youth and the lack of value placed on their lives. It was a disheartening reminder of the mutilation Euro-Americans have done to the African culture. There exists a paradigm shift from being in physical slavery by force to mental slavery by coercion. With some, she observed the acceptance of defeat and lack of motivation. A discouraging picture of street homelessness, people living in homeless shelters, women and men on street corners or near gas stations with cardboard signs begging for money, easily identifiable areas of drug activity, and unsupervised children. This despondent state of being is unacceptable to God. It is in direct opposition of Roman 12:2¹³, God's acceptable will of prosperity.

¹³ Ibid., Edwards, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern

This disheartening reality reminded the researcher of a book written by Boykin Sanders, *Blowing the Trumpet in Open Court*. It highlights the core of social injustice in Pan-African communities and is poignant about the route of the infestation of drugs, economic disparities, racism, and the breakdown of Pan-African families. Sanders' writing addressed America's social injustices, which parallels some of the social justice concerns identified in Pan-African communities of Herndon.

Additionally, James Cone's book, *A Liberation of Black Theology*, possesses the ideology needed to adjust the mentality of some disenfranchised, marginalized Pan-African communities. He wrote,

Children were not created for torture, and men and women were not created to have their dignity crushed. We believe that the Christian gospel offers all sincere persons an authentic response to inhumanity by assuring them of God's participation in the struggle to end human suffering. The knowledge of God frees believers

what is the will of God- what is good and acceptable and perfect., (Romans 12:2 NRSV), 2028.

to live for their neighbor without having to worry about storing up treasures on earth.¹⁴

The urgency to embrace this ideology in our daily lives, MPBC members, and Herndon's disenfranchised, marginalized communities are imperative because it will help many visualize themselves beyond the subliminal European societal barriers that mentally categorize Pan-Africans as second-class citizens. Cone wrote, "When an oppressed people come to know who it is, it will not tolerate oppression."¹⁵

Adopting Cone's statement is indispensable for every Pan-African youth and others that have settled for European ideologies of superiority. Cone's stance is critical in the development of CCAs. Although indirectly stated, Cone embraces the principles of Kwanzaa by encouraging community unity, family, and building. This is in continuity with the CCAM's God-centered purpose. In reading *A Liberation of Black Theology*, it spurred the researcher to take action in a concerted effort to alleviate

¹⁴ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Fortieth edit., (Maryknoll, NY:Orbis Books, 2010), 49-50.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Cone, 60.

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the condition of those affected by the unjust systemic society.

The researcher realized she needed to conscientize MPBC of her efforts to impact the community. Before taking action, she prayed for an answer of how the church could empower Herndon's marginalized residents to transform their communities and lives for the better through a faith-based community-building organization. She reached out to MPBC and spoke with the pastor to discuss the dire need for the inclusivity of equitable distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges for applicable MPBC members and Pan-African communities in Herndon. Having this conversation with her pastor revealed an unexpected disconnect of how to address the social justice disparities. When asked, what is the church and the affluent members of MPBC doing to help disenfranchised communities and MPBC members facing these same challenges, the pastor shared new provisional efforts MPBC was making to assist members in need. He shared how the COVID-19 virus had negatively impacted the so-called haves and have-nots. Therefore, MPBC initiated a food pantry to aid a basic

need. The Food Pantry was in addition to MPBC's clothing give-a-way and financial assistance fund. The pastor's response was that of temporary accommodations, not a long-term solution.

Unfortunately, the researcher learned the church does not have a ministry to assist disenfranchised communities with overcoming the known socio-economic and social justice concerns. Being sensitive to MPBC's position, yet understanding the communities need, it was expedient that CCAM's activities be shared with MPBC's pastor. In response to the church's void, the researcher told the pastor about CCAM's instructional training workshops and its purpose for community building and empowerment. She shared information about CCAM's interactive training, mentoring, coaching, and networking to empower Pan-African communities for long-term success. She explained how CCAM's structure minimizes the exclusivity of disenfranchised, marginalized people from opportunities to gain equitable distribution of wealth; thereby, addressing social justice concerns in the church and community. The pastor appeared intrigued with CCAM but redirected the conversation to his

ideology for responding to the immediate need. However, he was willing to discuss MPBC's involvement in the future.

After speaking with the pastor, the researcher thought about the conversation. It reminded her of a book, by Juan Floyd-Thomas, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*. She was intrigued by the peripatetic the author illustrated, starting with *Black Church history*, voyaging through the social and political challenges of Pan-African people, the perpetual need for Pan-African leadership, and the quest for fulfillment of pedagogical aims. The researcher reflected on her ministry of developing people, Pan-African culture and traditions, the new norms occurring in Pan-African churches and communities, and Pan-African leadership's response to the racial tension in America. This book brilliantly introduced the Pan-African church and directed attention to the state of Pan-African communities and churches in America. Its content stimulated her mind to reflect on her ministry, relating to transformative innovation, human development, and the essence of this project. Floyd-Thomas' book, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, is

a powerful introductory book on the Pan-African church, its history, progression, and current leadership concerns. Because this book is illuminating and educational, it is a stark reminder that there remains much work to do for Pan-Africans social justice concerns.

Although the researcher has earned two master's degrees¹⁶, the magnitude of the project invigorated her to seek additional intellectual ammunition to better prepare for social justice combat. After researching the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) programs at various schools, she chose the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), located on Morehouse College campus in Atlanta, GA because it is an affluent, historically Black, reputable institute with like-minded ideology for social justice. Romans 12:1-8 is a foundational support for addressing social justice in disenfranchised marginalized Pan-African communities and the church. It is the essence of this essay, as the researcher pursues a DMin. The ITC Mission Statement directly aligns with the CCAM, regarding building, unity, and being non-judgmental. The

¹⁶ MDiv: Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology and Faith Christian Schools & University.

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ITC Mission Statement greatly tipped her decision to enroll into the DMin program, as she was mesmerized by terms and phrases like, Christian Africentric, ecumenical consortium of seminaries, practicing justice and peace, liberating and transforming spirituality.¹⁷

ITC turned out to be the best school for pursuing the doctorate degree. The knowledge gained from every course taken and every book read is proven to have an instrumental impact on the effectiveness of the CCAM projects. The Africentric Philosophy and Black Liberation Theology course kindled an interest to learn more about ones authentic ancestry, religion and culture.¹⁸ The Intercultural Immersion Virtual Seminar solidified the urgency of writing ones own story to ensure ones perspective is shared.¹⁹ The significance of ones African ancestry was eloquently emphasized throughout the didactic experience at ITC. Of all the courses taken, it was the Africentric courses that continue to have the greatest

¹⁷ Interdenominational Theological Center,
<https://www.itc.edu/about/itc-mission-and-vision/>.

¹⁸ Dr. Mark A Lomax, Associate Professor of Homiletics.

¹⁹ Dr. Charles E Thomas Jr., PhD.

impact in the CCAM because ITC instructors encouraged the researcher to connect with her African ancestry. With this background knowledge instilled in her, the work of the DMin degree program began in earnest.

The cohort leaders, Themba Mafico²⁰ and Mark Thompson²¹ have been phenomenal. They have shared words of inspiration and continually motivate the cohorts to master the virtue of perseverance and anticipating ultimate success. Some of us embarked on the DMin degree expecting an easy sailing through. When the work was demanding, many of us were ready to give up. The instructors provided the coaching and mentoring needed for all to press forward and soar. They suggested several scholarly readings and challenged us to go beyond theological safe-zones to produce critical and scholarly writings. One of the resources, *Canoeing the Mountain*²² was a required reading that resonated with the researcher's project because of its basic, but relevant

²⁰ Rev. Temba Mafico, PhD., Cohort Leader.

²¹ Rev. Mark W. Thompson, DMin, Cohort Leader.

²² Tod Boslinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press), 2015.

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message for any challenging situation. “Keep building healthy alliances with those who are emotionally mature and share your convictions, and they will join you in the needed change.”²³

The researcher’s cohort dissertation project supervisor is Mafico. His philosophical insight enriched by his African heritage, theological ideology that questions embedded assumptions, and his heart for students and disenfranchised-marginalized people provoke student theologians who pastor and serve in various ministries to expand their minds and transition from the theological to the philosophical realm of critical thinking. The DMin courses and assigned reading resources are integrated in such a way that the DMin degree has already made a positive contribution to the growth of the CCAM in its ministry in Herndon, Virginia.

The innovative research methods the researcher was encouraged to adopt equipped her to better structure her passion for community building and empowering of disenfranchised marginalized Pan-African communities.

²³ Ibid., 176.

The knowledge gained is being used in the researchers' non-profit organization and leadership roles in the church.

The researcher used the Mixed Method approach to gather information and measure the success of the project, relying on the results obtained from qualitative and quantitative analyses. It was imperative for the researcher to start with a qualitative research approach to understand the social phenomena of disenfranchised, marginalized communities. She focused on the why not the what, because of the essential need for direct interaction with the people. After spending considerable time in the qualitative research phase of this project, qualitative analyses were conducted. The qualitative analysis was used to reveal behaviors and environmental quality. This information could only be effectively gathered from personal interaction with the communities, whether in-person or via social media, ZOOM.

To further break down the two components selected for this Mixed methodology, the quantitative analysis was used to provide statistical data needed to learn about the population of the people, the scientific and social data, and measure the progress or success of the

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project. The researcher collected data from various sources to obtain the socio-economic data needed and to measure the impact of MPBC's ministry in disenfranchised communities. She retrieved scientific data from the Town of Herndon's official website. She conducted surveys using the Survey Monkey electronic system, Facebook reviews and feedback, ZOOM polling questionnaires, and traditional customized questionnaires were emailed to participants to measure the success of this community-building project. ZOOM and in-person interviews were conducted with Herndon residents, MPBC leadership, and randomly chosen MPBC congregants to measure the need, weigh the interest, and strategize on an approach for addressing the social justice concerns.

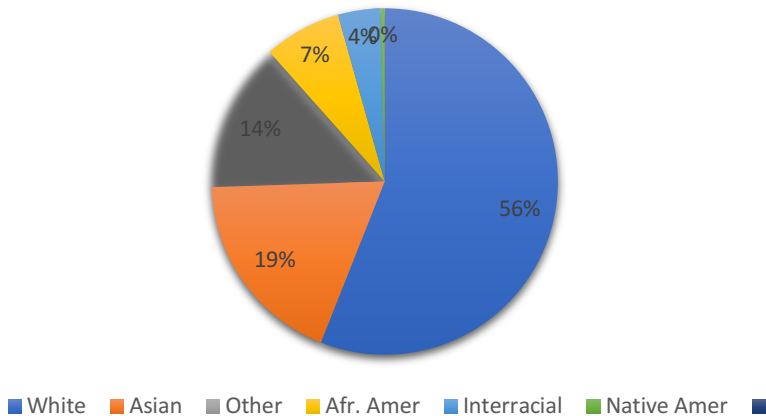
First, she searched the city's website to gather public information and data about the city. As of this year, 2021, Herndon has a population of 24,817, with an average age of 34.6. Of these, 51.9% are married and 71.5% of the children live in two-parent homes. However, the single male versus female ratio remains unchanged at approximately one-to-one, where the female percentage is

50.02 and the male 49.98. Herndon remains a multicultural city where 56.11% speak English, and 33.47% speak Spanish. The demographics reveal that 27.81% are natives of VA, 16.27% are born out of state, 43.80% are of foreign birth, and 27.53% are non-citizens. The racial demographics are 56.01% White, 18.47% Asian, 13.95% Other, 7.22 % Black or Pan-African, 3.95% interracial, and 0.40% Native American (See diagram on next page). In viewing the latest demographics of Herndon, there is an increase of 1.01% White residents and a decrease of 0.60% Pan-African

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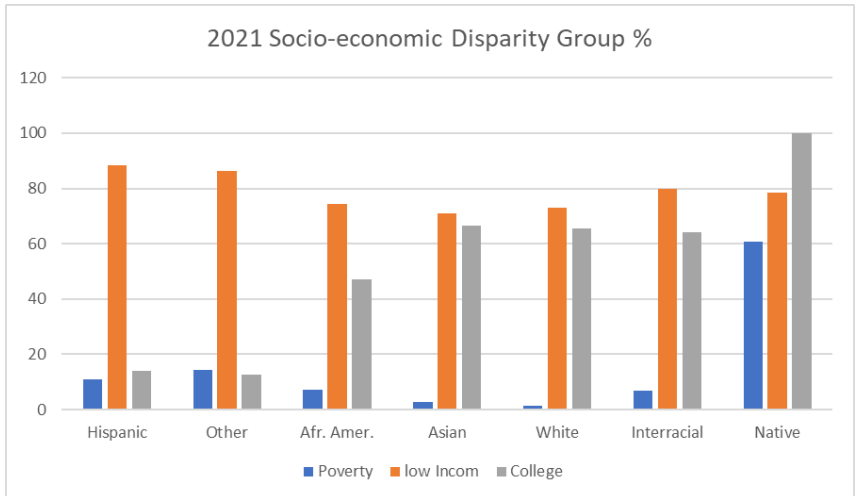
residents. The average salary of Herndon residents is \$131,085, with a poverty rate of 5.88%.

Racial Demographics 2021



The poverty percentile may seem low, but it is unacceptable because people of color, mainly those of African descent, make up the majority of this 5.88%. The diagram below illustrates the socio-economic divide of specific groups, which is not all-inclusive of Herndon's entire population. Poignantly, Pan-Africans are among the lowest population in Herndon, but they are among the overall highest for poverty and low-income. This is a

somewhat familiar, but often forgotten community that continuously cry out for social justice.



At a glance this diagram may seem to contradict the reporting, but if accurately broken down Pan-Africans are the poorest in Herndon, next to Hispanics. Natives appear to have the highest percentage of poverty, with Hispanics second, Others third and African Americans fourth. In order to get a clearer picture, the previous diagram must also be reviewed. There are only 0.40% Natives residing in Herndon, but 7.22% African Americans. The lower the actual number of residents, the higher the poverty percentile.

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After collecting the public data, it was used as a starting point to identify Herndon's disenfranchised Pan-African areas closest to MPBC and to determine where CCAM could be most impactful, in collaboration with MPBC. The in-person and virtual interviews conducted was the second form of data gathering to initiate this project. The following are some of the preliminary questions asked and responses given.

1. To what extent are you aware of socio-economic and/or social justice disparities of Pan-African communities in Herndon? Some knowledge - 86%, Not much knowledge – 14%. Although alarming, the results were not shocking. This question was asked of Herndon residents with well-paying jobs, who live in nice homes. They rarely exit their cocoon of comfort.
2. To what extent does stigma contribute to the resources that are made available to disenfranchised marginalized Pan-African Herndon communities? Great influence – 71%, Some influence – 29%. This question was asked of Herndon residents living in low-income areas. This response was interesting, as most residence frown on perceived handouts or being labeled as needy. Some are accustomed to their sub-par socio-economic status, accepting their current

state is all life has to offer. Therefore, there really is not a problem.

3. What barriers have you found that challenges your ability to effectively address institutional discrimination towards Herndon's disenfranchised, marginalized Pan-African communities? This multiple-choice question was asked of all participants. They were asked to select all that applies. From the low-income Herndon residents, there exists a lack of trust in those that come to their communities in the form a savior. This 14% questions the motives of all outsiders. With the lack of trust, there exists resistance to development training. These 29%, believe you must trust the source of the information, in order to provide effective training. The middle to upper-class Herndon residents want to become active in fighting social injustice, but with their busy schedules. This 57% is pre-occupied with work, family, church, and social activities. Of this combined group, 29% identified a lack of resources as a major barrier.

4. What actions have you taken to better Herndon's disenfranchised, marginalized Pan-African communities? Provided financial literacy training – 29%, provided financial assistance – 50%, provided training courses for success – 29%. This multiple-choice question was asked of middle-to-upper class Herndon residents and they were asked to select all that applies. It was not

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surprising to see that 50% of this group specified -provide financial assistance, as it is easier to give money that to become physically involved or to provide hands on training. However, it was encouraging to have 29% provide some type of training for future growth.

5. How do you feel an organization that is specifically designed to target disenfranchised, marginalized Pan-African communities for their betterment would be received in the Herndon Pan-African communities? Will definitely receive - 29% responded, will receive – 29%, will somewhat receive – 42%. The 29% that will definitely receive the organization are those that are enthusiastic and excited about the potential to change their situation for the better. The 29% that will accept the organization are those that have interest and are open-minded about change. Finally, the 42% that will somewhat receive the organization, are reluctant, but curious about the possibility of change. Although there exists a lack of trust and some resistance to training, they will cautiously accept the organization with a glimpse of hope that this organization can provided what is needed.
6. What foundations do you suggest would develop and/or foster a greater sense of community in disenfranchised, marginalized communities? This

multiple choice, answer all that applies question provided some interesting results. Mental, business, and financial counseling were deemed necessary for proper development of communities by 71% of the participants. Business training, mentoring, and coaching were deemed essential components for building successful communities by 86% of the participants. Networking and opportunities were deemed to be critically needed for communities' longevity by 71% of the participants. It was refreshing to learn that no one responded, doing nothing was acceptable.

The survey revealed that none of the participants were very knowledgeable of disenfranchised, marginalized Pan Africans in Herndon, but only had somewhat to little knowledge of the state of these communities. However, it was encouraging to learn that most participants agreed that stigma has a great influence on the resources provided to low-income Pan-African areas. The survey also revealed that the challenges most participants believed existed with assisting in building Pan-African communities, were fallacies because of their poor time management. Additionally, participants were not confident that these Herndon communities would

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embrace the community building efforts, as most feel the training would be somewhat received.

In addition to the surveys, in-person, ZOOM, and telephone interviews were conducted by the researcher. She interviewed men and women of age groups ranging from the mid-thirties to the mid-nineties that were residents of Herndon and MPBC members. The first interview was an in-person interview with a 48 year old male, who has pastored MPBC of Herndon for four years, at the time of the interview. He revealed that the church does not have a ministry to assist disenfranchised communities with overcoming the known socio-economic concerns. However, the pastor was intrigued with the idea of a faith-base organization that would have a structured community building program and was willing to discuss MPBC's future involvement.

Rev. CS is a Herndon resident and has been a member of MPBC for over 30 years. He is an African American male in his mid-sixties that has personally experienced the witnessed Pan-African socio-economic inequities. Once a successful entrepreneur, married to a Caucasian woman, after losing his successful business,

his wife divorced him. For many years he suffered depression, until joining MPBC and receiving agape from the previous pastor of MPBC that he begin to mentally recover from depression. However, he had not found the needed resources to restore his business. He embraced the idea of a faith-based organization assisting him and others like him to rebuild and restructure their lives and communities for success, as he desired to learn how to do the same.

EB has been a resident of Herndon all of her life and a member of MPBC for over 80 years. She has seen numerous changes throughout her life. Mother EB compared the days of segregation with the current activities she now see and hear in the news with social justice concerns of Pan-Africans. As she answered the questions, her perspective was quite different from the others, considering her perception is based on different understanding of the term equality. Revealing herself as a sharp-tongued rebel in her earlier years, some of the acceptable degrading words once used to reference African American men and women, like boy and girl, was not viewed negatively, but just the way white folks talk.

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She was not familiar with impoverished Pan-African areas, only those with little money, not poor because everyone looked out for each other. When asked if she felt a faith-based organization that is designed to rebuild Black communities, she passionately responded that it is needed because the young people have gone away from family values and respect. Several interviews were conducted with a unanimous acceptance to the ideology of community building and restoration of Pan-African communities.

Finally, the researcher established and conducted in-person workshops to develop CCAs that would advocate for social justice in Herndon. The workshops were strategically designed for internal change, resulting in the external building of Pan-African unity and prosperity. The training is administered in four workshops, approximately two to three months apart to contrivance the knowledge gained. The workshops cover identifying the authentic you, ancestral religious beliefs and cultural practices, business acumen, the importance of investing in one's health and mental well-being and building in unity. Participants learn to write their

narratives, define their community, share information of Pan African's contributions to America's economic growth, and are encouraged to redirect that positive energy to impact, restore, and build Pan-African communities. The first workshop entitled, "Your Authentic Self" has the foundational teaching of Sankofa and individuality. The second workshop entitled, "Balancing Excellence" addresses the total person, covering mental health and wellness, spirituality, and physical health. The third workshop entitled, "You're in Control: Write Your Story" emphasizes the significance of putting one's words and experiences into published writings to empower succeeding generations. Participants were taught to write their own narratives, define their communities, and develop Community Change Agents (CCA) to continue the work. The fourth and final workshop focuses on business acumen and entrepreneurship, highlighting The Black Wall streets in America. Interactive training on financial innovation and wisdom, training on successful ways to build and restore communities, and ones obligation to invest in Pan-African businesses, churches, communities, and schools. The

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instructional training consists of interactive workshops, provides networking opportunities, and practical application opportunities throughout the year.

Partnering with diverse Pan-African business professionals of Herndon and throughout the country, to provide invaluable training, made the Workshops very impactful. Community building organizations united with CCAM, in the successful development of CCAs to provide the best training and networking experience for attendees. The CCAM partnered with a women's empowerment group called Voices of Encouragement (VOE), a Pan-African female-owned publishing company named New Beginnings Enterprises, LLC, a Branding, Financial, and Marketing company entitled The Boujee Banker, a Financial Planning Organization called STRIDES, the CEO of The Gift of Dreams Wellness and Consulting, LLC, a certified raw food chef and the Chief Servant Officer of the Blessed Raw Deal nutrition organization, the founder of Choices Youth & Family Services, Inc., diverse authors, inspirational speakers, and many more. Umoja (unity), the combining of businesses, ministry, and organizations in a community building

forum, such as the CCAM workshops, accomplishes wholeness, empowerment, and prosperity.

The in-person approach was very effective, until the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on North America, causing a national shutdown for businesses, schools, and all social activities. Before and after the shutdown, a requirement for social distancing was required. Travel was significantly reduced, and community interaction appeared to be eliminated. In-person training was no longer a viable option. The shutdown coerced innovative ways for CCAM to address social justice concerns. Telephone conversations and virtual community discussions proved to be effective alternatives for in-person activities. ZOOM and phone interviews were conducted with Herndon residents, MPBC members, and MPBC leaders. The interviews unpeeled suppressed ails of past and current social justice concerns that continue to negatively impact Pan-Africans in Herndon, such as socio-economic disparities and violation of human rights.

Ironically, COVID-19 restrictions have camouflaged the appearance of social inequality in these communities; unaccompanied children were no longer

seen walking around apartment complexes but confined to their balconies or staring out of their windows and doors, some only wearing shirts with no pants or shoes. Many of the windows had badly broken blinds and torn or missing screens. Residents kept their slide doors and windows propped open, so a breeze of air would cool the apartment because their air conditioning systems were inoperative. Some lacked necessities and amenities, like minimal food, furniture, and transportation. The need for these items exasperated during the COVID-19 pandemic, but were somewhat softened after receiving the stimulus checks from the forty-sixth president of the USA of America, Joseph Biden. However, many viewed this effort as a band-aid, having no confidence their socio-economic concerns would ever change.

In addition to the socio-economic problem, there is also the concern for human rights and equality for people of color, specifically Pan-Africans. *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create A Politics Worthy of The Human Spirit* by Parker J. Palmer, is an inspiring book of one man's unexpected journey of equality for all, in America's divisive political culture.

Through Parker Palmer's experiences, he received a revelation of what true democracy means. He reintroduced the concept of the first three words in the preamble of the Constitution of the USA to highlight the significance of unity and equality. This book encourages readers to create bridges of communication to eliminate the divisive political-cultural gap existing in America. The researcher views Palmer as an advocate for social justice, as his concerns mirror many of the disparities expressed earlier in this essay.

Although Pan-Africans are no longer in physical bondage, entanglement in the political environment is essential to fight against the social "isms" people of color continue to encounter. On June 5, 2020, a group of concerned citizens organized a protest to bring political attention to the police brutality in these areas. Yahoo News' heading read, "Protesters Rally Through Herndon for Racial Justice."²⁴ It was encouraging to see and hear

²⁴ Michael O'Connell, June 6, 2020, Protesters Rally Through Herndon For Racial Justice, 2020, https://news.yahoo.com/protesters-rally-herndon-racial-justice-163201738.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3

Herndon citizens speaking out against this social justice disparity. But, as the researcher read the article and saw the faces of the organizers, she wept within. They were all of European descent. She was embarrassed to admit that she immediately wondered, where were the people most impacted and where were the predominantly Pan-African church leaders? Have church leaders become so self-centered and self-absorbed that they were no longer concerned about the least of these? Much like Jesus' response in John 11:35,²⁵ the researcher also cried. Like Jesus, she put her faith into action. Molefi Asante presents a philosophical perspective of God's will for Pan-Africans.

Asante's, *The Africentric Idea* directly ties into the foundational scripture of this project, Romans 12, as he emphasized God's perfect will that people of African descent know the richness of the cultural practices, family

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²⁵ Ibid., Harrelson, "Jesus began to weep." (John 11:35 NRSV), 1931.

values, and religious expressions. By showing the strength of the African ancestors, Asante exposed the systemic virus of social injustice in America. Asante's writing imbues our traditional values of family, unity, self-worth, and pride, while imbruing European ideologies about us. In reading Asante's book, I now understand Nommo to mean community building and oneness within the community, as it stems from the spoken word of our existence. This teaching is incorporated in CCAM's community-building workshops, as few MPBC leaders are actively involved.

This project is continually making a positive impact in the lives of participants; thereby, positively impacting Herndon's Pan-African communities, MPBC members, attendees throughout the USA. The following feedback is one of many received from attendees of CCAM workshops. Clementine Wright earned a Doctor of Ministry (DMin), is a leader, educator, and ordained minister at MPBC.

Wright wrote,

The PCFGBM Black Not Broken 2021 interactive workshop presented on Saturday, February 20 was absolutely awesome. Bestseller author Sis. Toledo and presenter Sis. Raquel was awesome. Of course, the opening presentation by Rev Tess on knowing who we are (Kings and Queens) - an accomplished people, primed us and set the foundation for Sis. Toledo who shared steps for defining, setting and reaching goals as defined in her book, “Be Intentional No Matter What”; and, Sis. Raquel who shared invaluable information on “branding and marketing” of which all entrepreneurs and businesses, in general would benefit mightily and without question. I’m really thankful for the opportunity to attend this enriching workshop. Again, thank you, Reverend Tess for another outstanding workshop.²⁶

One of the Pan-African male Herndon residents verbally expressed the impact the workshops have made in his life, ministry, and business. For many years, he was not able restart his once successful business because of fear and procrastination, until he started attending

²⁶ Clemintine Wright, DMin.

CCAM's workshops. He stated, the workshops forced him to meet and reevaluate himself. It challenged him to pick up his pen and put his thoughts in writing. He felt the CCAM training empowered him to move forward. He felt better informed, illuminated, and reassured of his divine purpose. The Herndon resident is currently revamping his business plan, learning the latest software needed to be successful, attending business specific courses, and is actively involved in building and empowering communities of color. Part of his process is to encourage others to attend CCAM's workshops because they have changed his life for the better. He has encouraged pastors, ministers, young adults, and youth to attend the workshops. This CCA is positively impacting others. The feedback received from workshop participants were instrumental in measuring the effectiveness of CCAM's approach to addressing socio-economic and social justice concerns of Herndon.

Conclusion

The goal of this essay was to report on an ongoing project to address socio-economic and social justice

disparities identified among disenfranchised marginalized Pan-African communities of Herndon, VA. This project required comprehension of available statistical data and acquiring knowledge of the behaviors and environmental quality of Herndon's disenfranchised marginalized Pan-African communities. Initially, the researcher assumed that this was a simple task, until embarking on the DMin degree at ITC. To address social situations, one must be equipped with broad reading about the proposed project, and get as much data as possible on the real issues that pin the people of Hendon in squalid conditions. It was enlightening to examine the statistics and find the disparities in salaries, housing and other social conditions.

Data supports CCAM's stance that interactive training workshops and community visits that were conducted in Herndon, contribute to building lasting relationships. Thus, the engagement in live training, consisting of four workshops designed to regenerate Pan-Africans from the inside out; thereby, creating an internal change for external success. The workshops provide historical information that assists with identifying ones authentic self, teachings of cultural practices, business

acumen, the importance of investing in one's health and mental well-being, community investment, and building in unity.

This research aims to develop CCAs to mentor and train others how to mitigate social justice disparities of Pan-African communities in Herndon and among applicable MPBC members. In addressing this concern, based upon biblical principles, various resources were used to measure activities God deems acceptable and unacceptable.

The Mixed Method using the qualitative and quantitative analyses were used for this research, to gain indispensable knowledge about the people of Herndon and their environment, and to measure the success of the project. A good indication of the project's progress is revealed through testimonies from CCAM workshop attendees. Many have shared the impact of CCAM workshops and how they have helped with overcoming insecurities for starting or restarting businesses, organizations, ministries, and are now motivated to further their education. Others have expressed gratitude for the valuable knowledge gained and the positive impact

the CCAM has had in their personal lives. They appreciate the proactive empowerment activities designed to develop effective CCAs. Therefore, the CCAM's model will continue to be utilized, until social justice disparities in Herndon's Pan-African communities and MPBC improves.

The researcher is now convinced that prophetic ministry, a hallmark of ITC, does not always have to operate exclusively through the church. Once commissioned and inspired by Holy Spirit, one should not wait for the church to catch up, because it may never, but one must operate in obedience. Based on the Pareto Principle, it is the bare minority of church folks who participate in church ministries.²⁷ Therefore, the researcher is now energized to continue with the project of addressing social justice concerns. This research affirms that the CCAM is a divine project that God should find to be acceptable. However, much more work remains to be done, but a firm foundation has been laid. This

²⁷ A. Grosfed-Nir, B. Ronen, & N. Kozlovsky, The Pareto Managerial Principle; When does it apply? *International Journal of Production Research* 45(10), (2007), 2317 – 2325.

article contributes toward the understanding of what prophetic ministry is all about, which means social involvement. A supporting verse to the foundational scripture of Romans 12:1-8²⁸ is Matthew 5:16, “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”²⁹ The researcher is now determined more than ever to explore ways of mitigating social justice disparities identified in Herndon’s disenfranchised marginalized Pan-African communities and applicable MPBC members.

²⁸ Ibid., NRSV, 2028.

²⁹ Ibid., NRSV, 1754.

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