

Lawrence H. Mamiya*

**FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS AND
FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES AMONG
AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSLIM MASJIDS
AND BLACK CHURCHES**

**Part I
Introduction**

Faith-based community development has become an important trend in recent years among philanthropic foundations such as the Ford Foundation and in the political arena. In the United States, both presidential candidates, Al Gore and George W. Bush, have spoken about the need for a "faith-based initiative" where religious groups can be used to deliver social services, especially in poor urban neighborhoods. While the wisdom and the pros and cons of such a policy can and should be debated, the faith-based initiative does recognize the historical fact that religious groups are often grass-roots community institutions, and they have delivered some forms of social services in their neighborhoods.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the data on the kinds of family support services and programs in which African-American Muslim masjids ("place of prayer") and Black churches are currently involved. The characteristics of congregations and leaders, which will facilitate relevant family programs, are also considered. The data, drawn from several national surveys, are largely descriptive studies of congregations. In other words, specific questions were not asked about "family support services"; however, inferences

*Lawrence H. Mamiya is professor of Religion/Africana Studies, Religion Department, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, and the lead researcher for ITC/FaithFactor Project 2000.

can be drawn from the types of programs to this area of concern. The Muslim study, entitled "Islam in the African American Experience," was undertaken with C. Eric Lincoln of Duke University as a co-principal investigator (until his recent death) and Ihsan Bagby of Shaw University as our main interviewer in face-to-face interviews with African-American Imams, the principal informants. The Muslim survey covered 130 predominantly African-American Sunni Muslim masjids nationwide from an estimated 350 (or close to 40 percent of the total). This study is continuing with a current ongoing survey of African-American Muslims in selected New York state prisons. The national survey of Black churches, *Project 2000*, based at Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, covers more than 1,800 churches in telephone interviews conducted by the Gallup Organization. This paper presents more background on Islam and African-American Muslim movements on the assumption that the readers know more about Christianity than Islam in America.

The Growth of African-American Muslim Movements: A Brief Historical Overview

Islam among African Americans has a long history in the United States and the Western hemisphere, beginning with the arrival of enslaved African Muslims during the several hundred years of the transatlantic slave trade. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of the enslaved Africans were Muslims removed from sections of West Africa being Islamicized during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.¹ Many of the Muslim slaves were taken from the rice-growing cultures of Senegal

¹See Allen D. Austin, *African Muslim Slaves in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles*, rev. ed. (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1996).

and Sierra Leone and forced to work on rice plantations on the Sea Islands and the Carolinas. According to our historical research, however, Islam did not survive beyond the first generation of African Muslims. Forced conversions to Christianity, increased missionary activity on the plantations, and the process of cultural stripping of Africans effectively reduced Islam to remnant memories of women wearing head scarves in public, churches and graves facing east, fasting during a Christian holiday such as Easter, or the Arabic writings left by some Muslim slaves. On Sapelo Island, the children of the head driver on the plantation, Bilali, a Muslim who was also the leader of the community, helped to establish the first Baptist church on the island after the Civil War.

In the twentieth century, Islam was reintroduced to African-American communities through the efforts of several heterodox, proto-Islamic movements. The term "proto-Islamic" refers to groups that use aspects of Islam to cover a message of Black nationalism. The Moorish Science Temple movement led by Noble Drew Ali from 1913 to 1929, and the Nation of Islam led by Master Fard (1930-1934), Elijah Muhammad (1934-1975), and currently Minister Louis Farrakhan (1978-) were Black nationalist groups that relied on Islam as a cover. Muslim missionaries from the Ahmadiyyah movement in India began to work in Black communities as early as 1920. The Ahmadiyyah preached the five pillars of Islam and helped to spread the use of the Qur'an among African Americans. However, they were also regarded as "heterodox" by mainstream Sunni Muslims because the founder, Ghulam Ahmad, claimed that he was the Prophet for a new age. According to orthodox Sunni Muslims, Muhammad Ibn Abdullah of seventh-century Arabia was the "final prophet."

Smaller movements of orthodox African-American

Sunni Muslims existed since the 1930s in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland. Their leaders and members usually had a previous background in one of the proto-Islamic movements mentioned above and sought a more authentic Islam. For example, the Ahmadiyyah movement influenced Imam Wali Akram, founder of the First Mosque of Cleveland. Sheikh Muhammad Ezaldeen, a key figure and organizer among African-American Muslims during the period from 1930 to 1950s, had been a member of the Moorish Science Temple movement. In 1944, Ezaldeen established the first national organization of African-American Sunni Muslims, called "Uniting Islamic Societies." Although it did not last more than two years, the organization represented the first attempt to organize this religious sector on a national basis.

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of several African-American Sunni Muslim movements. In 1961, a number of African-American Muslims left the State Street Mosque in Brooklyn, complaining that the mosque was not reaching out to the Black community where it was located. This group formed the Darul Islam ("house" or "world" of Islam) movement, which eventually encompassed about forty communities nationwide. Malcolm X's conversion to Sunni Islam from the Black nationalist Nation of Islam and his assassination in 1965 broadened the appeal of orthodox Islam to thousands of young Black people. The Mosque of the Islamic Brotherhood (MIB) was established in Central Harlem in 1967 by Imam Tawfiq, a protégé of Malcolm. Several hundred members of the MIB lived communally. In the early 1970s the Islamic Party was established in Washington, DC, by a jazz musician named Musafraheen Hamid. The Islamic Party, which focused on social service

programs in poor Black neighborhoods, also established thirty to forty communities on the East Coast, the Midwest, and the South. Both the Islamic Party and the Darul Islam movements collapsed in the 1980s. The remnants of the Darul Islam following eventually chose Imam Jamil Al-Amin (the former H. Rap Brown) of Atlanta as their leader and renamed the movement, the Jama'at or the Community Mosque movement. The movement had about thirty communities.

In February 1975, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam died and his son Wallace Deen Muhammad was named as his successor. Within three months, Wallace Muhammad shocked the Nation of Islam and the world by announcing that, "There is no black Muslim or white Muslim. All are Muslims. All are children of God." He began to dismantle the Nation of Islam, getting rid of its Black nationalistic beliefs and practices, and gradually moved the majority of the Nation's members to orthodox Sunni Islam. Wallace is known as Imam Warith Deen Mohammed. The name of the new group has changed several times, from the "World Community of Al-Islam in the West" to the "American Muslim Mission" to the current "Muslim American Society." Imam Mohammed's movement has more than 200,000 members and about 200 masjids nationwide. Their newspaper is *The Muslim Journal*.

In October 1977, in Los Angeles after consulting several close aides, Minister Louis Abdul Haleem Farrakhan attempted to resurrect the Nation of Islam as it was under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad; namely, a Black nationalist organization. As the National Representative of the Nation under Elijah, the second in command, Farrakhan had expected to be named the new successor in 1975. Beginning with public meetings in 1980, Farrakhan has been able to successfully

rebuild the Nation of Islam with a membership base estimated to be more than 50,000. In spite of his controversial reputation, he has mobilized two of the largest marches on Washington, DC, the Million Man March on October 16, 1995 and the Million Family March on October 16, 2000. During recent years, Farrakhan has been moving closer to orthodox Sunni Islam. In 1997, international Muslim leaders bestowed on him the title "Imam," or leader of prayers, especially the Friday afternoon Jumu'ah prayer. In February 2000, Minister Louis Farrakhan and Imam Warith Deen Mohammed had a meeting of reconciliation, to declare peace and brotherhood between both movements; there is no attempt to unify the movements. In spite of these moves towards Sunni Islam, Farrakhan's Nation still remains entrenched in Black nationalism as evidenced in "The Muslim Program" page in every issue of *The Final Call*, the Nation's newspaper.²

The Demography and Growth of Islam in America and Reasons for Conversion (Reversion) to Islam by African Americans

In 1964 when Malcolm X converted to Sunni Islam, there were an estimated 1 to 2 thousand African-American Sunni Muslims in the United States. Today, that number has grown to between 1 to 2 million, out of an estimated 4

²*The Final Call*, 31 October 2000. The most heretical of the statements is: "We believe that Allah (God) came in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, July, 1930; the long-awaited 'Messiah' of the Christians and the 'Mahdi' of the Muslims."

to 6 million Muslims.³ African Americans constitute between one-fourth to one-third of the Muslim population. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in Black communities over the past three decades. In his unpublished survey, Ihsan Bagby of Shaw University gives the following ethnic breakdown of major Muslim ethnic groups: African Americans (29 percent), South Asians (29 percent), Arabs (20 percent). In a presentation to New England Religion Discussion Society at the Hartford Seminary Institute for Social and Religious Research, Bagby has estimated that Islam in America is growing by at least 100,000 Muslims per year, with 60,000 Muslim immigrants arriving in the country and about 40,000 African-American converts annually.⁴

In our study of predominantly African-American masjids, the Imams who were the key informants gave their reasons for converting or reverting to Islam (The term "reversion" is preferred because Muslims believe that everyone is born a Muslim, i.e., submitted to Allah, so turning to Islam later in life is a "return" to an original state). Table 1 shows the faith background from which the Imams reverted, and Table 2 indicates the reasons for their attraction to Sunni Islam.

³The exact number of Muslims in America is not known since no adequate survey has yet been undertaken. However, the best estimates range from a low of 1 million to a high of 10 million. Based on their telephone survey of religious groups, Barry Kosmin and Jeffrey Scheckner place the size of the American-Muslim population at no more than 1 million. See Barry A. Kosmin and Jeffrey Scheckner, *Estimating the Muslim Population of the United States in 1990* (New York: City University of New York, 1991). The high estimate of 8 to 10 million comes from Imam Warith Deen Mohammed's Muslim American Society. Fareed A. Numan of the American Muslim Council has given an estimate of 5 million. See Fareed Newman, *The Muslim Population of the United States: A Brief Statement* (Washington, DC: The American Muslim Council, 1992). Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith support an estimate of 3.7 to 4 million American Muslims, with which Ihsan Bagby of the Islamic Resource Center and this writer feel most comfortable. See Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, eds., *Muslim Communities in North America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

⁴Ihsan Bagby, "Masjid Survey Results," Islamic Resource Institute of Orange County, California, 1992. Unpublished survey by Ihsan Bagby, now of Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina.

In our survey, of the 117 African-American Imams who responded to the question of whether they were a member of any particular religious faith before converting to Islam, 89 percent said "yes," 2 percent said "no," and 9 percent were raised as Muslims. Of those who replied affirmatively, all were members of some type of Christian group. As Table 1 indicates, seventy-three (62 percent) were former Baptists; thirteen (11 percent), Roman Catholics; six (5 percent), United Methodists; six (5 percent), Christian no denomination; and 5 (4 percent), African Methodist Episcopal. Given the rigid nature of segregation in religion in American society, one can assume that the majority of Imams left predominantly Black churches.

Table 2 presents the reasons why the Imams reverted or converted to Islam. Since some of the interview responses to the question why they reverted to Islam contained more than one category, the total percentage of responses is 167 percent, but the total number of Imams interviewed remained at 130. As Table 2 shows, spiritual and theological reasons are the main motivation for reverting to Islam with a total of 42 percent. The subcategories include clear guidelines for spiritual growth (11 percent), Islam as a way of life (19 percent), and the strong emphasis upon the oneness of God or "tawheed" (12 percent). The stress upon Allah's oneness could also be understood as a critique or dissatisfaction with Christianity.

The next main category in Table 2 concerns the social recruitment and attraction by Muslim role models (31 percent). The leading subcategory involves Muslims as role models for others, admiration of those who were Muslim, including their dress code, discipline, self-help, sincerity, morals, and spirituality. The Imams were also attracted by

the unity of the Muslim community and the brotherhood/sisterhood of Muslims in whose company they felt accepted and comfortable (14 percent). It is interesting to note that exercises in direct "dawah," visiting people in the neighborhood and inviting them to the masjid were the least effective means of recruitment, at least in the experience of these Imams. Muslims as role models and the feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood among them appeared to be more effective in attracting new members.

Table 1
Data on the Religious Background of
African-American Sunni Muslim Imams

Q. Before reverting (converting) to Al-Islam, were you a member of any particular religious faith?

89%	Yes
2%	No
<u>9%</u>	Raised Muslim
100%	(n=130)

Q. If yes, please indicate the religious faith:

Non-Christian Faith	0%
Christian (no denom.)	5%
AME	4%
Holiness	2%
Pentecostal	1%
Baptist	62%
Roman Catholic	11%
Disciples	1%
Episcopalian	2%

Table 1 (cont'd)

Lutheran	3%
Methodist	5%
Presbyterian	3%
Reformed	1%
UCC	2%
	100% (n=117)

Table 2
Reasons for Reversion to Islam
by African-American Imams

	<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>Total</u>
SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL REASONS		42%
1. Clear guidelines for spiritual growth and understanding of Allah, theological and religious questions resolved.	11%	
2. Clear guidelines for healthy daily living, Islam lays out a way of life; strict discipline; moral and natural way.	9%	
3. Concept of One God is stronger, better in Islam than in Christianity; no trinity or God in human form; Qur'an fills spiritual void.	12%	
INTELLECTUAL, MENTAL ATTRACTION TO ISLAM (Islam as realistic knowledge and logical truth. Encompasses science, culture, and natural life. Islam agrees with common sense).		11%
SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE OF ISLAM (Attracted by the social activism and/or self-help programs, especially the unity of spiritual, economic, political, and social justice).		16%
RACIAL JUSTICE AND NONDISCRIMINATION OF ISLAM		29%
1. Better religion for African Americans in particular; message of hope for African Americans.	22%	

2. No discrimination in Islam; commitment to justice and equality; dignity to all regardless of race.	7%	
		<u>Subtotal</u> <u>Total</u>
DISSATISFACTION WITH CHRISTIANITY		27%
1. Dissatisfaction with Christian tenets; Christianity did not meet their needs.	13%	
2. Disliked Christianity because it was the religion of the oppressor and/or the hypocrisy of Christians.	9%	
3. Liked the message that the white man was/is the devil (for those who began their journey to Islam from the Nation of Islam).	5%	
SOCIAL RECRUITMENT AND ATTRACTED BY MUSLIM ROLE MODELS		31%
1. Attracted by the unity of the Muslim community and the brotherhood/sisterhood of Muslims; felt accepted and comfortable.	14%	
2. Result of direct evangelism ("dawah"): Muslims visited me and talked to me; a friend brought me to the masjid.	1%	
3. Admired others who are Muslims (dress code, discipline, self-help); their sincerity, morals, and spirituality.	16%	
ISLAM HELPS ME TO BE A BETTER PERSON		11%
1. Islam helps me to stay out of the streets, trouble, jail, drugs, drink.	1%	
2. Personal identity problems solved by Islam; the need to belong is fulfilled.	5%	
3. Desire to improve my life and get strength from Islam.	5%	

Total Percentage is 167% (more than one choice).

N=130

The emphasis of Islam upon racial justice and nondiscrimination was another leading reason for becoming a Muslim (29

percent). Twenty-two percent of the Imams felt that Islam was a better religion for African Americans in particular, especially with its message of hope. Seven percent cited the nondiscrimination in Islam and its commitment to justice and equality, providing dignity to all regardless of race.

Since all of the Imams surveyed were once members of Christian churches, one can expect a widespread dissatisfaction with Christianity, which was cited by 27 percent of the Imams. In the subcategories, 13 percent were dissatisfied with Christian tenets such as the trinity or Jesus as son of God or felt that Christianity did not meet their needs; and 9 percent disliked Christianity because it was the religion of the oppressor. In their interviews, a few of the Imams (5 percent) cited the Nation of Islam's belief that whites are devils as one of the reasons which attracted them to that movement and started them on their journey to the universalism of Sunni Islam, which rejects that view.

Since the main categories do not do full justice to the interview materials, several narrative examples of reasons for reversion to Islam are presented:

#0005 (former Methodist)—“As a youth, I tried to understand Christianity but was disappointed. I was interested in the reality of religion. Looking for something and looking for social answers also. I disagreed with the Civil Rights Movement (nonviolence and turning the other cheek).”

#0020 (former Baptist)—“Allah touched my heart. I had a problem with the Trinity. I was dissatisfied with life—a spiritual void. The main attraction of Islam was the relationship between the Creator and the created. All this attracted me.”

#0050 (former African Methodist Episcopal)—“I never accepted Christian teachings. Attraction to Islam was due to the utter simplicity and concept of Allah—more powerful. Struggle against oppression.”

#0081 (former Baptist)—“In 1977, I saw a need for change. Studied Christianity for a means of social change but rejected it. Became a communist and rejected that too because of a lack of answers to big questions. Turned to religion. Islam answered all the questions and concern for social change. I was twenty-one years old in the Air Force, stationed in Turkey.”

Among African Americans, the increased incarceration of Black people, particularly young African-American males, has had the unintended consequence of contributing to the rapid growth of Islam in prison populations. With close to one out of three young Black men in prison or in the criminal justice system in the 1990s, many of them have been attracted to Islam as a religion that resists oppression. For example, Imam Warith Deen Umar, the head Muslim chaplain of New York state prisons, has estimated that Islam is growing at the rate of 1 percent every two months or a 6 percent annual growth rate.⁵ There has also been a growth of Islam among Puerto Rican inmates with the establishment of the first Puerto Rican mosque in East Harlem.

According to Imam Abdur Shahid Luqman, the executive director of New York City prison chaplains, Islam has surpassed Catholicism in 1999 as the religion of choice

⁵Imam Warith Deen Umar, Director of Muslim Chaplaincy Services, New York State Department of Corrections, interview by Lawrence Mamiya, 12 November 1997, the annual Islamic Conference, Poughkeepsie, New York.

among the 17,000 inmates at Rikers Island, the largest prison complex in the United States. We estimate that the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area has the largest number of African-American Muslims in the nation, close to one-third of the total. For immigrant Muslims, the upper mid-western cities of Chicago and Detroit have the largest numbers. Other cities that have a substantial number of Muslims include Atlanta, which has the largest African-American congregation of 3,000 in Masjid Al-Islam, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay area.

**Data on African-American Muslim Masjids:
Participation in Community Programs and
Cooperation with Social Service Agencies**

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, our national field survey of 130 predominantly African-American masjids did not specifically ask about family support services sponsored by the place of worship. However, inferences can be drawn from the data on more general community programs, in which these masjids have participated and their cooperation with social service agencies. Data on youth programs and support for women's leadership roles in the masjid are presented since they have relevance to family support services.

It should be emphasized at the outset that Islam is a family-based religion. The central role model, the Prophet Muhammad Ibn Abdullah, was a family man. He was married to Khadijah, an independent woman who was fifteen years older, his employer, and the one who proposed marriage. They had several daughters. It was only after Khadijah's death that Muhammad took other wives since polygamy was a dominant custom in the Middle East. The Qur'an is full of vers-

es that support the institution of the family for Muslims. It places a limit on polygamy (four) and outlines its conditions, which ultimately support monogamy, i. e., the need to treat all wives equally: economically, emotionally, etc. If a husband cannot treat all equally, "then, only one." The Qur'an also strongly emphasizes support for widows and orphans, which reflected the Prophet's situation at the age of six when both of his parents had died.

In our ethnographic interviews with twenty-three African-American Muslim women in Philadelphia, we discovered that one of the major reasons for reverting to Islam was their search for "a stable family" and Islam's emphasis upon it.⁶ Given the social conditions of Black communities nationwide where the rate of single-parent families has reached 60 percent, accompanied by a growing reluctance of young Black men to get married, it is not unusual to find Black women looking for more stable family relationships and husbands. African-American Muslim masjids also have a predominance of male membership. Since Islam requires males to attend the Friday afternoon Jumu'ah prayer service, the percentage of male participation is between 70 to 80 percent, which is the exact opposite in Black Christian churches where women predominate in the same percentages. There is also a very strong social pressure in masjid communities to get married. The Imam and older members often play the role of match makers and chaperones in developing marital relationships.

Tables 3 and 4 present data on the types of community programs sponsored by masjids and their cooperation with social agencies.

⁶Twenty-three African-American Muslim women, interview by Michelle Byng, 1997, Department of Sociology, Temple University, Philadelphia, for the research project, "Islam in the African-American Experience."

Table 3
Survey of African-American Sunni Muslims

- Q. Does this place of worship sponsor any programs to deal with community problems? 67% Yes 34% No

TYPES OF PROGRAMS SPONSORED
BY MUSLIM CONGREGATIONS

Charity to the poor or those in need	
Zakat (Alms required of a Muslim, 2.5% of savings)	74%
Sadaqah (alms up to the individual, to give as one chooses)	2%
Both Zakat and Sadaqah	8%
Food bank or clothing bank	39%
Masjid used as temporary housing for homeless, especially	
Ex-offenders	31%
Half-way House for ex-offenders	2%
Counseling	
Marital family counseling	52%
General counseling	25%
Other counseling (legal, business, etc.)	5%
Programs against substance abuse	
Drugs and alcohol	38%
(Muslims Anonymous, African-Americans Against Narcotics, war on drugs, etc.)	
Youth Programs	
Big Brothers for Youth, mentoring, tutoring, etc.	14%
Save the Children	3%
Work with street gangs	16%
Health programs and health education	7%

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Building/Rehabilitation of housing	7%
Visitation to sick and shut-ins	4%
Aid to the elderly	4%
Neighborhood watch and security patrols of area around the masjid	16%

N=130 (Since more than one program can be cited, percentage totals more than 100%.)

Table 4
Survey of African-American Sunni Muslims

Q. Has this place of worship cooperated with social agencies or other non-masjid organizations in dealing with community problems? Yes 75% No 25%

MASJID COOPERATION WITH SOCIAL AGENCIES
AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN DEALING WITH
COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Police/Law enforcement programs

Work with police in Partners against Crime, assisted in purchasing bullet proof vests, etc.	10%
Protest police brutality	4%
Neighborhood watch, community action	18%
Work with gangs, Gang Peace	3%
Education/mentoring programs for children and teens . . .	13%

Community programs against drugs and substance abuse

War on drugs, walks, rallies against drugs	24%
Substance abuse programs, Narcotics Anonymous . . .	15%
Speeches, educational services against drugs and crime . .	20%

General liaison activities with city/state agencies

Work with mayor and civic groups for betterment of

area and people; work with school councils, city human rights commission, voter registration22%
Health programs	
AIDS awareness; immunization programs; Healthy Moms/Healthy Kids, blood drive, work with psychiatric clinics7%
Direct aid to the needy: food, shelter, clothing, job referral14%
Interfaith coalitions to address community problems, human relations projects to overcome prejudice, etc.18%
Housing rehab/repair houses8%
Homeless shelter or counsel homeless4%
City-wide clean up programs3%
Black History month and M.L. King Day programs2%

Almost all of the community outreach programs in Tables 3 and 4, which are directly sponsored by masjids themselves or in which they cooperate with other social agencies or organizations, have a direct or indirect impact on families in poor neighborhoods. Sixty-seven percent of the masjids sponsor programs directly to deal with community problems, while 75 percent of them work with other social agencies on issues affecting their communities. The largest direct program (74 percent) is the requirement of "Zakat," charity to the poor or those in need and one of the five pillars of Islam. Zakat is two and a half percent of one's annual savings, i.e., after all expenses have been paid. Zakat is

given to the masjid and the Imam distributes the charity. "Sadaqah" concerns monetary aid given voluntarily by individuals. Thirty-nine percent of the masjids sponsor their own food or clothing banks for the poor; 82 percent of the Imams provide counseling aid to their members and the community with marital counseling (52 percent) leading the way. One of the unusual programs that Muslim masjids offer concerns temporary housing for the homeless, especially ex-offenders (31 percent). Almost all masjids will provide temporary shelter for travelers and visitors; the physical space of a masjid includes a room or place for overnight guests.

Since alcohol and drugs are strongly forbidden by Islamic law, Muslims are generally inclined to participate actively in programs against substance abuse. Thirty-eight percent of the masjids sponsor their own programs such as Muslims Anonymous or A.A. groups, and 59 percent of them cooperate with other community agencies and organizations in programs of this nature. In a similar manner, the Islamic ethic of self-defense enables African-American Muslim congregations to become more actively involved than Black churches in programs of Neighborhood Watch and security patrols against criminal activity (16 percent), and in working with street gangs and troubled youth (33 percent). It is not unusual to hear an African-American Imam talk about "cleaning up" the neighborhood around the masjid of drug dealers, prostitutes, and petty criminals. Part of the task of "cleaning up" may involve bearing arms or using strong-arm tactics, which most Christian clergy are not prepared to do. These strong programs of anti-drug and anti-crime activities have a direct impact on the quality of life in poor neighborhoods.

Perhaps the strongest connection that African-American Muslims have with poor families is that many of them are

poor themselves or at least one step away from poverty. In our survey, we asked the Imams to give estimates of the economic background of their congregations. They estimated that 36 percent of their most active members came from income levels below \$20,000 while the majority of their members (53 percent) were in the working class or lower middle income bracket between \$20,000 to \$34,000. Only 11 percent of their members had incomes higher than \$35,000. In contrast, the mainline Black Church denominations have members largely in the middle class and working class income categories with only a scattering of the poor among them.⁷

A problem area that has affected many poor Black families concerns the extremely high rates of incarceration of African-American men (49 percent nationwide) and women (52 percent). Table 5 presents data on ministry of Muslims to prisoners.

Table 5
Survey of African-American
Sunni Muslims Ministry to Prisoners
and Ex-Offenders by Masjids

Q. Does your place of worship or organization have a ministry to prisoners in the jails and prisons and to ex-offenders?

Yes	90%
No	10%

⁷C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990): 267-271, 384.

TYPES OF MINISTRY PROGRAMS

Leader works as a Muslim chaplain or religious counselor in prison or jail	38%
Visitation program by leader and members on a sustained basis	88%
Special programs held at prisons or jails on Muslim holidays	79%
Meetings held for ex-offenders at the masjid	21%
Counseling (moral, employment, housing, etc.)	41%
Participation in a half-way house for recently released prisoners	13%
Other, e.g., "correspondence" with inmates; send out Islamic materials and Qur'ans	3%

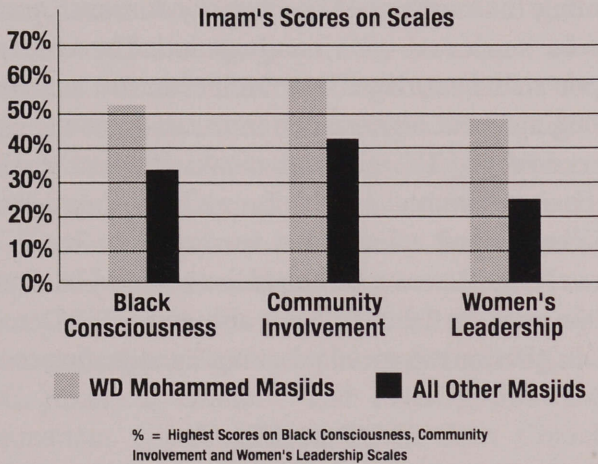
N= 13

With America's inmate population at more than 2 million and the number of African Americans at more than 1 million, Muslim groups have responded strongly in their ministry to prisoners and ex-offenders. Table 5 indicates that 90 percent of the masjids have prison ministries in place with 88 percent of them visiting prisons on a sustained basis and 79 percent holding special programs at prisons during Muslim holidays. Thirty-eight percent of the Imams also work as prison chaplains. Counseling (41 percent), meetings for ex-offenders (21 percent), and participation in a half-way house (13 percent) constitute the other activities.

In our field visits to predominantly African-American masjids, however, we found only one masjid in Atlanta that sponsored a half-way house for recently released prisoners. More is said about the need for a half-way house in the section on public policy reflections.

There is also some indication that gender sensitivity on the part of an African-American Imam is highly correlated with the willingness to sponsor programs of community involvement, particularly those that affect families. In Table 6, scales were constructed from questions that focused on "Black Consciousness," i. e., factors of valuing racial pride and African-American history, community involvement, and women's leadership. Since women in the orthodox Sunni Islamic tradition cannot become an Imam (or leader of the Friday prayer), we asked several questions regarding women's leadership in the masjid and at the national level. One of the key questions was whether the Imam approved or disapproved of women serving on the Board of Directors of the masjid. Table 6 shows that those Imams who expressed a high level of Black consciousness and support for women's leadership also had the highest rates of community involvement. Among the various African-American Muslim movements, the followers of Imam Warith Deen Mohammed's Muslim American Society had the highest scores in all three categories of Black consciousness, community involvement, and women's leadership. Perhaps the prior background of W. D. Mohammed's followers in the Nation of Islam has affected their views in all three areas. (Although his movement is not included in our survey, Minister Louis Farrakhan has appointed five women as Ministers in the Nation of Islam and one of them, Minister Ava Muhammad, serves as the Minister of the Atlanta Mosque and head of the Southern Regional district.)

Table 6



Summary

As mentioned in the introduction, before one can do adequate public policy reflection about faith-based institutions serving poor families, there is a need to find out what is actually happening "on the ground," i.e., what kinds of community programs that relate to the needs of the poor are being accomplished by religious congregations. Our survey of 130 predominantly African-American masjids nationwide in face-to-face interviews with Imams indicate that they have many programs supporting poor families either directly with monetary and food, shelter, or clothing programs; or indirectly by creating safer neighborhoods and drug-free zones in poor communities. Since many African-American Muslims are poor themselves, they implicitly understand what is needed by poor people in their neighborhood. However, as indicated in the survey results of *Project 2000*, a national survey of Black churches, both the

wealth and size of a religious organization are important in determining the number of community outreach programs that can be supported by a congregation. The emphasis of Islam upon stable marriages and families is also a critical factor in bringing about organization in the midst of the chaos of poverty conditions. The political stance of most Muslims in America is an ambivalent one. On the one hand, they will support the anti-abortion and conservative family values stance of the Republican Party. However, the emphasis on social justice and concern for the poor, on the other hand, also makes the Democratic position on government social programs an appealing one.

Part II
Black Churches and Community Programs:
Project 2000 at ITC

From January to June 2000 the Gallup Organization conducted a telephone survey of Black churches nationwide as part of *Project 2000*, funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. and based at Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. Gallup was chosen among the polling organizations because the staff of its Call Center in Atlanta is 98 percent African American and most are members of Black churches or have a sensitivity towards them. A national sample of 1,863 Black churches was created from a list of more than 27,000 churches that had purchased Sunday School materials.⁸ The Tri-Media list was also supplemented by lists of clergy and churches supplied by the deans of the constituent seminaries of ITC. Telephone interviews with key informants, par-

⁸The list was purchased from the Tri-Media Corporation and modified by the Gallup Organization.

ticularly the pastor or someone knowledgeable about the congregation, were conducted. ITC faculty and students also conducted a smaller study of fifty storefront churches in Atlanta and several hundred Black rural churches in the Southeast during the same time period. *Project 2000* is part of a larger study, *Faith Communities Today*, which covers survey data from forty-five religious denominations and is based at the Hartford Seminary Institute for Social and Religious Research. The Black Church denominations covered by *Project 2000* include the Church of God in Christ (Pentecostal); three Baptist denominations (NBC, USA, Inc. / NBC America, Uninc. / and PNBC); three Methodist denominations (AME Church, AME Zion Church, CME Church); and Blacks in white denominations (Presbyterian Church, USA and the United Methodist Church). The Baptist denominations are grouped together as "Baptists" since most of them have multiple affiliations with each other.

Table 7 presents a summary of the participation in Social Services/Community Programs by Black churches in the past twelve months. (See Table 7 on page 61.) According to the data in Table 7, Black churches are involved in a broad range of sixteen community outreach programs, many of which are applicable to poor families.⁹ A three-fifths majority of the 1,863 pastors responding to this survey are currently involved in eight of the sixteen programs. Nearly all of the congregations (over 85 percent responding) have youth programs and give cash assistance to needy families. At least three-fourths of these congregations also have food

⁹An adequate comparison between African-American Muslim masjids and Black churches cannot be made since the pastors of churches were given a list of community programs to check off and Imams were just asked to cite the kinds of programs in which they were involved. However, the data are comparable in terms of the same items in both lists.

pantries/soup kitchens and voter registration/education. Also included in the programs sponsored by three-fifths of these congregations are counseling services, tutoring programs for children or youth, health education or clinics, and prison or jail ministry. Fewer but still over half of these congregations sponsor senior citizen programs, thrift stores or donations to these, and substance abuse programs, employment counseling, or training. A substantial minority of these congregations, two-fifths or more, has organized efforts in social issue advocacy, employment counseling, and computer training. A smaller minority, but still over a third of these congregations, offer elderly emergency assistance/affordable housing. Few, no more than 6 percent of the total and no more than 10 percent of any denomination represented, have credit unions. As it was with the Muslim masjids, most of these programs have relevance to poor families. However, we have no data on how many of the poor actually participate.

Characteristics of Black Clergy and Churches in Relationship to Outreach Programs

In examining correlations between whether a congregation sponsored a particular kind of outreach program and other characteristics of the congregation or their pastor, the analysis shows less of a relationship with individual outreach ministries and more with whether the characteristic is related to the whole set of outreach programs. Larger churches and wealthier churches are likely to be doing more in all program areas. The more abled-bodied (younger) members available for volunteer work, the greater the range of outreach activity possible. Involvement in these endeavors is often expedited with partnership with other congregations ecu-

menically—indicated with white congregations in this survey. The higher the education of the pastor, the more likely that person is interested in associations with community agencies, social and political issues, and churches of other denominations, all of which expedite outreach. The more favorably the pastor is inclined toward the church as a body expressing its views on day-to-day social and political issues, the more willing that pastor is to lead a church involved in a variety of outreach activities, but especially those in the area of social advocacy.

A summary of the findings about Black Church congregations more likely to offer each kind of outreach ministry is as follows:

Wealthier churches

(All outreach programs, but particularly more likely to offer health clinics, soup kitchens, social issue advocacy, senior citizen programs, computer training, counseling services, youth programs, and tutoring).

Larger churches in terms of membership

(All programs and particularly those mentioned under wealthier churches, but not as strongly. Church wealth and size are significantly correlated at .23, sig. .0001; but the association is not that strong, indicating that size and annual income of a congregation are far from identical.)

Higher percentage of young adults in the congregation

(All programs, but not as strongly as in wealthier and larger churches. Poorer congregations are somewhat less likely to have a substantial proportion of young adults among their members than are large congregations, but the correlations are modest: wealth .25 and size .14, both are significant at the .0001 level).

Whether the church has ecumenical or interfaith

activities with white churches

(All programs, but more likely to sponsor outreach in social advocacy and tutoring programs.)

The higher level of formal education for ministry the pastor has received

(All programs, but more likely to sponsor health programs, social advocacy, tutoring programs, youth programs and programs for the elderly.)

The degree to which the pastor approves the church's expressing views on social issues

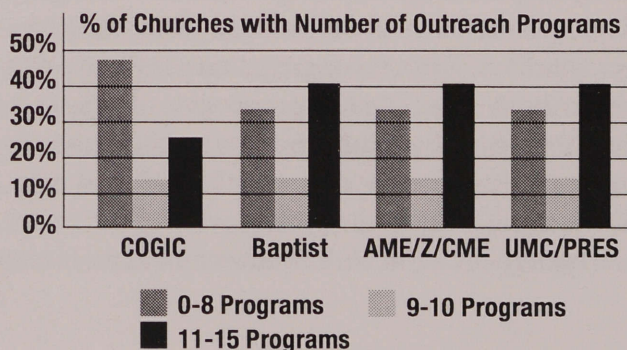
(All programs, but particularly if the pastor approves, the church is more likely to sponsor social advocacy activities.)

Denominational Affiliation and Size of Church as Variables: Charts I, II, III, and IV

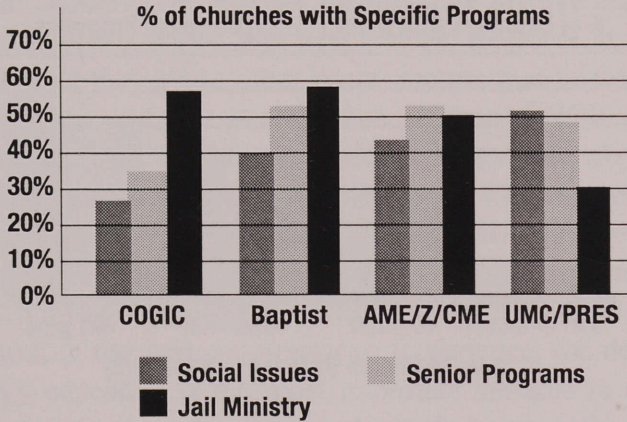
Charts I to IV illustrate graphically the effect of variables such as denominational affiliation and size of church upon the number and types of outreach programs sponsored by Black churches.

I. TOTAL NUMBER OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES BY DENOMINATIONAL CLUSTER

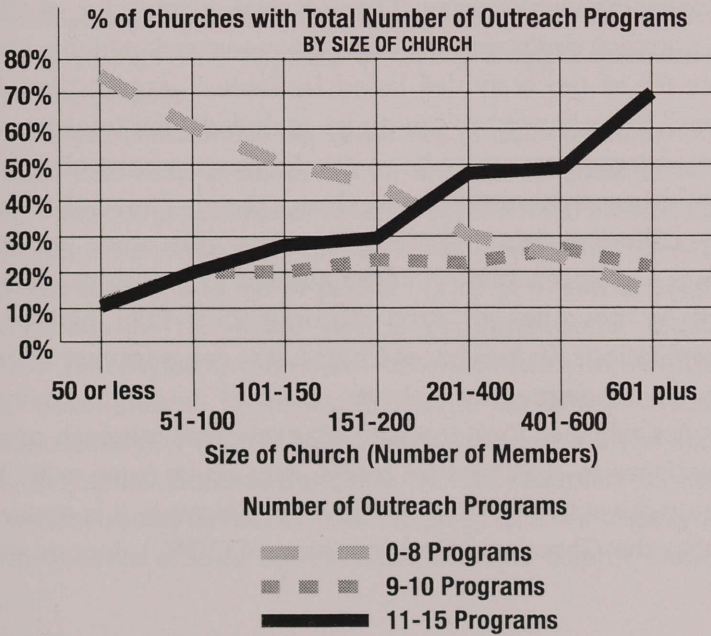
II. SPECIFIC PROGRAMS BY DENOMINATIONAL CLUSTER



III. TOTAL NUMBER OF OUTREACH

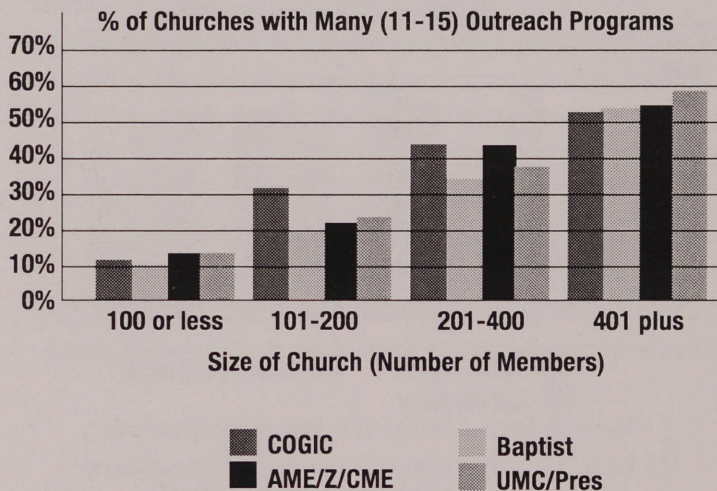


PROGRAMS BY SIZE OF CHURCH
IV. TOTAL OUTREACH BY CHURCH



SIZE AND DENOMINATION

Chart I illustrates the total number of outreach activities



by denominational cluster. Using a total score index of fifteen outreach programs each church sponsored, which comprises all of the activities listed in Table 7 except "credit unions" (a response too low to be included), the total number of outreach programs has a greater range among churches within each denominational cluster than between churches in different denominational clusters. In other words, there is a greater variation of the number of programs sponsored by churches in each denomination than between denominations. In looking at Chart I, it is apparent that within each denominational cluster there is a range among churches whether they sponsor relatively few outreach programs (zero to eight), or are moderately active (nine to ten), or are quite active (eleven to fifteen.) However, it is apparent that the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomina-

tion has more congregations with limited involvement in social outreach programs than the other three denominational clusters. The reasons for this may involve aspects of their theology, polity, and past history. However, it is more likely that they share other social factors that lead to limited involvement. For example, as a group, COGIC pastors probably have less formal education (M.Div. degree or higher) than the other denominations. The denomination has supported only one seminary, C. H. Mason at ITC, which is unusual for the second largest (5 million members) denominational grouping after the Baptists. In the Black Church in the African-American Experience, the degree of clergy education is the most important variable in creating outreach programs. Formally educated clergy can be creative in devising programs even in small or medium-sized congregations. Other factors could also lead to more limited involvement in outreach programs, including fewer programs with white churches, fewer churches with a high annual income, or fewer pastors who approve of taking a stand on social and political issues.

Chart II examines the variations in denominational affiliation with three areas in which there is the most difference between congregations of each denominational cluster; namely, the areas of social issue advocacy, programs for seniors or the elderly, and jail or prison ministry. It can be seen that churches in the more liberal denominational cluster—UMC/Presbyterian churches—are more likely to be involved in social issues advocacy, although the Black Methodist denominations (AME/AMEZion/CME) are a close second, with Baptist churches third, and COGIC churches least apt to sponsor social advocacy. Senior programs are slightly more likely to be offered by AME/Z/CME and Baptist churches,

than UMC/Presbyterian churches, and again least likely to be offered by COGIC churches. However, COGIC churches lead in their involvement in prison ministry programs, followed closely by the Baptists and AME/Z/CME churches, with UMC/Presbyterian churches clearly trailing in involvement of this kind. The predominantly Black denominations are more likely to be involved in prison ministries because this issue may affect family members.

A major predictor in most studies of social outreach activity by congregations is the total size of the church membership and Black churches are no exception. Small churches sponsor significantly fewer different social outreach programs than larger churches. The linear relationship between this total number and the size of the church is depicted in Chart III. Although there are certainly small churches engaged in a wide variety of social outreach programs and some megachurches involved in a limited number of such programs, generally the larger the church in membership size, the greater the number of outreach programs it sponsors.

Furthermore, as seen in Chart IV, churches of 100 members or fewer are substantially less apt to sponsor many different outreach programs than are churches twice as large, which are, in turn, less likely to be as active as churches with even more members. This fact holds true in each denominational cluster.

Gender Sensitivity Among Black Clergy and Sponsorship of Programs That Relate to Family Issues

Finally, it is important to raise the problem of gender sensitivity among Black clergy in relationship to programs

relating to family issues. As indicated in our survey of African-American Muslim masjids, there is a high correlation between support for women's leadership in masjids and sponsorship of community involvement programs, most of which directly affect families. Due to the predominance of women in Black churches (70 to 80 percent in most congregations), it is assumed that they also provide most of the leadership throughout Black church organizations. For Black churches, the critical gender issue concerns the degree of support for Black women as pastors. In the *Project 2000* survey, we repeated the question asked in 1990 concerning approval or disapproval of women as pastors.¹⁰ Using a Likert Scale which differentiates the strength of the response (strongly approve, approve, strongly disapprove, and disapprove), the preliminary correlation and regression analyses indicate that Black clergy who strongly approve of women as pastors are also more likely to sponsor community outreach programs that affect families. Thus, there is growing evidence that for Black religious leaders, Muslim and Christian, the issue of gender sensitivity is a good indicator as to whether they will provide support for these kinds of programs.

Part III

Concluding Statement: Public Policy Reflections

The sociological surveys of African-American Muslim masjids and Black churches provide data about what they are doing "on the ground" in their communities. They also give indication about the types of community outreach programs sponsored, many of which affect poor families

¹⁰Lincoln, *Black Church in the African American Experience*, 289-294.

directly, e.g., monetary assistance or food bank; or indirectly, a safe neighborhood or tutoring and youth programs. A more refined analysis of the data gives indicators about which characteristics of religious organizations and their leadership are most likely to result in the sponsorship of relevant community outreach programs. The following public policy reflections are raised by the studies and interviews with key informants among African-American Muslims and Christians:

1. A key stumbling block for more active participation by African-American Muslim masjids in government or foundation programs for poor families concerns the highly negative media preconceptions of Muslims as "terrorists." Too many negative media stereotypes of Muslims abound in newspapers, magazines, television, films, and novels. Hillary Rodham Clinton's request for a withdrawal of a \$50,000 campaign donation by a reputable American-Muslim group is one of the latest examples. Unfortunately, Islam is beginning to replace Communism as the evil empire in the American mindset. Much work has to be done to overcome this negative image. The positive side is that many African-American Muslim groups are continuing to do fine work in their community outreach programs, especially for the poor. These efforts could become more effective with government or foundation grants.
2. One result of this negative atmosphere and the pressure of constant FBI investigations is a wariness among Muslims themselves about government inter-

vention. As a consequence, few African-American masjids have applied for or received government or foundation grants to develop their outreach programs. One exception is the Malcolm Shabazz Masjid in Harlem where Imam Izek Pasha has been able to parlay federal and city government grants to build a structure with 246 apartments and about twenty townhouses at 117th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard (Lenox Avenue). The housing will be mixed income for the middle class, working class, and poor. Intensive training efforts are required for African-American Muslim leaders and their masjids in financial and accounting procedures to receive grants.

3. The area of housing has been the most successful example of the cooperation between religious organizations and government agencies (city, state, and federal). Black churches have been among the leaders in building new housing in the United States. In Central Harlem, the Abyssinian Baptist Church and the Canaan Baptist Church have erected new apartment buildings. The Nehemiah Houses in Brooklyn constitute the largest effort of its kind where fifty-five churches in a community organization are building 5,000 townhouse units. Forty percent of the occupants will come from public housing projects. The emphasis on mixed income housing is a way to undercut the "social isolation of the poor" about which William Wilson has written.¹¹ It is a movement away from the housing efforts of the 1940s to 1960s to build large housing projects that warehouse the poor.

¹¹See William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

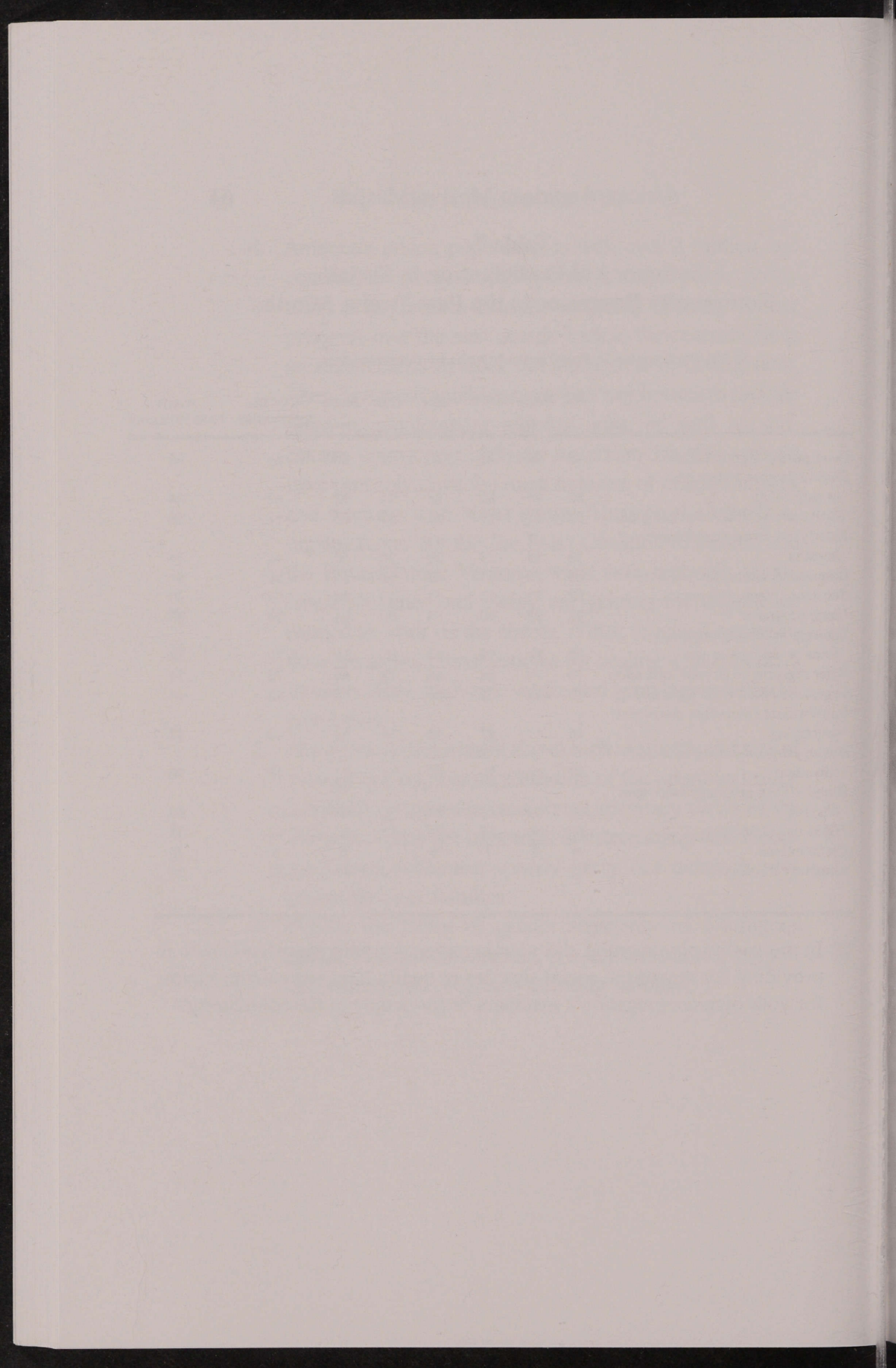
4. America's prison population is well over 2 million and contains the poorest of the poor. A major public policy effort is required to ease the transition of many former prisoners over the next decade back to their communities so that recidivism does not become a revolving door. There is a great need for more halfway houses to provide housing, employment training, jobs, as well as self-esteem counseling. African-American Muslim groups have probably done the most in terms of prison ministry and working with street gangs. Through the efforts of organizations like the Ten Point Coalition in Boston and the Private/Public Ventures work with high-risk youth, Black churches and clergy are gaining the experience needed to work on the streets. Thus, religious organizations are an important resource for dealing with America's inmate nation, high-risk youth, and growing ex-offender population.
5. The characteristics listed above such as wealth and size of a congregation, formal education of the religious leader, interfaith cooperation, and social advocacy views of the religious leader are important in determining which congregations will most readily carry out outreach programs for poor families.
6. Finally, the factor of gender sensitivity of a religious leader, Muslim or Christian, is a key indicator of support for policies and programs affecting families.

Table 7
**Summary of Participation in Social/
 Community Programs in the Past Twelve Months**

% Yes Participated in Past Twelve Months by Denomination

	Total	Baptist	COGIC	AME	CME	AMEZ	UNITED METHODIST	BLACK PRESBYTERIAN
Food pantry or soup kitchen	75	76	71	80	68	84	84	78
Cash assistance to families or individuals	86	89	82	84	84	92	87	84
Thrift store or thrift store donations	52	51	51	53	45	66	57	50
Elderly emergency or affordable housing	36	38	29	39	36	50	41	34
Counseling service or "hot lines"	66	70	64	63	50	66	59	56
Substance abuse programs	52	52	52	51	43	66	52	39
Youth programs	92	93	90	94	89	94	90	89
Tutoring or literary programs teens or children	65	68	59	67	60	66	70	78
Voter registration or voter education	76	79	64	86	78	86	73	74
Organized social issue advocacy	45	47	32	56	78	86	73	74
Employment counselors placement or training	46	47	47	46	34	54	40	37
Health program clinics or health education	62	66	51	69	56	74	76	70
Senior citizen programs other than housing	57	62	42	63	58	68	67	60
Prison or jail ministry	62	66	65	56	55	66	42	35
Credit unions	6	5	7	9	7	6	6	6
Computer training	42	47	33	46	38	41	52	50

Q: In the past twelve months, did your congregation provide or cooperate in providing for any of the social services or community outreach programs for your own congregation's members or for people in the community?



**(Jesus) answered, "Let us go
out to the neighboring towns,
so that I may proclaim the
message there also; for that is
what I came to do."**

Mark 1:38

