The Center for Racial Equity and Justice
Repent – Reform – Refocus

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"No African Americans take to the streets in protest to demand Whites to love us more. We demand a behavior change!" Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.

February 2025 Newsletter

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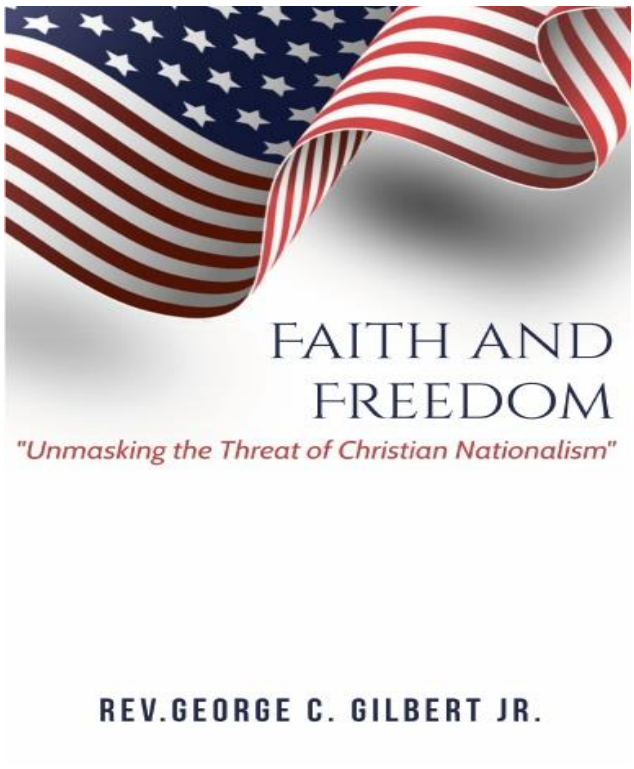

Christian nationalism, often masked by appeals to tradition and patriotism, has long carried a history of contradictions, injustice, and systemic racism. In Faith and Freedom, we unravel the historical roots and core traits of this dangerous ideology, exposing its impact on modern society and its role in perpetuating inequality and oppression.

Through a lens of faith, this book examines the urgent need to separate Christianity from the distortion of political agendas, with particular focus on the events of January 6th and the unsettling implications of Project 2025. It calls believers to return to the true foundations of Christianity—centered on love, justice, and humility—and to reject the pursuit of power and domination that has hijacked the gospel.

This is a rallying cry for those who seek to reclaim their faith and redefine its role in building a more equitable and compassionate society. Faith and Freedom is both a sobering critique and an inspiring vision of what it means to truly walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

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NOTHING IS TOO SMALL!!!

Running in Circles on Racial Justice

Hard-fought victories in terms of racial justice in the U.S. are always met with a vicious backlash that makes progress a circular motion where we end up, it seems, where we began.

REV. GRAYLAN SCOTT HAGLER

We keep running in circles when it comes to addressing racial justice in the U.S. This means that with every advance we almost come back to the same place and must fight the

battles all over again. It doesn't mean that progress has not been made, but the progress retrogresses due to the immediate backlash that charges any advance to rectify past racial injustices as an affront to white people. At best there is an ebb and flow when it comes to rectifying the racial harms and damages of the past.

Race history and the many initiatives to rectify past wrongs is more of a circle than a linear line. It may be an expanding circle considering advances, but for every victory won there is a vicious throw back. It is almost like the 1993 movie *Groundhog Day* where morning after morning we awaken to history repeating itself, and where victories of racial justice are swept away by the courts or a change in the body politic. The struggle continues, and in many cases, we must begin again.

Every racial justice victory in the United States came about because of the Civil War and the various modes of resistance employed by victims of racial injustices. Mass protests and resistance has generally forced those in power to seek easy answers to placate the anger of the victims of racial injustice. But every attempt to satisfy and pacify the various protests is met with vociferous protests that erase hard fought victories. Just a few examples over four centuries in U.S. history serve as evidence. At each juncture of political protest those in power have historically responded with various initiatives designed to calm the uprisings and unrest. However, any advance is quickly eradicated under the guise of reverse discrimination.

> ***If the United States is ever going to create a society of real growth and opportunity, it needs to stop chasing its tail.***

After the Civil War, one man, one vote was militarily imposed resulting in the elections of Black men to numerous political offices in the South. With those advances came the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865 abolishing slavery. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 granted citizenship to people born in the U.S. This served as a response

to the 1857 Supreme Court *Dred Scott* decision that ruled Blacks were not citizens. The 14th Amendment passed in 1868 addressed and attempted to rectify state laws that abridged the rights of Black people. In 1870 the 15th Amendment was adopted that attempted to grant the right to vote to Black men (It should be noted that it wasn't until 1920 that women had the right to vote). In 1871 another Civil Rights Act was passed, also known as the Klu Klux Klan Act, which was a response to the growing terrorism used by whites against Blacks and advances in civil rights. These acts of terror were designed to take away the vote, enforce racial codes, and re-impose restrictions on Black people that had been granted post-Civil War. The backlash turned back the clock on the numerous advances that sought to correct the racial injustices of the past.

In 1865 Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, and Andrew Johnson became President. Andrew Johnson was a Southerner who worked to turn back the numerous advances made in racial justice. Under his administration amnesty was granted to Confederates. Confiscated lands (plantations) were returned to those who rebelled against the Union. The last remaining Union troops were withdrawn from the South in the Compromise of 1877 resulting in the reestablishment of pre-Civil War policies that completed the circle of restoring white Southern rule, reinstating the Black Codes, and allowing states to make policies that re-created de facto enslavement. The circle turned 360 degrees from voting rights, citizenship, anti-terrorism, social rectification, and attempts at inclusion to making it virtually impossible for Blacks to vote, live and work, or engage in the routines of life without fear and intimidation. Reconstruction, a response to racial injustices and calls to the nation to be inclusive and equitable, was short lived—from 1865-1877—and in that short time it ushered in amendments and civil rights acts. However, it was attacked from the beginning, sabotaged, and died because of white backlash. Most of the steps forward were spurned within 12 short years, and all the advances

undone. The circle of racial justice took Blacks from winning to having to fight all over again.

In response to the racial justice organizing in the 20th century and the social unrest through demonstrations, sit-ins, and mass marches, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed. This act prohibited discrimination in labor and attempted to end segregation in public facilities, public schools, and federally funded programs (keep in mind that 10 years prior, in 1954, the Supreme Court had already ruled segregation in public schools unconstitutional and ordered schools to desegregate). In 1965 the Voting Rights Act was passed to challenge the many schemes employed by states to abridge the ability of Blacks to vote. It also required Southern states to seek permission to substantively change voting practices. However in 2013, the Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder*gutted these protections arguing that they were "based on 40-year-old facts having no logical relationship to the present day." Hence voting protections enacted in 1965 were gutted effectively rendering the act a relic of the past. This is an example of the ebb, or the circular motion, of the nature of racial rectification in the U.S.

In the 21st century white resistance to the freedoms of Blacks to move and live within the society coupled with continued fears of whites towards Black people resulted in "Stand Your Ground" laws. These were boilerplate legislation written by the American Legislative Exchange Council and offered to state legislators which produced glaring and frightening consequences for Black people. Black people were shot for ringing the wrong door bell, or for being in the wrong neighborhood. But all of this played into a larger scheme to

erode equal rights and turn back the clock on racial rectification.

The reaction to racial justice is relentless and comes whenever strides are made to make the nation more inclusive. The Black Lives Matter movement emerged, trying to hold people and society accountable. The movement was spurred on by the killings of Trayvon Martin and Ahmaud Arbery by vigilantes. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, and Philando Castile were examples of police killings. In the streets voices chanted, "Defund the police," and bodies blocked expressways and intersections. Political leaders and bodies across the country entertained discussions on the matter. Corporate America responded along with other entities employing "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" (DEI) measures. DEI became part of the discussion in the economic, political, and educational arena. The corporate world responded to the various outcries of disadvantaged groups that included racial and the LGBTQIA community and sought ways to demonstrate their desire to include and sell to these groups. Among those employing DEI initiatives were Amazon, Meta (FaceBook), McDonald's, Walmart, Ford, Lowe's, John Deere, American Airlines, Boeing, Jack Daniel's (Brown-Forman), Caterpillar, Harley-Davidson, Molson Coors, Nissan, Polaris, Toyota, and Anheuser-Busch.

The criticisms however grew louder as the "Turn Back the Clock" and Make America Great Again activists homed in on "wokeness" and began to attack those corporations for their support of racial justice and gay rights. The 2023 Supreme Court decision on college admissions, which struck down affirmative action programs declaring that race cannot be a factor in college admissions, was used to advance charges of reverse discrimination and of lowering standards. Then with the election of President Donald Trump the attacks on DEI found greater energy and corporations demonstrated lesser courage. Each of the corporations mentioned have since rolled back or eliminated their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs. This is another example of a 360-degree turn in the struggle for racial justice

and inclusion within the society, culture, and workplace.

Blacks have been historically wronged and remain disadvantaged. We continue to lag behind our white counterparts in terms of education, economics, and wealth. If progress is linear then we could surmise that at some point Blacks would catch up to whites. Instead, in most categories, the gaps and disparities have grown wider. The only way to explain this phenomenon is that we are engaged in a circle of gaining and then losing. The circle may grow larger signifying the progress being made, but the hard-fought victories in terms of racial justice are always met with a vicious backlash that makes progress a circular motion where we end up, it seems, where we began.

If the United States is ever going to create a society of real growth and opportunity, it needs to stop chasing its tail. It needs to change its belief that correcting past wrongs is somehow to penalize someone else. The irony is that those who complain about reverse discrimination are the ones who have been the beneficiaries of a system of discrimination. A strong society must come to terms with its history; tell the stories of the good, the bad, and the ugly; and muster the courage to create and maintain policies, programs, and systems that correct the sins of the past.

Defense Department Declares 'Identity Months Dead,' Barring Black History Month and Others

WASHINGTON — The Trump White House issued a proclamation Friday recognizing February as Black History Month around the same time the Defense Department issued guidance declaring "identity months dead." The conflicting messages came as President Donald Trump has been targeting diversity, equity and inclusion programs for removal in the first weeks of his administration. He has referred to DEI initiatives as "discrimination" and insisted that the country must instead move toward a merit-based society.

The White House proclamation calls for "public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with

appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities," though there is no elaboration on what constitutes "appropriate." A news release from the Defense Department titled "Identity Months Dead at DOD" says official resources, including working hours, will no longer be used to mark cultural awareness months. Black History Month, Women's History Month and National Disability Employment Awareness Month were among the events listed as now barred. "We are proud of our warriors and their history, but we will focus on the character of their service instead of their immutable characteristics," the Defense Department release read.

In his first two weeks in office, Trump has moved to end affirmative action in federal contracting and directed that all federal DEI workers be put on paid leave before eventually being laid off. On Thursday, hours after a midair collision between a military helicopter and an American Airlines plane killed 67 people just miles from the White House, Trump baselessly blamed diversity initiatives for undermining air safety, despite no evidence of that. Gerald Ford in 1976 became the first president to issue a message recognizing February as Black History Month. Since then, presidents have made annual proclamations marking the month as a celebration of Black history, culture and education.

Trump's proclamation Friday specifically noted the contributions of abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, conservative economist Thomas Sowell and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. It said their achievements "have monumentally advanced the tradition of equality under the law in our great country" and are a continued inspiration. The declaration also listed golfer Tiger Woods as an American great, saying he was among those who have "pushed the boundaries of excellence in their respective fields, paving the way for others to follow." "This National Black History Month, as America prepares to enter a historic Golden Age," the proclamation said, "I want to extend my tremendous gratitude to black Americans for all they have done to bring us to this moment, and for the many future contributions they will make as we advance into a future of limitless possibility under my Administration."

TRUMP GETS SUED!

A deeply religious group of Quaker congregations hits Donald Trump's DHS with a brilliant lawsuit after his administration changed a policy that banned ICE agents from raiding places of worship.

This is what happens when fake MAGA christianity encounters the real deal...
The revoked policy in question bars ICE agents from carrying out operations without supervisor approval in "sensitive locations" which includes places of worship, playgrounds, schools, and hospitals.
The lawsuit filed in a federal district court in Maryland states that: "The very threat of that [immigration] enforcement deters congregants from attending services, especially members of immigrant communities." According to the plaintiffs, attending service is a crucial aspect of the constitutional guarantee to "religious liberty."
"A week ago today, President Trump swore an oath to defend the Constitution and yet today religious institutions that have existed since the 1600s in our country are having to go to court to challenge what is a violation of every individual's constitutional right to worship and associate freely," said Skye Perryman, president and CEO of Democracy Forward, the group providing lawyers for the Quaker groups.
"The troubling nature of the policy goes beyond just houses of worship with sanctuary programs — it is that ICE could enter religious and sacred spaces whenever it wants," Perryman added.
In an email to NBC News, Noah Merrill, secretary of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends wrote: "Quaker meetings for worship seek to be a sanctuary and a refuge for all, and this new and invasive practice tangibly erodes that possibility by creating unnecessary anxiety, confusion, and chilling of our members' and neighbors' willingness to share with us in the worship which sustains our lives.
"This undermines our communities and, we believe, violates our religious freedom," he added.
"The very threat of government officials wearing ICE-emblazoned jackets outside of our religious service will have a significant impact on our communities and ability to practice our faith," the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, another one of the five Quaker groups involved, stated.

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Ambrose Lane, Jr.

Black History Month: A Celebration of American Freedmen Heritage

By

Roslyn Mickens

In 1926, historian Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History launched "Negro History

Week", deliberately choosing the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. This celebration would later expand into what we now know as "Black History Month". However, what is often overlooked in contemporary discussions is that this commemoration was specifically created to celebrate the history, achievements, and contributions of American Freedmen – the descendants of enslaved people who were emancipated in the United States.

The Foundation: The American Freedmen Story

The unique story of American Freedmen is inextricably linked to the United States' history of slavery, emancipation, and the long struggle for civil rights. Following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the subsequent ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865, formerly enslaved people and their descendants embarked on a remarkable journey of community building, educational advancement, and cultural achievement that would profoundly shape American society.

Notable Freedmen Achievements

The contributions of American Freedmen have touched every aspect of American life, demonstrating extraordinary resilience and creativity in the face of severe obstacles:

Science and Innovation

- George Washington Carver, born to enslaved parents, transformed agricultural science through his research on crop rotation and development of hundreds of peanut-based products

- Granville T. Woods, dubbed the "Black Edison," revolutionized railroad safety and communication with over 50 patents

- Benjamin Banneker, a free-born mathematician and astronomer, helped survey and design Washington, D.C., while also publishing almanacs

- Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, son of Freedmen, performed one of the first successful open-heart surgeries in 1893

Education and Institution Building

- Booker T. Washington, born into slavery, established Tuskegee Institute and became a leading voice in Freedmen education

- Mary McLeod Bethune founded Bethune-Cookman University, demonstrating the power of educational leadership

- Charlotte Forten Grimké became one of the first Freedmen teachers in the Port Royal Experiment, paving the way for Freedmen education in the South

- Anna Julia Cooper, born into slavery, earned her Ph.D. from the Sorbonne and became a pioneering Freedmen feminist scholar

Arts and Cultural Expression

- Scott Joplin, the "King of Ragtime," revolutionized American music with compositions that laid the groundwork for jazz

- Paul Laurence Dunbar captured the American Freedmen experience in both dialect and standard English poetry

- Elizabeth Keckley rose from slavery to become a celebrated dressmaker and confidante to Mary Todd Lincoln

- The Fisk Jubilee Singers, many born to enslaved parents, introduced spirituals to the world stage

Civil Rights and Political Leadership

- Frederick Douglass escaped slavery to become a towering figure in the abolitionist movement and American politics.

- Ida B. Wells-Barnett, born to enslaved parents, launched a fearless anti-lynching campaign and fought for women's suffrage.

- Robert Smalls made a daring escape from slavery and later served as a U.S. Congressman during Reconstruction.

- Hiram Revels became the first Freedmen U.S. Senator, representing Mississippi during Reconstruction.

The Importance of Historical Context

Black History Month must be understood within its original context as a celebration of American Freedmen history. This distinct historical narrative encompasses:

1. The transition from slavery to freedom and the challenges of Reconstruction

2. The establishment of Freedmen schools, churches, and businesses

3. The Great Migration and the transformation of American cities

4. The long struggle for civil rights and equal justice

5. The ongoing pursuit of full equality and recognition

Preserving the Legacy

To honor the true spirit of Black History Month, we should:

- Emphasize the specific historical experience of American Freedmen.

- Document and preserve Freedmen family histories and genealogies.

- Support institutions dedicated to preserving Freedmen history.

- Recognize the unique cultural traditions and contributions of American Freedmen.

- Study and share the stories of Freedmen achievements in every field.

Looking Forward

While the celebration of Black history has expanded to include the achievements of Black people worldwide, it remains crucial to remember and honor Black History Month's original purpose: commemorating the extraordinary journey of American Freedmen from slavery to freedom, and their profound contributions to American society. By maintaining this focus, we honor Carter G. Woodson's vision and ensure that the distinctive history of American Freedmen remains at the heart of this annual observance.

This history is not just the heritage of American Freedmen – it is an essential part of American history itself. The story of Freedmen rising from slavery to achieve remarkable success in every field of human endeavor, despite enormous obstacles, embodies the highest ideals of American democracy and human potential. As we celebrate Black History Month, let us remember its roots in American Freedmen history and continue to honor the legacy of those who helped build and shape our nation.

Sign Up for Black Church Mental Health Learning Hub

Our communities are experiencing pressing mental health challenges, and as leaders, we are called to guide our congregations toward healing and wholeness. The Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), in partnership with the Huntsman Institute and the National Ad Council, has created a groundbreaking free resource to equip you with the knowledge, tools, and strategies to address these urgent needs.

Introducing the Faith & Mental Health:
Black Faith Community Hub

This comprehensive training platform is designed specifically for clergy and congregational leaders in the Black faith community. Inside, you'll find:

Expert Guidance: A special message from Dr. Howard John Wesley on the necessity of clergy sabbaticals, underscoring the importance of self-care for those who shepherd others.

Inspirational Insights: Wisdom from Dr. Barbara Williams Skinner, who shares actionable advice on breaking down barriers to mental health support and fostering a culture of care.

Culturally Relevant Training: Resources tailored to the unique experiences and challenges of the Black faith community, helping you champion mental wellness within your church and beyond.

Practical Solutions: Learn to recognize mental health issues, reduce stigma, and build effective support structures for those in need of hope, healing, and help.

By joining this initiative, you're not just signing up for a training—you're joining a movement, a collective effort to uplift, restore, and empower God's people. Let's ensure our faith communities are places of refuge and understanding, where seeking help is a sign of strength rather than weakness.

Register now by clicking the link below and begin transforming the way we nurture mind, body, and spirit:

Faith & Mental Health:

Black Faith Community

Let’s stand together as leaders who truly lead—equipped, compassionate, and ready to make a lasting difference.

Peace, Power, and Progress,

Rev. Dr. Kip Bernard Banks, Sr.
Senior Impact Strategist
Values Partnerships
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301-520-6223

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