

Black Churches and Civic Traditions: Outreach, Activism, and the Politics of Public Funding of Faith-Based Ministries

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Religion serves multiple purposes in the civic life of African-Americans. Viewed by a generation of scholars as a form of social control that helped blacks cope with slavery and racial segregation, the variety of Christianity that emerged out of the black American experience contributed to various movements for racial reform for much of the twentieth century. What evolved out of Afro-Christianity is a civic tradition that nurtures a sense of charity for the poor and an active engagement in political life. While black religious traditions had different ideas about how to challenge racial inequalities in American life—indeed whether at all churches should challenge inequalities through political agitation—by the post-civil rights era most black religious traditions were at a consensus about the need for churches to be vigorously engaged in community outreach and to be involved, in some way, in political matters.

As an institution reflecting the interests of an economically marginal population, urban black ministers and churches have been committed to providing social services to the poor. However, that commitment varies, depending on the financial constraints of a congregation as well as on the doctrinal beliefs that may influence how churches approach the needs of the poor. Like most religious traditions, black churches exist to meet the spiritual needs of their members, leading them to devote most of their resources to maintaining and expanding the needs of the institution. For a church that can comfortably sustain its daily operations, community outreach efforts present less of a financial constraint on the institution than if that church was not on a strong financial footing. Even if churches have the financial and administrative capacity to provide social services to particular constituencies in need, doctrinal perspectives, such as the belief that the personal salvation of a person in need supercedes their social service needs, may impede the effectiveness of faith-based social services.

As policymakers consider using public funds to finance the social service programs of churches—an initiative that has been coined charitable choice—the administrative capacity of churches to manage programs and the doctrinal

beliefs that may constrain the effective delivery of programs should be strongly considered. Beyond these considerations, however, another civic tradition of black churches may further complicate charitable choice initiatives—the high degree of ministers and churches that are engaged in electoral politics. The participation of ministers and churches in electoral activities is not unique to African-American communities. Indeed, over the past two decades majority-white fundamentalist Christians have supported the elections of social conservatives, both in local and national contests. However, when considering the level of political activity in black churches and the social needs of congregants and community constituencies, public funding of faith-based ministries raise concerns beyond institutional capacity and doctrinal views.

This essay explores two civic traditions in black religious life—the aggressive support for faith-based social services in black communities and the strong engagement of black ministers and churches in political activities. The history of black churches' involvement in both civic traditions along with evidence from recent opinion surveys suggests that not only are black churches involved in a variety of social service activities but there is great enthusiasm among blacks for their churches to address the needs of the poor. Responses from opinion surveys also indicate that the desire for faith-based initiatives may conflict with the need for black churches to place greater emphasis on personal salvation. The tension between the belief that black churches should expand community outreach efforts and the belief that black churches should spend more time on personal salvation points to conflicts that may influence the success of public funding for faith-based programs.

The second civic tradition—the engagement of black clergy and churches in electoral activities—should also frame discussions about public funding of faith-based initiatives. Indeed, activist black clergy and churches have a long tradition in American politics that stretches back to the Reconstruction era when black men first gained the right to vote. That tradition of political engagement—especially when placed in context of ministers aligning themselves with urban political machines in northern cities during the heyday of black migration to northern cities—may provide some insight into the potential perils of using government money to fund the programs of activist ministers and churches. After considering the two civic traditions, the essay illustrates the potential problems that might beset charitable choice initiatives by considering how government funding for social services operated as a form of political patronage during the era of machine politics in Chicago.

The Evolution of Black Churches as Faith-Based Communities

To understand why there is strong support among blacks for black churches' engagement in community outreach, we have to consider the historical development of black religious institutions and how they were integral to the idea of "racial uplift." During the mid to late 19th century, a period of heightened institutional building in the aftermath of slavery, black churches became

the center of black life, operating not only as places of worship for congregants but also as the incubator behind schools, business enterprises, clarity, politics, and recreation. Urban churches, in particular, offered an array of outreach services, encouraging congregants to help reform prison inmates, visit hospitals to assist the sick, and provide food and clothing for the indigent. In some instances, urban churches founded hospitals, orphanages, and nursing homes for freedmen and women (Montgomery 1993).

Schools were among the first initiatives to be supported by churches. Though predominately white religious societies, such as the American Baptist Home Missionary Society, the American Missionary Association, and the Methodist Freedmen's Aid Society, were instrumental in developing black education before and after the Civil War, local black congregations also planned and implemented education programs. These initiatives were aimed at promoting the personal advancement of freedmen and women who would collectively "advance the race" by lifting, over time, the educational level of African-Americans. The cooperation of churches in educational activities was so strong that black congregants pooled together meager resources to "pay teachers salaries, purchase books, or rent additional space for class rooms." Others would assist by welcoming teachers into their homes since some of them could not afford housing on their own given their modest salaries (Montgomery 1993, 148).

In addition to education, mutual aid and burial societies, which were associated with local churches, also served as an important source of community support for freedmen and women. These societies were formed to provide assistance to members in time of death or sickness. They were created and flourished because of the discrimination blacks faced from white charities and insurance companies. Indeed, their origins in black churches led to the development of black-owned insurance companies, one of the first, and perhaps longest-lasting, business enterprises surviving over several generations. More than a source of black economic cooperation, church-rooted mutual aid societies were "inspired by the spirit of Christian charity" where black congregants scrapped together pennies "in order to aid each other in time of sickness but more especially to insure themselves a decent Christian burial" (Frazier, 42).

Church-based community outreach programs expanded at the turn of the century in response to the erosion of the civil rights reforms of Reconstruction and to expanding black migration from the rural south to the cities of the South and North. While helping migrants adjust to their new environment was a desire of many black churches, the flood of migrants into existing black neighborhoods stretched the capacity of black congregations to handle the problem. Both financial constraints and institutional priorities prevented greater resources to be devoted to the needs of migrants. "Despite their continuing sensitivity to the welfare needs of the people generally," historian William Montgomery explains, "(black) churches by the turn of the century

did not always rank as the most important community service agencies. Because their members were generally poor, they often had little money to spend on charity" (300).

Mortgage debt on church property provided the greatest financial constraint to community outreach efforts. During the "great migration" established churches purchased larger structures to accommodate the flow of migrants, draining congregations of resources that could have been used to support social services. Desperately poor migrants who did not join established churches, formed their own congregations in private homes or in storefronts, opting to worship in class-stratified settings. In their classic study of black churches published in the early 1930s, Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson noted that many blacks expressed frustration over the lack of church-sponsored community services in black communities. They observed that "individuals interested in social welfare often charge the church with being incompetent because it does not assume to satisfy many of the non-religious community needs." Pointing to the problems that plagued many urban black churches, "in reality the church is so limited by lack of funds, equipment and personnel that it could not adequately assume all the responsibilities that the public might place upon it"(164-65).

When community outreach programs were launched, usually by large Protestant congregations, success varied from church to church and city to city. Most of the outreach efforts were short-lived. In Chicago, for example, the Olivet Baptist Church, the largest black church in that city during the first wave of black migration, provided a wide variety of social services, including recreational activities for youth, an employment bureau, and a health and baby clinic, all established during the teens (Sernett 1997, 143-4). At the turn-of-the-century, similar outreach efforts were attempted earlier in Chicago through the efforts of the African Methodist Episcopal minister Reverdy Ransom. Ransom founded the Institutional Church and Social Settlement in 1900, a church modeled more like Jane Adam's social settlement house than a congregation of the A.M.E. church. Ransom's Institutional Church offered migrants desperately needed social services, including manual training, an employment agency, and a nursery. Unfortunately, the Institutional Church was short-lived since the A.M.E. church hierarchy believed that Ransom was spending too much effort on social betterment and not enough time on the spiritual needs of his congregation.

Other churches contributed to community outreach efforts by cooperating with existing social service agencies such as the YWCA/YMCA and the Urban League, organizations that were also assisting black migrants. While funding and doctrinal beliefs that stressed personal salvation over social reform—a perspective that was particularly emphasized by Pentecostal churches—hindered cooperative efforts between churches and secularly-based social service agencies, some cooperative efforts were successful for awhile.

In Brooklyn, for instance, black churches coordinated scouting programs, athletic activities such as baseball and basketball leagues, and educational programs such as summer vocation schools in conjunction with a variety of social agencies and community organizations. Youth programs, which were organized mostly by church women, were greatly empathized to combat juvenile delinquency, a major problem in Brooklyn's black communities during the 1930s. As Clarence Taylor observes in his history of Brooklyn's black churches, "by organizing programs for children and teenagers, parishioners (churches) attempted to represent healthy alternatives to street life." They did so by keeping "the church doors open past the usual service hours in order to offer social, recreational, and sporting events for black children," making a few of the black churches in the borough "social service centers stressing moral uplift" (1994, 131). Churches that provided recreational activities for black youth were the exception rather than the rule. Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson's survey of black churches discovered that only 27 percent of congregations from their survey were engaged in providing youth with recreational activities. Though the lack of resources partly explains the absence of recreational activities at churches, puritanical attitudes that regarded dancing, card playing, and ball playing as "sinful behavior" also explains the low number of church-based youth programs in black urban communities during the migration era. The financial inability to create and sustain community outreach efforts and religious attitudes about recreational activities that were considered too secular would continue to stifle the development of church-based youth activities as well as other outreach efforts well into the civil rights era.

Black Churches and Civic Life in the Post-Segregation Era

Though the civil rights movement and the black power movement altered both religious and secular institutions in black communities, it should be noted that only a minority of black ministers and churches support either movement. In recounting the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Martin Luther King, Jr. pointed to the difficulties of mobilizing support from black ministers in that city, noting their apathy "stemmed from a sincere feeling that ministers were not to get mixed up in such earthy, temporal matters as social and economic improvement" (1985, 35). The attitudes and the actions of ministers in Montgomery were not unusual. However, the success of the civil rights and black power movements had long-term consequences for how black ministers and communities thought about the role of black churches in public life.

As the sociologist C. Eric Lincoln declared in the early 1970s, the pre-civil rights black church "died an agonized death in the harsh turmoil which tried the faith so rigorously in the decade of the 'Savage Sixties'" (Lincoln 1974). The fact that most black ministers were not involved in movement activities—and that some even actively opposed the movement—is beside the point. Since clerics were a visible part of the leadership cadre of movement activists and because of the movement's emphasis on Christian values, the movement pro-

jected an image throughout American life that black churches were the vanguard of social change in black communities. Civil rights activist Septima Clark once commented on the contradiction between the image and reality, observing that “so many preachers supported the Movement that we say it was based in the churches, yet many preachers couldn’t take sides with it because they thought they had too much to lose” (88).

The economic progress of blacks since the civil rights movement should—in theory—indicate that religion is less important in the lives of blacks than it was prior to the civil rights movement. As modernization theorists would predict, the secularization of a society and increases in education attainment and income should make individuals less interested in the sacred. Although there is evidence that church attendance has declined among blacks—and Americans in general since the 1960s—strong feelings of religious commitment among blacks have hardly changed over the decades. Consider black responses to questions from the 1992 National Black Politics Study regarding “God presence” in black communities (Table 1).

When asked if the oppression blacks face today is a sign that God is “removed from the black community,” 17 percent of respondents agreed with that statement which suggests that blacks do not blame group conditions on a “neglectful God.” When asked if the progress made by blacks is an indication of “God’s presence” in the black community, 75 percent agreed. Given the choice between the two perspectives—whether God was removed from the black community or whether God has been a positive force in the black community—86 percent chose the view that God has been a positive force. The symbolism of black progress being linked to a sacred entity among a majority of blacks suggests that there would be little opposition to publicly funded community outreach initiatives through black churches.

Table 1
Attitudes About God’s Influence on the
Condition of the Black Community

	Agree/God’s Presence (%)
The humiliation and oppression experienced by black people is surely a sign that God is almost totally removed from the black community.	17
The recent progress made by blacks is an indication of God’s presence in the black community.	73

Source: 1992-1993 National Black Politics Survey (N = 1,175)

Not only does black public opinion confirm the support of black churches' involvement in community outreach but the attitudes and actions of black ministers about outreach efforts seems to have greatly increased since Mays and Nicholson's survey of black ministers during the 1930s. The Mays and Nicholson survey reported few outreach initiatives by ministers; Lincoln and Mamiya's survey of black ministers during the 1980s—taken roughly fifty years later—reported that 68 percent of black congregations cooperated, in some way, with social agencies or secular groups in community outreach.

Reflecting the long-term socialization effects of the civil rights movement, nearly half (43 percent) of ministers engaged in outreach did so through traditional civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). However, when asked whether they were involved in direct social service delivery, less than 10 percent cited daycare (two percent), drug and alcohol abuse programs (four percent), assistance to senior citizens (seven percent), welfare and housing programs (seven percent), food assistance or clothing banks (seven percent), educational programs (five percent), or health-related issues (eight percent). About 20 percent of clergy who reported that their church cooperated with other organizations in outreach reported involvement with youth programs (19 percent). Even fewer ministers reported that their church received funding from government agencies to carry out outreach efforts. Of the six percent receiving government funding to do outreach work, most involved direct social service delivery, such as head start programs, food programs, or daycare.

Some churches have used government funding to simultaneously provide social services and to stimulate business enterprises in black communities. Reverend Floyd Flake, a former U.S. Representative and pastor of the Allen Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church of Queens, New York, provides one example of how activist ministers and churches have used government funding for community outreach efforts and economic development. In many ways, Allen Temple is a modern-day version of Reverdy Ransom's Institutional Church and Settlement house that operated in Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century. Allen Temple provides congregants and the surrounding community housing and jobs through a for-profit corporation which manages a Senior Citizen Section 8-202 Complex, a Burger King franchise, as well as small enterprises. It founded a neighborhood preservation and development corporation that rehabilitates vacant housing units and provides direct home improvement services to local residents.

Another housing program, the Allen A.M.E. Hall Estates, is a development of affordable housing units that provides low and moderate income residents with the opportunity for home ownership. The church also operates a shelter and counseling for women and children who are victims of domestic violence and a senior citizens center that provides recreational and social activ-

ities. The seniors program also serves meals daily and offers transportation and shopping assistance to the elderly who are homebound. For Medicaid eligible senior citizens, a church-run home care agency provides services for the disabled in their own home.

It goes without saying that the Allen Temple A.M.E. Church is unique, but there are a few other black churches around the country that combine government-sponsored social service programs with economic development initiatives. They include the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem, Hartford Memorial Baptist Church of Detroit, and Brentwood Baptist Church of Houston, among others.

By the early 1990s, there is some evidence that black churches have become more engaged in community outreach. The 1992 National Black Politics Survey asked respondents who reported being a member of a congregation if their church sponsored community outreach programs such as “a food program and clothing program for the needy, a drug or alcohol abuse program, a daycare center or nursery, or a senior citizens outreach program.” A clear majority of black churchgoers—86 percent—reported that their place of worship was involved in some type of community outreach. Indeed, for those who reported that their church was involved, about 70 percent answered that they were either “active” or “fairly active” in outreach activities. These responses, if accurate, suggest that if government-funded social services were placed in black churches there would be an army of volunteers to assist in those efforts.

Black Churches and Political Activism

Just as church-based community outreach programs evolved during the era of Reconstruction, so did the political engagement of black ministers and churches. When newly freed black men were given the right to vote, black churches provided the organizational resources to mobilize the new black electorate. Churches provided the physical space for political gatherings, ministers and church members served as delegates to state constitutional conventions and ran for elected office, and news about politics was regularly disseminated through black pulpits. Although the political engagement of black churches was relatively short-lived, as a consequence of black disfranchisement by the turn of the twentieth century, many black churches continued the civic tradition of political activism in northern cities where blacks flexed their political muscles.

Many northern black churches worked in cooperation with the newly-founded civil rights groups such as the NAACP and the Urban League, which was founded to help black migrants adjust to the cities. Some churches aligned themselves with political machines, allowing political elites to employ churches as a direct vehicle for black voter mobilization. Political candidates made direct appeals before black congregations and many black ministers endorsed candidates for public office, thereby delivering votes to a preferred candidate. As political scientist Harold Gosnell observed in his 1935 classic study of black

politics in Chicago, “It is not uncommon on a Sunday morning during a primary or [general] election campaign to see a number of white candidates on the platform ready to present their claims for support at the polls as soon as the regular service is over and before the congregation is disbanded. . . .The church is an institution which plays an important role in their social life and they look to it for advice on political matters” (1967, 96). The electoral activities of black ministers and congregants only strengthened in the post-civil rights era as the voting rights of southern blacks were restored and the civil rights movement turned its focus toward electoral politics and away from the politics of protest.

Indeed, the civic tradition of church-based activism is so strong that it is commonplace to see ministerial support for political candidates as an integral part of the politics of black communities. Just as blacks strongly support church-based community outreach efforts, they are also strongly supportive of church-based political activism. The 1992 National Black Politics Study asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “black churches or places of worship should be involved in politics.” While a strong minority of blacks—a third—“somewhat disagreed” or “strongly dis-

Table 2
**The Intensity of Church-Based
Political Activism among Blacks**

	Yes (%)
Has a member of the clergy or someone in an official position talked about the need for people to become involved in politics?	63
In the past year, have you heard any discussions of politics at your church or place of worship?	61
Has any national or local leader spoken at a regular religious service?	48
Have you talked to people about political matters at your church or place of worship?	44
Has a member of the clergy or someone in an official position ever suggested that you vote for or against certain candidates in an election?	29

Source: 1992-1993 National Black Politics Survey (N=1,175).

agreed" that black churches should be engaged in politics, nearly 70 percent "agreed" or "somewhat agreed."

Table 2 demonstrates the intensity of church-based activism in black communities. Respondents to the 1992 National Black Politics survey were asked a variety of questions about the level of political activities in their churches. When asked if their minister or someone in an official position at their church talked about the need for people to become more involved in politics, 63 percent of respondents reported that a leader had talked about the need for political involvement. Another 61 percent of respondents answered affirmatively that they had heard discussions about politics at their place of worship. Additionally, 44 percent of black churchgoers reported that they personally chatted with others about politics at their church, further demonstrating how black churches may operate as a source of politicization in black communities. As previous studies have demonstrated, the frequency of political discussions increases the likelihood that congregants will directly engage in political activities.

Beyond discussing political matters, respondents reported a high degree of direct political activities at their churches. When asked if a local or national leader spoke at a regular church service, 48 percent reported hearing a speech by a political leader. Moreover, 29 percent reported that a member of the clergy or someone in an official position at their church suggested that they vote for or against a political candidate. While these modes of church-based activism facilitate the involvement of blacks in the political sphere by providing an alternative source of political information and by giving individuals the opportunity to learn about politics, they also provide political elites with resources to support their candidacies and policy initiatives. Though most religious leaders in black churches do not endorse candidates, as the survey responses indicate, a solid core of black religious leaders, perhaps a third, do engage in candidate endorsements.

Views about church-based activism differ considerably by race. Though both blacks and whites equally approve of religious leaders taking a stand on social issues, blacks are substantially more likely than whites to believe that churches or political leaders should back political candidates or that a minister had a right to promote a particular point of view during church services (Harris 1999, 110-111). By some estimates, blacks are three times as likely as whites to report that their religious leaders frequently discuss politics, more than twice as likely to be encouraged to vote at their place of worship, and more than five times as likely to be visited by a political candidate at their church. As a consequence, black churchgoers are more likely to be activated directly into politics through their place of worship than white churchgoers (Harris 1999, 112-113).

These findings indicate that black churches continue to be an important source of political mobilization in black communities. Through clerical appeals, candidate visits at churches, church-sponsored political forums,

endorsements by ministerial groups, and the rare instances of church-based fund-raising for candidates, the historical roots of church-based activism continues to flourish as a black civic tradition.

Traditions in Conflict? Activist Clergy and the Public Funding of Faith-Based Programs

The two civic traditions of the black church—the participation and desire for faith-based social services, and political activism through church networks—may be in conflict with policy initiatives, such as charitable choice, that use government funding to support church-based social services. Through charitable choice, churches have the right to compete for state-awarded social service contracts. Putting aside the constitutional questions about the separation of church and state and worries about whether government money will be used to promote proselytizing, questions regarding the potential for conflicts of interests—that is, questions about the ethics of activist churches and ministers receiving contracts because of their support of political candidates—has been largely overlooked.

This conflict is not just a concern for black churches; it also has implications for other religious traditions that are directly involved in political activities. White evangelical churches, for instance, are also highly engaged in electoral activities and their activism may also give them advantages in the procurement of government contracts in certain instances. However, since black churches are considerably more likely to engage in political activities than majority-white congregations, and because of the civic tradition of activism in black churches, charitable choice initiatives may have the unintended consequences of being used as a means of political patronage. Not only would this possibility raise ethical questions about money and politics—a problem that seems to pervade all sectors of American politics—it also may have a corrupting influence on the politics of black communities. In the past, politicians have used government money to build alliances with black ministers, using funds to award supporters and punish opponents.

The political relationships that form between ministers and politicians are rooted in the practices of mutual support. Both activist ministers and politicians have strong incentives to solicit support from the other. For ministers these incentives can either be material, altruistic, or symbolic and political elites have an array of incentives to induce ministers into civic action. They can supplement the revenue of churches through “donations,” expand church revenues by hosting government-sponsored programs in churches, or, in some rare cases, they might hire ministers as government employees. Ministers, of course, can also be altruistically motivated by the desire to provide outreach programs.

Ministers, on the other hand, have resources at their disposal. Like most elected officials, politicians are primarily interested in getting elected or re-elected. Depending on the office, electoral strategies may entail maintaining or

expanding electoral coalitions and insuring that prospects for re-election are expanded by satisfying the needs of often diverse constituencies. As the survey data above indicates, activist black clergy can assist politicians in their efforts to woo the black electorate by endorsing candidates, allowing candidates to speak before their congregations, or just by simply mentioning the candidate's name during church services.

The Case of Patronage Politics and Chicago Ministers

Perhaps the best illustration of how government funds have been used as a way to build political support among black ministers is the ruff-and-tumble politics of Chicago. Because of its tradition of patronage-style politics, considering the alliances of black ministers and politicians may provide a skewed perspective of the consequences of using government funds to subsidize faith-based ministries. Nevertheless, the Chicago experience can shed light on how government funding can be used as a way for political elites to build alliances with ministers and how that alliance may impede the political interest of black communities.

In Chicago, the incentives for activist clergy and for politicians seeking black support have been related to the city's tradition of machine-style politics. For some ministers, their political activism has been influenced by their support of candidates and policies that they have backed in exchange for patronage. Indeed, this exchange is a part of black Chicago's political development and extends well beyond the politics of the pulpit to encompass almost every aspect of the city's civic life. Although this exchange has allowed many black churches to provide social services to needy congregants and neighborhood residents, over the decades the relationship has undermined the efforts of reform-minded political candidates and movements that challenged the machine over issues such as open housing, equal educational opportunities, police brutality, black employment in city government, as well as other issues that address racial inequalities in the city.

In the post-World War II era, as the Democratic party solidified its grip on Chicago's political life, two forces would influence the political nexus between activist clergy and politicians: the development in the 1950s of Richard J. Daley's powerful machine, including a black submachine led by Congressman William Dawson, and the emergence of Chicago's civil rights campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s. While blacks contributed to Daley's successful electoral coalition, his support softened as black activists challenged Daley on school segregation, open housing, slum housing, and police brutality. These reform-minded activists, which included few black ministers among its ranks, clashed with machine-backed political and religious elites who worked to thwart reform-oriented movements that emerged out of Chicago's black communities.

However, as James Q. Wilson notes in his research on black leadership in Chicago during the 1950s, most black ministers avoided participation in civic

affairs altogether (1960, 127-130). But clergy who were engaged in civic life were divided in their support for the machine. Wilson noted that "several prominent Negro ministers who have large congregations never fail to support the Dawson organization and are personally close to him." As he explains further, the social class dynamics influenced support for the machine: "these ministers are characteristically Baptist or Pentecostal, with large followings among lower-income Negroes," while those who were suspicious of Dawson and the machine were "often better educated and with wealthier congregations" (127).

The incentives and sanctions the Daley machine and the Dawson submachine used to consolidate the support of black political elites are legendary and are beyond the scope of this essay. However, one activist clergy learned early on about the potential benefits that could be distributed by the machine. After unsuccessfully challenging the machine's black incumbent congressman, William Dawson, as a Republican candidate, Reverend Wilber Daniels, pastor of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church and then president of the local NAACP, quickly made overtures to Daley. Reverend Daniels operated as a strategic actor, avoiding possible sanctions from the machine while also extracting symbolic and material resources in exchange for his loyalty to the mayor:

I went into his office and won him over. That was not easy, because usually if you crossed Daley you were in the doghouse for the rest of your life. But I realized that I lived in a city that Daley was running, and I wanted to be with him because he could help me with what I wanted to do. From the day we met until the day he died, he was strictly a good friend, all the way down the pike.¹

As a symbolic reward for his support of the machine, Daley appointed Reverend Daniels to the civilian police board in 1972; he later served as the president of the board under the Jane Byrne administration in the late 1970s. The board, among several duties, is responsible for monitoring police misconduct. However, neither the board, nor Daniels, challenged the policies of the mayor or the police chief, both of whom disregarded civilian complaints about police misconduct. Police brutality in Chicago during the 1960s and 1970s was a serious problem, symbolized by police violence against protesters during the 1968 National Democratic Party convention and the police murder of Black Panther activists Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in 1969. As one reporter described Reverend Daniels's performance as a reformer in 1980: "He served a limp stint as president of the Chicago NAACP during the height of the civil rights movement; he sat as a member of the old Police Board for many years without raising a ruckus; and now he speaks ill of citizens' groups that monitor the board and some board members who would bring change."²

1 Grant Pick, "Daniel in the Lion's Den," *Chicago Reader*, 25 July, 1980.

2 Ibid.

Although not considered a reformer, Reverend Daniels' support of the Daley machine netted material benefits to his church that not only cared for the minister's congregants but also helped residents of Englewood, a poor and working class neighborhood that surrounded Daniels' church. Indeed, during the late 1960s and early 1970s Richard Daley assisted Reverend Daniels with securing funding from city and federal agencies to build low and moderate income housing in Englewood. By 1979 the church had an annual budget near \$1 million with real-estate holdings totaling \$9 million.

Reverend Daniels' strategy of working within the constraints of patronage-style politics symbolizes the tradition of one dimension of clergy-oriented civic action in Chicago. When asked what separated the ministers who supported the Daley machine from those who did not, Reverend A. Patterson Jackson, the late senior pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, pointed to the financial independence of clergy as a factor. His assessment reveals how important it is for activist black ministers to be financially independent, so that they will not be influenced by political patronage or dependency on government funding that has the potential to hamper their activism. Reverend Jackson notes this problem when Martin Luther King Jr. failed to recruit influential ministers in Chicago for his campaign against open housing in 1966. "It is a known fact that a number of our black preachers eat at the mayor's table. You don't eat at the mayor's table and fight the mayor. Quite naturally had they allowed Dr. King in their pulpit they were not an ally to the mayor."³

Describing his own situation, Reverend Jackson, whose church built housing for the elderly without the support of the city, noted that:

[Liberty Baptist Church] have never received a dime from any politician in this church, in its construction, in its program, in anything. The church made sure that I was freed from any wants, so I never had to ask any politician for anything....Give to Caesar what's Caesar and to God what's God. We feel that if you accept a favor from a politician one day you will have to pay it back. I know that.

The Chicago Freedom Movement did not win concessions from the Daley regime. As the most racially segregated city in the United States, the movement could not mobilize enough support to defeat housing segregation and poverty. Many ministers who opposed the movement or kept silent were rewarded. The mayor used the largess of federal monies designated for Johnson's War on Poverty and the city's department of Human Services to undermine clergy dissent. As historian Melvin Holli explains, "Federal anti-poverty money was used to keep black churches pro-administration, or at least to keep them from becoming forums for Daley's opponents."⁴ Patronage for black clergy would continue to undermine black opposition to the machine well after the demise of

3 Interview with A. Patterson Jackson, 14 November 1990.

4 Barnaby Dinges, "Mayor Daley Courting Black Ministers," *The Chicago Reporter*, December 1989.

the movement, becoming an obstacle to black mobilization in behalf of Harold Washington's failed independent campaign for mayor in 1977. The election of Washington in 1983 would successfully challenge the power of the machine and, as happened during the King's Chicago Freedom Movement, black ministers would be deeply divided over a movement that pushed for both racial equality and the dismantling of machine politics.

Although most cities and locales in the United States do not have a tradition of patronage-style politics, much can be learned from the Chicago experience. On the one hand, charitable choice provides the impetus for promoting black civic life by availing churches of the resources to address the needs of marginal communities. On the other hand, charitable choice also has the potential to undermine the civic tradition of church activism by rewarding contracts to activist ministers and churches who might be lured into accepting contracts in exchange for their support of political campaigns or policy initiatives. One could make the argument that since politically powerful individuals and institutions in American society use their influence to extract benefits from government, why should religious institutions be treated any differently?

If charitable choice is to work, safeguards should be put in place to assure that churches and ministers who are competing for contracts do not get special favor. Grants should be offered to churches that have the institutional capacity to sponsor programs rather to those that have the best political connections. Indeed, it is quite likely that both criteria will overlap since the larger, more established churches are more likely to engage in political activities and to sponsor community outreach programs. With safeguards against political favoritism, the two civic traditions in black religious life may well continue to flourish, unblemished.

Issues to Keep an Eye On

First Civic Tradition. Faith-based social services have a long tradition in black communities. They evolved out of the need to address the condition of ex-slaves during the era of Reconstruction and continued on during the “great migration” of rural southern blacks to the cities of the north and south. The success of these services depended on the financial and administrative capacity of local congregations. They also depended on the doctrinal views of congregations who were reluctant to support outreach efforts that would promote “sinful” behavior.

Second Civic Tradition. Just as faith-based social services have a long tradition in black communities, so do the tradition of church-based political activism. That tradition was nurtured during the period of Reconstruction, continued through the alignment of activist black ministers with political machines in northern cities, and was very much part of the civil rights activism of the 1960s. Today, a considerable number of black churches are engaged in some form of political activity. That activity ranges from most black churches regularly discussing political matters during church services to a quarter of ministers endorsing political candidates.

Past Attempts at Government Funding of Churches. In urban machine cities such as Chicago, political elites have used public funding of church-faith ministries to build political alliances with black ministers. At times, these alliances have compromised the ability of activist ministers who receive funding to speak out on political matters that may be in conflict with political elites who are supportive of their faith-based efforts.

Implications for Charitable Choice. Although most cities and locales in the United States do not have a tradition of patronage-style politics, much can be learned from the Chicago experience. On the one hand, charitable choice provides the impetus for promoting black civic life by availing churches with the resources to address the needs of marginal communities. On the other hand, charitable choice also has the potential to undermine the civic tradition of church activism by rewarding contracts to activist ministers and churches who might be lured into accepting funding in exchange for their public support of political campaigns or policy initiatives that may or may not be in the interests of their constituencies.

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