

# THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSIONS MOBILIZATION MANIFESTO 2007

## INTRODUCTION

We do humbly acknowledge that God has called the African American church to a unique role in helping to fulfill the Great Commission. We acknowledge that God has endowed the African American church with its own cultural distinctive, uniqueness and giftedness, borne out of a history of slavery, Jim Crow segregation and oppression. In the furnace of affliction, God has given us a word of redemption for and special sensitivity towards the oppressed and disadvantaged.

We acknowledge that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have successfully used this sensitivity to empower our own communities: to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, and to release the oppressed.

We acknowledge that the African American Church is part of the Body of Christ and is thus commissioned to take the Gospel to the world.

We confess that we have a rich history of missionary involvement in Africa. Throughout the 1800's there was a considerable African American Missions presence in Africa.

God has placed the African American Church in position to make a critical impact on world evangelization. As the wealthiest Black people group on earth, He has given us the human and financial resources to help take the gospel to the world. He has opened the window of opportunity for the church to evangelize and empower the poor, imprisoned, blind and oppressed of the world.

In order to take our place on the world stage, we acknowledge that a new way of thinking is needed. We cannot work in isolation. We must work together to create a unified force.

## DECLARATION

For this reason, we representatives of the African American missions mobilization community with a heart to the evangelization of the whole world, do declare that we are committed to fulfillment of God's Great Commission (Matt 28: 18-20) through the mobilization of African Americans to the global mission force.

We affirm:

## PURPOSEFUL INVOLVEMENT

1. Global Evangelization – We affirm that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is The Gospel of truth to all people and thus shall be preached to all nations with the goal of “Making Disciples” of all nations. We affirm that there is no other way to be saved except through Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). We declare that as a part

of the global body of Christ, we will engage in global evangelization (cross-cultural evangelism and discipleship) spreading the message of salvation to the whole world (Matt 28: 18-20).

2. Uniqueness – We affirm that as African Americans, we have a unique contribution to make in the world and endeavor to take our rightful place in the global missions effort, not subservient nor superior to others, but as joint-heirs and equal partners with all believers within the body of Jesus Christ.

### **HISTORIC LEGACY**

3. Historical Hindrances – We acknowledge that our history is full of hindrances to engagement in global evangelism such as Jim Crow segregation in the US, colonial leaders abroad who did not see the value of our contribution as missionaries, and our focus on the challenges facing the African American community in the U.S.
4. Continued Commitment – We are thankful for the example and fortitude of people like George Liele who was willing to indenture himself to another in order to take the Gospel to Jamaica; and Betsy Stockton who indentured herself to a white family in order to serve as the first single woman missionary from the United States.

### **CHURCH ENGAGEMENT**

We are concerned that after several generations of obstacles our churches have greatly lost touch with the breadth of the mandate to take the Gospel to the world and that our churches have little exposure to the spiritual climate in nations of the world today.

5. The Centrality of the Local Church – We believe that the local church is central in God’s plan to advance His Kingdom throughout the earth. The responsibility to proclaim the gospel rests with the whole church. We declare that we will seek to expose African American churches to:
  - a. The biblical mandate for global witness,
  - b. Our heritage in cross-cultural missions,
  - c. The magnitude of the current unreached peoples of the world
  - d. Best practices for training and equipping the local church for missions
  - e. Historical & cultural barriers to missions mobilization
6. Full Church Engagement – Every member within the church has been gifted for service in God’s Great Commission. We believe that the entire body of the local assembly of believers can and should be engaged in God’s global purposes by giving, praying, sending, going, supporting, hosting and/or training.
7. Healthy Church Engagement – We acknowledge that it will take a renewed commitment on the part of every local church to center its development and growth, its preaching and teaching, its conversation and conduct, its fellowship and witness, around the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the advancement of His

Kingdom throughout the world. We commit to work with our churches to move to greater internal health for greater external victory. We will strive to see our church families victorious at home so they can be victorious abroad.

## **STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT**

Strategic Mobilization – We understand that the obstacles of the past have left many of our churches unacquainted with our role in global evangelization.

8. Beyond the Local Community – We believe that the principle of Acts 1:8 instructs us to be witnesses among those who are near and far, to those culturally similar and those culturally dissimilar from us. It is too small a thing that we in the African American community should think that we are called only to see the restoration of our own people into right fellowship with God. God calls us to see people of other nations reconciled to Himself also, Isaiah 49:6. We declare that we will be witnesses for Christ in our own communities, and also in communities in other parts of the world.
9. Partnership – We understand that there is increasing involvement of peoples from various cultures in cross-cultural outreach. We believe that unity in the body of Christ is a part of our witness. We affirm that though many others are engaged in the mission force, we offer a special sensitivity to oppression and deprivation. Our ethnicity is now a global cultural force, and a platform for the Gospel. In the reconciling power of the Gospel, we declare that we will partner with others where it is strategically wise for the glory of God in making His name great among the nations. This includes partnering with Whites and other ethnic groups on the worlds mission fields.
10. Long Term Commitment – We acknowledge that the primary charge of the Great Commission is to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19). We value the support provided by our churches to National churches in other countries and the increase in short-term missions among African Americans. We see value in short-terms missions. But we declare need for long-term relationships that would result in lifetime commitments to completing the Great Commission. We declare a need for greater personalization of the Great Commission through lifetime commitments to missionary service.
11. Financial Support – We affirm what God, through His Word, repeatedly demonstrates: His grace supernaturally provides for everyone that He calls into full time missionary service (Acts 14:26; 15:40). We also reaffirm our commitment to actively participate in "the grace of giving" by financially supporting missionaries and missions work around the world (2 Corinthians 8:1).
12. Preparation – We understand that Western missionaries have experienced great successes and made many mistakes in the past. We declare that we will seek to learn from the past and prepare ourselves to minister with cultural sensitivity, biblical accuracy, and in Christian unity.

13. Approaching the Field – We affirm that our experience as a people have prepared us in unique ways. We declare that we will approach the mission field in a holistic manner, with cultural sensitivity, and a contextualized message.

## **CONCLUSION**

We believe that God has called the African American Church to take its rightful place as a significant participant in His Mission to reach all nations with the good news of His Son, and that its participation is essential to God's plan to reach the nations. We therefore, commit to purposeful involvement in cross-cultural evangelism and discipleship. We embrace our historical legacy that has equipped us for present day service. We affirm our local churches as the primary agent for fulfilling the Great Commission. We agree with the Manila Manifesto that the whole church is called to take the whole gospel to the whole world. We declare that we will by the grace of God, intentionally and strategically engage God's calling to the nations as a lifetime commitment.

## **APPENDIX A HISTORY**

### Historical Commitment

We acknowledge that we have a rich history of missionary involvement in Africa particularly from 1800-1900. There were many developments that profoundly affected the African American missionary movement. One of which was the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution intensified European activity in sub-Saharan Africa. Colonial powers began to fight among themselves over territory and rights to the vast resources of the African continent. In 1884, European colonial powers met to carve out geopolitical boundaries in Africa. The aims of the African American missionaries were seen as a direct threat to the commercial interests of the colonial powers. Black missionaries were marginalized and within a few years, the entire African American Missions movement was devastated. As a result, the church associated Missions with trauma and developed Missions amnesia. By the early 20th century, the church focus was not on missionary efforts outside of the United States. Missions history was lost inside of a generation and the missions consciousness of the African American church was practically obliterated.

## **APPENDIX B BY THE NUMBERS**

### Global Missions and African American Involvement

The number of unevangelized people by mid-2006 was 1,806,065,000, which is 27.7% of the global population. There are 4,373,076,000 non-Christians on the planet. Of these, Muslims total 1,339,392,000, Hindus total 877,552,000 and Buddhists total 382,482,000. Muslims and Hindus both have a higher growth rate than the general Christian population, due to higher birth rates.<sup>i</sup>

According to the World Christian Database, 419,429 missionaries globally are being sent from one country to another. Of these, 118,600 missionaries come from the USA.<sup>ii</sup> If there are as many as 500<sup>iii</sup> current African American cross-cultural missionaries from a population of 38,300,000 African Americans<sup>iv</sup>, then African Americans are 0.4 percent of the total number of US missionaries, while being 12.7% of the US population.<sup>v</sup>

In 2004 the estimated buying power of black households was \$679 billion dollars.<sup>vi</sup> Ghana sends 500 missionaries per year. Her population is 22.1 million and her Gross National Income is 10 billion. African Americans spent 10.7 billion on household furnishings and equipment in 2004. Nigeria sends 2500 missionaries per year and has a Gross National Income of 74.2 billion dollars. African Americans spent this much on vehicles, insurance, clothing and gifts in 2004.<sup>vii</sup>

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i David Barrett and Todd Johnson "Missiometrics 2006..." International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Jan. 2006, p. 28.

ii World Christian Database

iii This is only an estimate and is in line with historical surveys, but may be overestimated. The actual number is unknown at the present time.

iv Target Market figure

v As of 12/4/2006, the US population was estimated by the US Census Bureau to be approximately 300,339,455.

vi Target Market News <http://targetmarketnews.com/BuyingPower05.htm> accessed 12/4/2006

vii Sources: The World Bank:

<http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPProfile.asp?PTYPE=CP&CCODE=GHA>

<http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPProfile.asp?PTYPE=CP&CCODE=NGA>; the World

Christian Database and Target Market News

<http://targetmarketnews.com/BuyingPower05.htm>