

The State of the Black Church

If the Black church is dead, how is it that its millions of sons and daughters serving daily and tenaciously as its caring heart, serving hands, going feet and prophet voice never received notice of our own funeral service? It appears to me that Professor Glaude is engaging in an incredibly premature autopsy through his Huffington Post pronouncement regarding the Black church's demise.

Glaude states and then asks "Rare are those occasions when black churches mobilize in public and together to call attention to the pressing issues of our day. We see organization and protests against same-sex marriage and abortion; even billboards in Atlanta to make the anti-abortion case. But where are the press conferences and impassioned efforts around black children living in poverty, and commercial and organizing around jobs and healthcare reform?"

I suspect the good professor spends more time in the ivy towers of Princeton University than he does in and around Black churches and the communities they serve. When hundreds of us converged on the Children's Defense Fund Haley Farm in Tennessee this past summer to organize and write letters and make phone calls and plan mobilizations of our churches to address health care reform, I saw the Black church.

When Black American Baptists convened in Chicago this past fall in a "Call to Greater Works" where hard working and serving pastors like Alan Ragland, Jesse Brown, Alice Greene, Marvin McMickle, Roxanne Cardenas and J. Alfred Smith Sr empowered us through teaching, preaching and training to speak until justice wakes, I saw the Black church.

This winter, when the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference came together as the big tent of progressive black Christian voices across our nation, still addressing and protesting the wake of Katrina five years in its aftermath and the quake in Haiti all the more devastating because of debilitating USA policies, I saw the black church.

There is a passage in Luke's gospel where Jesus goes to the home of Jairus a noted religious leader. The word had gone out that Jairus' daughter was dead. Jesus tells the crowd, that the girl is not dead, but has just been sleeping. No, the Black Church is not dead. I do wonder if some of its cultural and academic critics have been sleeping.

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