

MOSAIC Segments –

E01, E02, F03, F04, H02, J03, K03, K04, K05, K06. *Some G03, I04, L01*

Southern Jazz

2008 Mississippi Statistics

1,077,483 (36.52%) Expected to climb to 1,107,612 by 2012 (36.65%)

This majority African American segment is a vastly diverse population segment in its beliefs and values. Among these communities are other minority segments that will usually be a minority in population and found clustered in communities throughout the area. For a better description on the other ethnic segments, please review the Culturescape on Ethnic Mosaic.

Current Stats for the African American Socio-cultural groups (as of 2k8)

- Just 50% of Black high school students graduate in 4 years. Black men become statistics because of trends.
- 1/3 of black kids are beneath the poverty level.
- Blacks enrolling in college is up 40% in last decade.
- AIDS - 50% of all HIV cases in America are black, mostly black women. It is the #1 killer of black women 25 to 34.
- 70% of kids are born to unwed mothers. This number continues to rise.
- 45% of black women are not and never have been married. There is an increasing number of professional single black women. *Side note – some of these women who do get married, marry a man of another race.*
- 2x as many black women in college as men.
- 7 million Americans are multi-racial.



Social Issues

Although there are about 42 different Black people groups in the United States, only one has a bond with the issue of slavery.¹ It is this group, called African Americans, that is the basis of this study. The socio-cultural segments that make up the African American people group vary widely as other ethnic groups in economic, education, age, and race. The community is family oriented and engaged in various social networks that range from the church network to community gangs. There is force in numbers and a longing to be a significant part of something. There is great significance in titles and levels of authority. Camaraderie and loyalty exists for others who are part of your social network and some distrust for those who are outside.²

The southern African American varies from a predominantly oral culture (as found largely in the Delta area and inner cities) to the literate professionals (found in the suburbs of southern cities).³ Even the more educated value the tradition of heritage that is passed on through storying. African Americans are truly emotional people. Their emotion drives them to have great passion for what interests them. Core values include social justice, family, social standing, and religion. Music tastes generally revolve around R&B, Jazz, Gospel and Hip-hop and its message is indicative of a people that value stories and their story.

¹ Jenkins, James. African American Consultant with Louisiana Baptist Convention. Notes from Interview done in 2006 by David Alexander.

² O'brien, Soledad. CNN presents Black in America. (CNN, Atlanta, GA). Air date July 23-24, 2008.

³ MOSAIC

African Americans' employment is scattered across the spectrum, but among the middle to lower middle income peoples, hair styling, educators, religion, small business, and fast food ranges among the more popular sources of income.⁴

Under the above generalizations, there exist three predominant ideologies with a few distinct personalities.⁵ Note that even in a given household, the members of the family might fall within separate ideological segments. This ideology is passed on from the parental figure and encouraged by the religious figurehead associated with the family.

1. Accommodators

This segment values its influence in the political and social scene. Its public leaders – Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Oprah Winfrey, and Martin Luther King, Jr. are listened to. The church has an emancipation theology and centers on being the center of politics and social society. Non-evangelistic, its growth is strictly biological. Many of the churches made up from people of this segment are affiliated with National Baptists. Extremists in this ideology would include Rev. Jeremiah Wright.

2. Separators

Historically once a part of the “Accommodators”, this segment highly values its African origins and values cultural separation from the other people segments. Farakkhan is the public figure that represents this segments worldview and those comprising the Nation of Islam are usually members of this segment. Universities with Black study departments are likely to have professors that would hold to this segment’s values and worldview. Some religious icons such as Rev. Wright, might also be included within this ideology.

3. Assimilators

This segment is comprised of African Americans who possess a willingness to be included among the mainstream of society. Although once a part of the Accommodators, they have risen to the generational challenge of not accepting the status quo. This group no longer fully knows the struggle of the lower class, although within its membership are those that may have originated there. Most of this segment values working in corporate structures and are more likely than other Black segments to possess a Biblical worldview. Tending toward charismatic practices, the Word church and Full Gospel church are expressions of the average church attender.

Ministering in African American Communities

There is a solution to the challenge of unreached African American communities but it is not arrived at over night. The solution is challenging, costly in time and emotion, and will take a generation or two.⁶ Due to years of consistently bad family role models, many inner city and rural residents find themselves trapped in recurring single parent homes, lack of education, and an inability to progress in society. These challenges are predominantly lower income population segment issues although, peer pressure knows no socio-economic boundaries. On the surface, the issues faced are those most population segments in poverty have to confront, however, because lower income African Americans often live in segregated communities, addressing these issues has to be done through an African American lens. The segregation of the community is not necessarily intentional and is a common factor throughout America as its population tends to reside in neighborhoods of monolithic worldviews. Lower income peoples in

⁴ McNairy, Chris. Consult done with MS Baptist Convention Board. December 2007.

⁵ Jenkins.

⁶ Wilson, Rev. Herron. Notes from Interview, July 2007, Jackson, MS. Rev Wilson is a Missionary Baptist Pastor in Indianola, MS. He also is director of a interdenominational community ministry.

this segment struggle with the challenges of teenage pregnancy, unemployment, education, dropout, and poverty driven troubles. Those in the segment who are better educated, or work their way into blue collar middle income jobs, share the same struggles as most Americans. However, in the South, there is still some mistrust, prejudice, and discrimination between the black social segments and other segments and vice-versa. There are LONG MEMORIES among blacks. Not much total forgiveness yet. This is overcome through intentional long term relationships and Biblical worldview transformation through discipleship.

Connections are important. People are tied to their relationships with others and to places. African Americans are cluster oriented desiring to do things as a group and not by individual decision. Appearance is extremely important and not depth of character.⁷

Although very religious, church attendance is viewed by many as the social event of the week and has no bearing on their relationship with God. Most of the lower income segments are unchurched. Only about 50% of the other segments that attend are there as a result of a personal relationship with Christ. Therefore, a large cultural barrier has been erected that equates church attendance and religiousness with salvation. The social gospel is prevalent among many African-American churches. This gospel preaches Jesus as the one able to bring social justice, liberation, and prosperity to the religious members. Liberation theology undergirds most African American doctrine from one extreme (liberation from oppression, poverty) to the other (liberation from Satan).

Keys to Success

- Parental encouragement.
- Parental role models.
- Parental involvement in their kids' lives.
- Sibling pressure.
- Relational pressure.
- Resourcing.

What Following Christ Looks Like

Worship is a high emotional experience truly providing an environment by which the worshiper can experience God in freedom and joy. Music is a live collaboration of choir voices and R&B Gospel instrumentation. The gathering is all about the experience and little to do with how long it takes. Although consistent worship would be culturally distinct between the African American population segments and other segments of Mississippi society, intentional fellowships, ministerial partnerships, and joint mission projects would greatly enhance the trust level and effectiveness in breaking down cultural barriers that prevent outside segments from having positive evangelistic impact on all segments involved. Good discipling will help to create followers of Christ who have emotional worship, but also a strong relationship with Christ that is modeled throughout each aspect of their daily walk.

Discipling is a journey in mentoring. The men of the community have to be the key focus of the church. Effective models could be patterned after the "Big Brothers and Sisters" paradigm for instilling values and modeling biblical worldviews. Disciples should be held to a strong accountability. They will want to be included in decisions and be given increasing responsibility for things along the journey, whether it be in church leadership, family issues, or vocational tasks. They will need to be mentored as to what to do with the responsibility once they have it. Great care must be taken to help them avoid public embarrassment as they begin to take on more responsibilities.

Preaching and teaching should be highly oral and visual. The chanting, singing style of communication is regarded as the cultural norm and valued by those listening. Any style of

⁷ Wilson.

presentation, from expository to narrative, is effective as long as it clearly defines the application for the audience. Preaching that is impacting is direct and succinct appealing not only to the emotions of the participants, but also speaks straight to the reality of daily living and circumstances. The higher the medium income of the congregation, the more non-indigenous the expositor can be and still have credibility with the audience.

African Americans would be open to attending a multi-ethnic congregation as long as part of the leadership team was indigenous to their population segment. Emphasis will be on redemptive community transformation. Funding comes from the congregation but also from community entrepreneurship as the church helps the community better itself while making disciples.

True discipleship must be the model. The volunteers should never be the only ones leading in the activity. The volunteer leader must come with a mentor attitude. The person in the community is taught on one day in order to return and help work on the next putting in practice what they have just learned.


Ministry must happen without an agenda. God is level at the cross. He is the same God for all peoples. So the “ministers” must learn to walk in love and relationship to those being ministered to. Ministry is done “teaching how to fish”, not “handing out fish.”⁸ It will take 3 generations to make the transition from Separator to Assimilator. Use events such as Black Church Week or bringing SBC leaders in as key presenters in order to mentor young African American ministers into Southern Baptist life. In regard to the inner city, the church must consider what role it is to play in order to be a solution to the poverty issue in its neighborhood.

Things to Consider When Engaging in Missions Among African American Segments

1. Black church culture includes everything from Muslims on one end to African American Southern Baptists on the other.
2. Be aware of African American subgroups
3. Follow Paul’s approach from Acts; team planting in the city.
4. Provide for the mainstreaming of African American church plants into Southern Baptist Life.

Theological Conclusions

Although Biblical, the liberation emphasis of the Gospel held by many African Americans is only part of the whole Gospel. More emphasis is given to the humanity of Christ and the call to ministry and social justice of the Christian than the deity of Christ and the need for righteous and holy living in every facet of life. This differs from Anglo theological perspectives which tend to emphasize the deity of Christ and personal need for repentance; both are Biblical yet partial gospels. The challenge for the church is helping their targets embrace a more balanced perspective of the Kingdom which in turn would lead to more missional behavior. The black church is an instrument, and maybe the instrument, of social change, but must also be an instrument of discipleship.

 2008 by David A Alexander

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⁸ Wilson.