

A CREDO TO LEGATEES OF THE BLACK CHURCH TRADITION

THE FIRST DAY OF JANUARY 2025

Jubilee

In the legacy of the Black Church tradition, we as legatees recognize [believe] the sacrificial witness and scholarship of Athanasius of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian of Carthage, Origen of Alexandria, and Tertullian of Carthage wherein these African theologians contributed to the development of trinitarian Christianity. Standing on their shoulders, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote the “Credo” in 1904 as his philosophy of racial equality, which appears in his book *Darkwater* (1920). Together these courageous *Souls of Black Folk* from different eras gave to our liberation struggle which sustains our enduring salvific faith to call for in forthcoming justice, equality, and equity:

We believe in one God, the Father [Theos] almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father [Theos] before all ages, ... And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He [Theos] proceeds from the Father [Theos] and the Son, and with the Father [Theos] and the Son is worshiped and glorified.

The Nicene Creed 325 AD

I believe in God who made of one blood all races that dwell on earth. I believe that all men [and women], black and white, are brothers [and sisters], varying through Time and Opportunity, in form and gift and feature, but differing in no essential particular, and alike in soul and in the possibility of infinite development.

Therefore, our Credo is not a reaction to Project 2025. Instead, it is an ethical response to white Christian Nationalism that we believe, is inspired by the Spirit of the Lord.

We legatees believe, *Project 2025* is an attempt to protect the nation’s white mythology. It is an effort to maintain the nation’s sanitized and homogenized collective memory. It is a scheme to disremember the nation’s unreconciled hegemonic past – and its laws, policies, and procedures that have inflicted unreconciled pain upon Black people for more than 400 years. Collective Black pain then represents the shared horror of the nation’s indigenous and people of color.

Indeed *Project 2025* is an immoral strategic plan designed to exploit, manipulate, and prey upon the citizens of the United States and the “democratic world.” *Project 2025* is a tyrannous abuse of power:

- Project 2025 parallels Adolph Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) which instigated the formation of Fascist’s Nazi Germany’s politics and policies that excites neofascist’s policies and politics today.¹
- Project 2025 encourages tax policies that would decimate human families economically (the middle, working, and poor classes).
- Project 2025 would defund the US Department of Education (DOE) limiting the personal and collective agency of children in elementary through secondary education K-12. In addition, the (DOE) provides approximately 50% of most HBCU’s operating budgets.
- Project 2025 would displace immigrant families. Such department efforts are undemocratic, inhumane and the costs to families are amoral.
- Project 2025 is by definition an undemocratic and a neofascist’s authoritarian doctrine.

¹ Rebecca Donner, “Project 2025 in the Original German: How Nazi family policies seem to be the model for Trump’s abortion playbook” in *The Nation* (October 30, 2024). This article was last accessed on 12/26/2024: <https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/project-2025-in-the-original-german/>

Although we reject all unfettered rebellions against our God's [*Theos*] imago Dei, an image and likeness which abides within every person and personality, we focus on the historical and damming presence of white supremacy and its oppressive hegemonies. The newest national supremacy and hegemonic mutation is white Christian Nationalism [which is not Christian] and is in the policies and practices of *Project 2025*. Our *Credo* then uncovers that *Project 2025* is informed by white Christian Nationalism. Therefore, our *Credo* is not a reaction to *Project 2025*. Instead, it is an ethical response to white Christian Nationalism that **we believe** is inspired by the Spirit of the Lord:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because [The Spirit] hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; [The Spirit] hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Luke 4:18-19

There will be times when it feels as if the kings of this world are making all kinds of demands on us...and yet we must have courage to say NO!

Katie Geneva Cannon

We believe, that the Gospel records how Jesus embodied the incarnate seeds of Christianity as a protest movement that still calls us to stand[s] against imperial and hegemonic powers. The Spirit of the Lord birthed two significant manifestations, namely the Black Social gospel movement which became a kind of transmutation into the Black Church tradition and together, they shape the Black socioreligious and sociopolitical consciousness and our collective cultural worldview that is most noticeable at John Hope's, Charles Du Bois Hubert's and Benjamin Elijah May's Morehouse College. The Black Social Gospel movement and the Black Church tradition then continue to light a flamed torch for justice that illumines the indefatigable [our] path toward divinely ordained [our forthcoming] liberation.

We believe, the witnesses of this early Black Church tradition's proponents: Robert Bagnell, Mary McLeod Bethune, Virginia Broughton, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary Cook, Anna Julia Cooper, Benjamin Elijah Mays, Robert Frazier Miller, John Hope, Vernon Napoleon Johns, Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, S. Willie Layten, Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., Reverdy C. Ransom, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, William J. Simmons, Mary B. Talbert, Howard Washington Thurman, Lucy Thurman, Lucy Wilmont Smith, William Monroe Trotter, Henry McNeil Turner, George W. Woodby and Ida B. Wells.

The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them...One had better die fighting against injustice than die like a dog or a rat in a trap. There must always be a remedy for wrong and injustice if we only know how to find it.

Ida B. Wells

We believe, as legatees of a justice witness, we are called to resist oppressive white supremacy, and its disciples' unwillingness to accept that all Black women and men and other peoples of color (which are the majorities of global populations) are divinely created equals with white women and men. Furthermore, as legatees of the Spirit-led liberating and reconciling gospel, we proudly uphold the existential call [and secondly, we are called] to decolonize the sociopsychological systems preying upon oppressed Black people and any others deemed the poor and heavy-laden (downtrodden).

We believe, the Spirit baptized Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Gabriel Prosser, Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, and Denmark Vesey to point us toward justice, equality, and equity between women and men in our pulpits and pews.

*Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,*

“Lift Every Voice” James Weldon Johnson

We believe, that like Medus' siren song, the “white gaze” attempts to seduce by colonizing minds to accommodate, assimilate, and adapt to white supremacy's dysfunctional psychosis determined to turn our aspirations and hopes into stone. As such, disciples of white supremacy deceive and manipulate biblical texts and aspirational documents such as the *United States Declaration of Independence* and the *United States Constitution*.

We believe; therefore, legatees must continue to interpret all texts through a hermeneutic lens of holistic liberation and of suspicion to avoid the constant domineering white gaze. **We believe**, a first defiant act of resistance is, that all Black people apply for and retain United States passports. We encourage increasing numbers of Americans of African descent to travel abroad to further experience the global existential threat that is white supremacy. This affirms and informs us of

our citizenship rights. A second defiant act of resistance is leveraging our collective finances. Imagine the income and wealth between Black people and their churches. Invest monies in Black owned and managed Black banks. A few examples are *America Bank*, *Alamerica Bank*, *Citizens Bank of Atlanta*, *Carver Federal Savings Bank*, *Commonwealth National Bank*, and *Industrial Bank and Liberty Bank and Trust*. A third act of resistance is supporting Black business in our community and nationally (i.e., we can buy products through the internet services). A fourth act of defiance, we encourage leveraging our [Black] votes in all local, state and federal elections.

We believe, our collective finances will support “Africa is Rising,” the largest and youngest population in the world. By 2050, Africans will be 1 in 4 people on the planet.

We believe, authentic theologies have a common liberation chain stitch that is sewn into the fabric of biblical narratives. Without liberation motifs, we consider these species of theologies to be synthetic, fraudulent, and unauthentic.

Too many Catholic and Protestant theologians do theology as if they do not have to engage with the problem of white supremacy and racism. Not all of them ignore it completely, but some write as if slavery, colonialism and segregation never existed. In fact, white supremacy is more deeply entrenched now than it was in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, because back then, the country acknowledged its racial problems more directly. The civil rights and black power movements forced the nation—through Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and a host of other courageous people—to confront racism as a cancer in the body politic. The churches did too, both Catholic and Protestant. Fighting for racial justice in the 1960’s was the churches’ finest hour.

James H. Cone

We believe, it is honorable to defend democracy at home and abroad. We acknowledge that our dedicated service in the Armed Forces of the United States has been historically a means toward social and economic uplift for black women and men. However, until white America denounces undemocratic neofascist doctrine, we caution against our *full measure of devotion* in defense of a nation that has abandoned its pursuit of democracy and a more perfect union.

We believe, people who benefit from white privilege struggle to support Black suffrage. All know, because of Americans of African descent’s free (slave) labor, we are owed trillions of

dollars in remuneration and reparations for building America's infrastructure and white America's disproportionate income and wealth.

We believe, it is necessary to invest in Black banks and other Black financial institutions to create higher education and vocational scholarships that reinforce our expectations of our forthcoming generations.

We believe that although predominately white institutions (PWI's) support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies, we encourage all college-eligible Black students to seek admissions, enrollments, retainment, and graduations from Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCU's]. We encourage all students who seek high paying vocational professions, enroll into credentialed schools that offer internships that better prepare our children to make noble contributions to their families, societies, and communities. In addition, local, state and national governments must provide equitable educational opportunities for all students beginning at pre-kindergarten and those funds are not removed from these institutions so that all eligible students have choices.

We believe, that the legal system needs to provide “liberty and justice for all” and that formally incarcerated Black women and men born in the United States are immediately restored to their full rights, privileges, and responsibilities that are afforded to all United States citizens. This includes voting rights in local, state and federal elections. Furthermore, we disavow the “School – to – Prison Pipeline” which disproportionately affects our black children.

We believe, the sanctity of all human life of all people is divinely inspired and that our Creator has given to humanity – human free will which dictates matters of consciousness and the autonomy over human bodies. This includes a demand for accessible, affordable, adequate and universal healthcare for all people.

We believe, that in the face of all forms of undemocratic tyranny, *Black Lives Matter* is a representation of democratic rights for people of faith traditions, agnosticism, atheism and otherwise orientations.

We believe, and support *Critical Race Theory*, which informs *Project 1619*.

We believe, and support Theo ethically, socioeconomically, and sociopolitically, the people of the fifty-four nations of the continent of Africa. Specifically, we denounce the United States's unethical and unfair economic policies that result in the dehumanization of the people of the

Democratic Republic of Congo, the people of the Sudan and in addition, the people of Haiti which is the first democracy in the Western Hemisphere and the other nations of CARICOM (Caribbean Community).

We believe, and support a two-state solution between Palestine and Israel.

The state of Israel is the purveyor not only of a settler-colonial project but also of one that actively continues its violent expansion in the 21st century... [W]e have witnessed widespread, unnecessary death and extraordinary devastation that has led to the uprooting of practically the entire population of Gaza. Massive demonstrations all over the planet and deep collective grief about the conditions in Gaza have turned my attention back to the emotion-laden political mobilizations during the summer of 2020. People everywhere, including in Palestine, felt both rage and profound sadness at the racist police lynching of George Floyd.

Angela A. Davis

We believe, and support Ukraine's efforts to remain a democratic nation and furthermore, we condemn Russia's undemocratic tyranny against what is known as the "Breadbasket to the World" and like Hamas and other immoral and unethical undemocratic actors, the State of Israel is guilty of crimes against humanity. Their crimes parallel the United States's international policies which promote global white supremacy (which are neo-colonization, neofascism and neoliberalism). What is clear is that we support democracy, and we denounce all tyrannical undemocratic regimes.

We believe, and know, white supremacy's disciples cause unyielding pain and anguish to maintain black poverty and other unsavory conditions that result in psychological trauma. Therefore, legateses seek enlistment of Black psychiatrists, psychologists, and licensed social workers to assist our people toward regaining our mental health balance and adequate housing.

We believe, Black people cannot depend on neo-colonial, neofascist, or neoliberal politicians, political pundits, mainstream and cable news networks, or social media propaganda. We the legateses are correct and morally responsible to remain suspicious of political candidates who accept corporations – campaign donations. Furthermore, we the legateses cannot support political parties that refuse to pass clear federal legislation for bipartisan campaign finance reform. Without reform, we know that billionaire classes will continue to buy power and the United States government.

We believe, investment is essential in *The Black Press of America, National Newspaper Publishers Association* and regional and local black newspapers such as the *Atlanta Daily World, The Black Chronicle, The Black Defender, The Charleston Chronicle, The Chicago Defender, the Los Angeles Sentinel, the New Journal and Guide, the Tri-State Defender, the Oakland Post, and the Washington Informer* to name only a few.

We believe, that many in the white evangelical church have committed irrefutable political, economic, and religious idolatry. White evangelicals are drunk on the religion of white Christian nationalism which does not find its footing in the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth which is to “proclaim good news to the poor” [the oppressed and sociomarginalized].

We believe, Black people should return to the ecumenical Black Church tradition and renew fellowship with their brothers and sisters [this includes other Black faith traditions] to help fight and resist hegemonic practices which continue to endorse under-resourced public and private funding to abolish human poverty [sociomarginalized, oppressed, people labeled as otherwise people].

We believe, God [*Theos*] is eternal and righteous and is our Liberator who abolishes evil through the cross and witness of Jesus of Nazareth who is in solidarity with us and alone “Keeps [us] from being torn asunder:

*Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where
we met Thee,
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the
world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, May we forever
stand.
True to our God, True to our native land.*

Of this Credo, We the Legatees,

Janine Anthony

Timothy J. Clarke

Lucias M. Dalton

Joseph N. Evans

Kathy L. Ferguson

Willie D. Francois

James A. Grandison, III.

Geoffery V. Guns

Lester A. McCorn

Marvin A. McMickle

Otis Moss, Jr.

Otis Moss, III.

John Ogletree, Jr.

James C. Perkins

Aidsand Wright Riggins, III.

J. Alfred Smith, Sr.

Warren H. Stewart, Sr.

Mark A. Thompson

Valerie Miles Tribble

Cornel R. West

Tish Dixon -Willams

Janelle L. Wood

Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr.