

*The Public Influences
of
African-American Churches:
Contexts and Capacities*



A REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS BY
THE PUBLIC INFLUENCES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES PROJECT
THE LEADERSHIP CENTER AT MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

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Introduction

SWEEPING CHANGES DURING THE LAST FORTY YEARS in the structuring of African-American political and social life have both extended and reduced the political prominence of African-American churches. Though pivotal in channeling black political grievances and dissatisfaction into mass protest during the 1950s and 1960s, African-American churches have struggled to maintain political momentum within a contemporary political context characterized by rapidly evolving tactical and technical demands and a corresponding class of well-versed political professionals — including black political professionals.

One indication of the increased professionalization of American political culture is that the number of groups registered to lobby the federal government grew from roughly 1,000 in the early 1970s to 14,000 by the mid-1990s. Many of these organizations have a highly specialized focus and staff, and the most influential tend to be heavily funded. For example, the top ten public relations firms in the Washington, D.C., area had 1998 revenues in excess of ten million dollars, while the top ten revenue-generating lobbying firms brought in more than five million dollars in fees during the first six months of 1999.¹

There are also a growing number of African-American professional, trade, and lobby organizations with national memberships and issue orientations. Currently, there are about 400 such organizations — not all of which are part of the federal lobby registry, however, and none of which were listed in a recent ranking of the 120 most influential national lobby organizations.² Instead, the more dramatic evidence of black political professionalization has been the growing number of African-Americans

¹ Neil Lewis, “Once the Enclave of a Few Old Hands, Lobbying is Corporate and Fast-Merging,” *New York Times* (November 16, 1999), Section C:1.

² “The Power 25,” *Fortune Magazine* 136/11 (December 8, 1997), 144-50. The number of respondents in the *Fortune* survey was 329.

serving in elective and appointive offices. Black elected officials in the U.S. increased from approximately 100 in 1965 to 8,500 currently, and the growth in appointed political officeholders has likely been comparable.

Despite imbalances in political resources from one constituency group to another (or perhaps because of these imbalances), many social analysts tend to feel that the increasing professionalization of American political culture has been more boon than bane to advancing the civic needs and political interests of America's plural citizenry.³ Others have cautioned, however, that the growing professionalization of the political culture contributes to vicarious more than direct citizen participation in political life — with citizen interest in political life extending as far as electoral participation, but generally not carrying over into active engagement and monitoring of public policy or governmental affairs.⁴

This latter point is descriptive of the African-American context. African-Americans, and African-American churches, emerged from the Civil Rights Movement with political momentum stemming both from their successful mass-based public policy activism and from legally enhanced electoral opportunities achieved as a result of that activism. And while there is ample evidence that African-Americans have built effectively upon the electoral momentum produced by mid-1960s civil rights legislation, there is very little evidence of large-scale public policy engagement by rank-and-file blacks over the last forty years.

Research conducted by The Public Influences of African-American Churches Project (PIAAC) verifies, as outlined in this report, that African-American congregations have been far more involved institutionally in electoral activities than in public policy advocacy. The findings in the report are primarily based upon data from the PIAAC's random national survey of black churches, which yielded 1,956 respondents. The report also draws on feedback from interviews and group dialogues convened by the PIAAC Project over the course of three years. As the report will show, a number of factors contribute to the relatively weak emphasis by African-American churches on the monitoring of public policy and governmental affairs. Those factors include the contemporary political conditions and

³ See for example, John Bibby, *Politics, Parties, and Elections in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1987), 10-18.

⁴ See for example, Adolph Reed, Jr., *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregated Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), especially pp. 118-121.

circumstances in which black churches operate — including the tactical and ideological dynamics within the context. There are additional factors examined that are related to characteristics of the congregations. The research shows, in fact, that congregational characteristics such as membership size, annual budget, and the education level of the pastor more strongly influence a congregation's political posture than do factors related to the broader political context.

Nevertheless, political contexts vary with respect to the issues that receive attention, the prospects for political problem solving, and the political tactics most effective in achieving political objectives. With that in mind, there are a number of dynamics operative within the contemporary American context that suggest this to be an essential, and opportune, time to focus attention on the public role of faith institutions within American life, including:

- A growing sense of distance by many Americans from the political and public policy process (notwithstanding the spurt of post-September 11 patriotism) and the consequent need for institutional bridges that more effectively empower rank-and-file citizens;
- A large-scale reassessment of political responsibility and social support for guarantees of citizen participation in the nation's economic, educational, and electoral life — guarantees diligently fought for by faith communities and many others during the Civil Rights Movement; and
- Increasing governmental interest in matters related to personal morality, including reproductive rights and marital policies, and in collaborations with faith-based institutions around implementation of government policies, including social services for low-income persons.

The contemporary political activism of black churches builds on its own historical imperatives and traditions of activism, but also on the necessities and opportunities specific to the present political and social context. The PIAAC research sheds light on crucial aspects of the political agency of black churches, but also on how the traditions, imperatives, and capacities of black churches inform their responses to the specific circumstances of the contemporary political context. Focusing on the period since the Civil Rights Movement, the Project examines the frequency, type, intensity, and policy substance of black church political involvements, and also examines ways ecclesiastical and societal dynamics influence the contours of those involvements.

As part of its investigation of contemporary black church activism, the PIAAC Project (1) convened focus groups, roundtables, and a national conference where church leaders, political leaders, and scholars shared insights and information about the contemporary public involvements of black churches; (2) conducted numerous in-depth interviews with ecclesiastical leaders and public officials and successfully surveyed leaders of 1,956 predominantly black congregations (pastors were surveyed in 81% of the cases); and (3) facilitated research by approximately thirty scholars on the political positioning of black churches. Chapters by scholars affiliated with the Project have been assembled into edited volumes, with the first volume scheduled for release by Duke University Press in May 2003. The volume is entitled *New Day Begun: African American Churches and Civic Culture in Post-Civil Rights America*.

The present report serves as an outline of key findings and recommendations of the PIAAC Project and will emphasize the following:

- Contemporary black church activism has centered around electoral activity, and only infrequently around direct public policy advocacy;
- The potential influence of black churches among broader publics has been significantly impaired by a lack of black church-related infrastructure devoted to policy advocacy and intergenerational civic interaction; and
- Recommended actions include civic capacity building among church leaders through the facilitation of interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and inter-ethnic dialogues about churches and public life.



Research Design and Areas of Inquiry

A MAJOR PREMISE OF THE PIAAC PROJECT is that there has been a visibly different range and frequency of political involvements by African-American churches since 1965 that have not been sufficiently researched, analyzed, or documented. The PIAAC Project has sought to respond to this gap by gathering quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources and by facilitating original and updated scholarly analysis on this topic. In doing so, the approach has been to focus on the recent political behavior of churches, but not in isolation from the broader social, cultural, and institutional forces impacting the historical context of church action. That is to say, the Project has attempted to place as much emphasis on understanding the forces shaping the contexts of church action, as on the actions themselves. The Project has been most successful at this where it has been able to bring multi-disciplinary analysis to bear on the subject matter. This acknowledges that, as glaring as the scholarly inattentiveness to the “new” political behaviors of black churches has been, the lack of comprehensive analysis of black churches and politics that cuts across theological and social science compartmentalization of the topic has been just as conspicuous.

With respect to political actions or behaviors, the Project has been concerned with black church involvements in civic organizations, public policy advocacy, electoral activism (including clergy elective and appointive office holding), community development activities, and government-funded social service provision. These types of involvements are not necessarily new for African-American churches, but the scale of these activities in the contemporary period seem quite different compared to the years prior to the Voting Rights and Civil Rights Acts. For example, much greater attention is being given to electoral and lobby activities and much less attention to protest activities since 1965. Also, there appear to be important changes

since 1965 in the manner in which these activities are structured and the vehicles through which they are pursued. For example, direct black church access to and collaboration with governmental structures and diverse advocacy organizations seem quite different in the period after 1965.

To determine the accuracy of these impressions and to provide details about the scale and scope of contemporary political involvements by black churches, the PIAAC Project (1) conducted a random, national survey of black congregations; (2) interviewed a select number of prominent ecclesiastical leaders and public officials and collected formal denominational reports and resolutions bearing on denominational political engagement; and (3) invited approximately thirty scholars with expertise on aspects of the relationship between African-American churches and public life to write on designated topics that drew upon their preexisting research and research interests. What follows below is more specific detail about the methodologies and frameworks of the Project's multiple research components.

Project Survey

The survey was administered to a representative cross section of predominantly black churches, drawn from nineteen cities, twenty-six predominantly black rural counties, and two predominantly black suburbs. The cities that were selected represented variations in population size, regional location, and percentage black population. For example, there were large to mid-size, predominantly black cities such as Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and Detroit; and large to mid-size cities with relatively small black populations, such as Los Angeles and Boston. Smaller cities were included as well, such as Trenton, N.J., and Oakland, Calif. (See Appendix A for a complete list of the cities, counties and suburbs). Approximately 11,000 predominantly black churches were identified in these geographical locations. Surveys were mailed, more than once, to each church, and follow-up calls were made. The process yielded 1,956 completed mail-in and telephone surveys — with 324 of these respondents completing follow-up telephone surveys as well.

The survey instruments contained questions pertaining to the theological and cultural underpinnings of the congregation's ministry

mission; the nature and extent of the congregation's civic, electoral and public policy involvements; the channels of activism utilized by politically active congregations; the congregation's size, income, and denominational affiliation; and its pastor's educational background. (Please refer to Appendix B for the actual wording of survey questions and the distributions of responses). Some of the dynamics these questions were designed to probe were (1) whether there are certain membership sizes and socio-economic characteristics to activist congregations; (2) whether these congregations characteristically align with any particular denominational groups — for instance, historically black denominational groups (e.g., AMEs) versus predominantly white ones (Presbyterians), or denominations characterized by certain kinds of governance or authority structures (e.g., with or without bishops); (3) whether church-based civic involvements have been motivated by a particular theological or religious agenda, (e.g., “liberation theology,” “evangelicalism,” “afrocentrism”); and (4) whether specific political tactics and strategies have been emphasized more than others by activist churches in recent years. Insights from the data on some of these matters are discussed in Section III of this report.

Dialogues with Public Officials and Ecclesiastical Leaders

Dialogues were solicited with a select number of ecclesiastical leaders and public officials, either one-on-one or in a group setting. The purpose was to obtain perspectives on some of the ways churches engaged in public affairs collectively (as opposed to singularly), including perspectives on points of intersection between the political concerns of local congregations and those of denominational offices and advocacy organizations. Ecclesiastical leaders were asked, for example, about (1) whether and how their denominations had been engaged in public affairs in recent years; (2) whether their denominations collaborated with other denominations, civic groups, or public sector entities on political matters; (3) whether pastors and member congregations within their denomination were routinely informed about political advocacy initiated through the denominational offices; (4) whether member congregations were responsive, and in what ways, to these



Keynote address at PIAAC National Conference.



National religious leaders at PIAAC denominational roundtable.

denominational initiatives; and, conversely, (5) whether member congregations mobilized denominational offices around specific civic and political concerns. Public officials were asked for their perspectives as well about ways that churches, either individually or collectively, collaborated with the public sector and with advocacy organizations on public policy matters and other civic concerns. Insights from these discussions have been highlighted, at points, in the present report and, more systematically, in previously published reports on Project conference dialogues.⁵

Invited Chapters

Approximately thirty scholars were asked to write chapters on various aspects of the civic involvements of black churches since 1965.

The topics they were asked to write on were connected to one of three broad themes: (1) Churches and American Civic Culture; (2) Public Policies and Church Impact; and (3) Churches and Public Life in American Cities.

Scholars writing on churches and civic culture contributed chapters that explored (1) structural dynamics within the institutional and social contexts of black church activism that have influenced black church civic responsiveness; (2) theological and moral imperatives that have shaped black church approaches to civic life — including womanist and afrocentric imperatives that have served as challenges to mainstream American

⁵ See “Black Churches and Political Leadership in the New Millennium,” (PIAAC Project, Summer 2001); and “Social Witness, ‘Prophetic’ Discernment, and Post-Civil Rights Era Churches,” (PIAAC Project, Spring 2001); available at www.morehouse.edu/pubinfl.

social service provision. Scholars writing on public policies and church impact explored (1) black church responses to national public policy issues; (2) the factors internal and external to churches that shape those responses; and (3) the implications and outcomes of these black church policy responses. Some of the policy areas that were examined included affirmative action, welfare reform, health care, criminal justice, education, and U.S. Africa policies. Scholars writing on churches and public life in American cities looked at local patterns of civic and public policy engagement by black churches in cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, Columbus, Ohio, Detroit, and Miami. Although Project scholars worked individually on their respective research topics, they interacted with each other as part of an ongoing working group that met once each of the first two years of the Project. As part of this process, Project scholars were afforded opportunities to make presentations on their chapters for peer feedback. Project scholars also presented their chapters at the Project's national conference in April 2001. The chapters have been organized into edited volumes, including two volumes scheduled for publication by Duke University Press. The first of these volumes is scheduled for release in the spring of 2003.



PIAAC project scholars conference.



PIAAC project scholars and evaluators.



Core Learnings on Black Churches and Public Life

Electoral Activism as the New Face of Black Church Activism

AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES HAVE BEEN very much in the public eye during the 1980s, 1990s, and as recently as the November 2000 elections in the familiar public role of mobilizing black voters. Because of their access to a broad range of potential African-American voters, Democratic candidates for elective office have drawn routinely on the support of black churches. Organizations such as the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and even the Democratic National Committee have collaborated closely with black churches on voter mobilization efforts, particularly in the South and in targeted cities and states. These collaborations were viewed as responsible for substantial increases in black voter turnout throughout the 1990s in states such as Michigan and Georgia and in specific cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Atlanta.⁶ During the presidential elections in 2000, similar collaborations involving black churches were credited with producing record black voter turnouts in Florida and in Pennsylvania.⁷

Consequently, black churches have been crucial to the dramatic increase of black elected officials since the mid-1960s. In a growing number of instances, black clergy have, themselves, served in elective offices. Since

⁶ See David Firestone, "Drive Under Way to Raise Turnout of Black Voters," *New York Times* (October 29, 2000), www.nytimes.com; and Larry Elowitz, "An Analysis of the 1998 Midterm Elections," (paper on file with author).

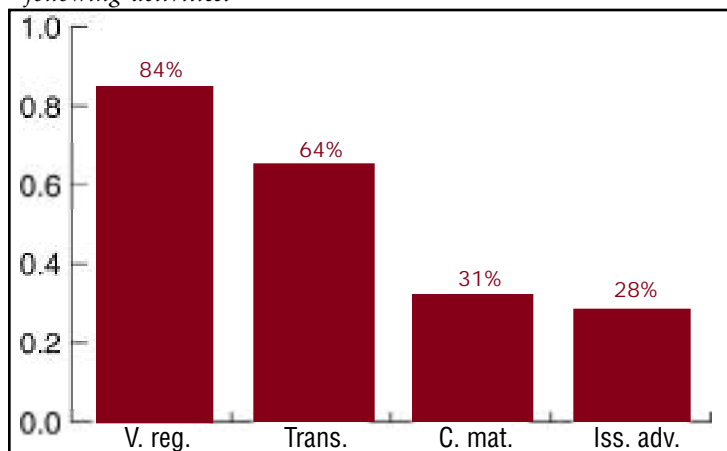
⁷ See Chase Squires, "GOP Governors Put on a Brave Face," *St Petersburg Times* (November 18, 2000), www.sptimes.com; and John M. R. Bull and James O'Toole, "Success Surprised GOP in Philadelphia's Once Republican Suburbs," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (November 9, 2000), www.post-gazette.com.

the early 1970s, six black clergy have been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, some have served as mayors, many others have served as state and local legislators, school board officials, and in many other elected and appointed positions. Quite a few black clergy have run unsuccessfully for political offices since the 1970s — including campaigns for President, U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, and Governor in at least one state.

PIAAC survey respondents were asked about their congregation’s electoral involvements over the previous ten years, including participation in voter registration activities, transporting people to the polls on election day, passing out campaign materials, and advocacy related to ballot issues or referendums. Most pastors (84 percent) indicated that their congregations had been involved with voter registration initiatives, while nearly two-thirds (64 percent) reported congregational efforts to transport people to the polls, and approximately half that many said their congregations had been involved in passing out campaign materials.

Figure 1. Select List of Congregational Activism

Q. During the last ten years has your congregation engaged in any of the following activities?



The extensive involvement by black churches in electoral matters suggests fairly broad agreement among African-American churchpersons about the necessity of a general involvement by their churches in political affairs. Voting related activity and political protest are, undoubtedly, the political activities that are most familiar to black churches. At the other end of the familiarity spectrum, however, would be matters related to public policy formation. The data in Figure 1 show, for example, that congregational involvement in advocacy related to ballot issues significantly trails congregational involvement in voter related activities (especially voter

registration initiatives). Only twenty-eight percent of the congregations said they were involved in advocacy related to ballot issues. Survey respondents were also asked whether their congregation was involved in advocacy related to a number of specific public policy issues. Data from those questions are summarized in the following section.

Modest Levels of Public Policy Involvement by Black Churches

ALTHOUGH AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES voiced a variety of political perspectives during the Civil Rights Movement, the overriding concern with civil rights served as a single-issue context into which large numbers of black churchpersons were effectively mobilized. According to a number of black church leaders interviewed by the PIAAC Project, however, public policy involvements by black churches during the last few decades have been impeded by an inability to define and to articulate issues in ways that mobilize black constituencies around the issues. As black church leaders explained, it is more difficult than it was forty years ago to achieve a consensus about the issues that should be prioritized and about the policy position to take on any given issue.

This has contributed, no doubt, to the relatively modest public policy involvements of African-American churches in the period since the Civil Rights Movement. When asked about their involvements in key public policy areas during the last ten years, Table 1 shows that 25% or less of the congregations surveyed by the PIAAC Project reported having direct

TABLE 1

ISSUE INVOLVEMENTS BY BLACK CHURCHES

Q: During the last ten years has your congregation been directly involved with any of the following as part of their congregational mission?

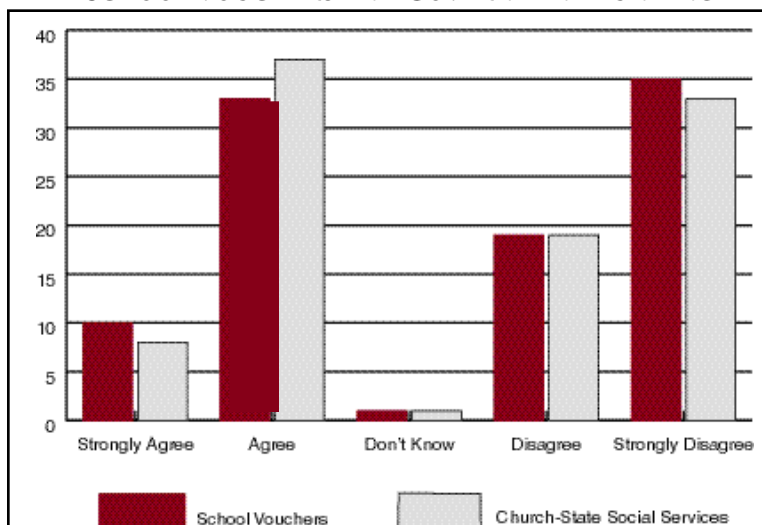
| | % Yes |
|---|-------|
| Public school policies | 41.5 |
| Civil Rights policies | 31.0 |
| Public welfare policies | 27.2 |
| Affirmative action | 24.1 |
| Criminal justice policies | 23.1 |
| Government economic development policies | 19.8 |
| Social rights and empowerment of women | 17.5 |
| U.S. Africa policies | 13.5 |
| U.S. Caribbean and Latin America policies | 5.5 |
| N=1,956 | |

congregational involvement in six out of nine strategic policy areas. This included areas such as criminal justice policies; women’s rights; affirmative action; and U.S. policies toward Africa and the Caribbean. There were three areas where the involvements were reported to be higher: 41% cited involvement with public education policies, 31% cited involvement with civil rights policies, and 27% cited involvement with welfare policies.

The issue orientation of African-American churches suggests wide-ranging interests but a still strong two-fold emphasis on racial justice and economic development policies. Three of the top five issue categories in Table 1 (civil rights, affirmative action, and criminal justice) could be considered racial justice issues, with economic development policies listed closely behind the racial justice issues. In many respects, then, the broad policy emphases of black church leaders remains fairly consistent with the emphasis forty years ago on racial justice and economic empowerment.

Despite continuities in the broad policy emphases of black churches, however, there were strong differences of opinion about how justice and empowerment are best achieved — especially as it relates to the nation’s approach to education and welfare policies. For example, when a sub-sample of 324 respondents were asked about government interest in channeling education tax dollars toward vouchers for private education, 43% of the respondents agreed with the policy (with 10% of those strongly agreeing), 54% disagreed (with 35% of those strongly disagreeing). When asked about government interest in funding churches to provide social

FIGURE 2
SCHOOL VOUCHERS AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING



services, 46% agreed with this initiative (8% strongly agreeing), 52% disagreed (with 33% strongly disagreeing). This data is reported in Figure 2.

A commonly relied upon method of policy activism has been collaboration with advocacy organizations. Only 2% of the congregations surveyed, however, indicated that they frequently collaborated with advocacy organizations in the lobbying of public officials. Fifty-two percent said their congregation never engaged in such lobbying. Similarly, when asked whether their congregation met with advocacy organizations around public policy matters, only 2% stated that they frequently did so, while 42% said that they never met with advocacy organizations (see Table 2). What is clear, then, is that only a very small number of black congregations were formally engaged.

TABLE 2
FORMAL AND INFORMAL POLICY INVOLVEMENTS
BY BLACK CHURCHES

| | Group Lobbying (n=324) | Group Meetings (n=324) | Group Giving Money (n=324) | Policy Discussions in Worship (n=1,956) |
|------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Frequently | 2% | 2% | 13% | 29% |
| Sometimes | 27% | 35% | 39% | 48% |
| Rarely | 18% | 19% | 33% | -- |
| Never | 52% | 42% | 12% | 22% |

Black congregations that were involved with advocacy organizations indicated being involved in a wide variety of such organizations — even though the organizations most frequently cited tended to focus on racial justice or economic development issues.⁸ For example, 317 congregations (16% of the 1,956 respondents) reported involvement with the NAACP. Other civil rights organizations, including the Rainbow Coalition, and SCLC, were cited 61 times (with more than one of these organizations sometimes cited by the same respondent). And community economic development organizations, including the Urban League, were cited 202 times (again, with more than one of these organizations sometimes cited by

⁸ The survey question from which the data is taken asks respondents about organizations that they are involved with locally.

the same respondent). The remaining citations were categorized as ecumenical organizations, public health organizations, cultural organizations, electoral organizations, neighborhood associations, education-related organizations, and a variety of other organizations. Data on the type of involvements congregations have with these organizations suggest, however, that quite a bit of it is in the form of monetary donations.

Although ecclesiastical channels were not often cited as channels through which congregations pursued their policy advocacy, denominational and interdenominational channels have been important resources for congregational activism in varying degrees. For example, black congregations within mainline denominations (including the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, United Methodists, American Baptists, Lutherans, Disciples of Christ, United Churches of Christ, and Roman Catholics), have been able to draw upon their respective denominational lobbyists on Capital Hill and on offices and divisions within their denominations devoted to public policy advocacy and analysis. At least two of the historically black church bodies, the AME denomination and the Progressive National Baptist Convention, have had Washington lobbyists off and on during the last twenty years. Also, all of the mainline denominations (except for the Roman Catholics who have had their own structures) and many of the historically black denominations have been involved in the advocacy ministries of ecumenical bodies such as the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA and the World Council of Churches. Overall, however, the historically black churches have engaged in activism far less through denominational or through interdenominational structures than have mainline churches. The general absence within historically black churches of divisions or offices dedicated to policy advocacy has been a source of real concern among segments of the leadership within these denominations. As a prominent leader within one of the Baptist conventions stated in an interview with the PIAAC Project:

My prayer is that some day our denomination will have a desk or a staff person who can do policy advocacy as it should be done and as it must be done if we are going to survive.

PIAAC Project's Outreach to Partner and Stakeholders

Outreach to Denominational and Judicatory Leaders

TOP LEADERSHIP IN ALL OF THE HISTORICALLY BLACK denominations, in many mainline Protestant denominations, and in the Roman Catholic church were contacted early in the Project for discussion about the Project's goals and strategies. Based upon these contacts, endorsements of the Project were received from many of these ecclesiastical leaders. For example, the Project received specific endorsements from top leaders in each of the historically black denominations and from top leadership in the National Council of Churches. A number of their written endorsements were included in the Project's brochure circulated to thousands of churches as part of the Project's initial outreach to congregations. Also, when surveys were mailed to the Project's sample of congregations, the surveys were accompanied in most instances by a letter of endorsement from top leadership within their respective denominations.

The Project was very fortunate to receive this level of support from ecclesiastical leaders. They gave their support because they believed in the importance of the Project — (see Appendix E for text of endorsement statements). In addition to placing their support behind the work of the PIAAC Project, black ecclesiastical leaders engaged in systematic dialogue with the Project about current prospects for black church public influence and about steps that should be taken to strengthen the influence of their churches in the public sphere. For example, leaders from prominent black Evangelical, Charismatic, Pentecostal, and Holiness denominations and church organizations attended a PIAAC Project roundtable convened to receive feedback from some of these rapidly growing church groups about their public sphere involvements. Some of these same leaders, along with black church leaders from across the denominational spectrum, participated

in the Project's national conference as well. In both of these conference settings, church leaders were candid in articulating the challenges that black churches, and initiatives such as the PIAAC Project, will have to contend with in an effort to increase black church influence in public affairs. These dialogues were initial installments on what is hoped will be much further denominational, inter-denominational, and local-level dialogues between church leaders, scholars, and community leaders on religion and public life.



Denominational leaders and special guests at PIAAC roundtable.

Outreach to Local Congregations

Communicating PIAAC Project objectives and information to local congregations has been an extremely important part of the Project work. Consequently, direct contact has been made with thousands of local congregations via a series of mailings and via PIAAC Project staff participation in the annual national assemblies of several of the historically black denominations. The 11,000 black churches on the Project mailing list received a variety of Project materials including: the brochure announcing the launching of the PIAAC Project; the Project survey and endorsement letter; two Project newsletters; two publicity mailings about the national conference; and (for a few hundred churches) a synopsis of our national conference and our denominational roundtable. PIAAC Project staff also attended and gave presentations at annual assemblies of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.; the Progressive National Baptist Convention; the National Baptist Convention of America; the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; and the Church of God in Christ. At some of these gatherings the Project also sponsored special meals or receptions as a way of sharing details about the Project with targeted church leaders and local pastors. The contacts made with local pastors and, in some instances,

the relationships that were established, will be strategic to future work of the PIAAC Project — including local policy roundtables that are being considered.

Outreach to Elected Officials

The PIAAC Project was also endorsed by two of the largest bodies of black elected officials: the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) and the National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM). The Project enjoyed a particularly close working relationship with the NBCSL. For example, NBCSL members were featured speakers and participants in the PIAAC roundtable and national conference, and the PIAAC Project played an active part in NBCSL's newly initiated Faith Roundtable. The hundreds of NBCSL and NCBM members also received PIAAC Project mailings, including the Project brochure and newsletters. Moreover, a number of NBCSL and NCBM members shared perspectives on important matters related to black churches and public life via the PIAAC Project's conferences and targeted interviews. The feedback from black elected officials provided intriguing contrasts to that of black clergy on the role and contribution of black churches to public life. These contrasting perspectives represent a potentially rich area for further research and systematic dialogue.

Outreach to Scholars

Although a fairly rich body of scholarship has been established on the public roles of black churches during the Civil Rights Movement and earlier, significantly less scholarship exists on their public involvements during the period since the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore, a primary objective of the PIAAC Project has been the facilitation of multi-disciplinary



Governmental leaders addressing policy issues at PIAAC national conference.

academic research and dialogue on black religion and public life during the post-Civil Rights Movement period. The PIAAC Project set out to identify as many scholars as possible engaged in research on the post-Civil Rights Movement context of black church activism and approximately thirty such scholars were invited to join the Project as commissioned scholars. These scholars were asked to gather periodically as a working group and, ultimately, to produce individual chapters that would be organized into multiple anthologies on black churches and public life. Scholarly interactions within the working group contributed insights from a variety of disciplines, including religious studies and the social sciences. This multi-disciplinary aspect was facilitated through the convening of seminars and conferences that placed the Project scholars into direct dialogue with one another. It has been our hope that working with this team of scholars would energize current and future scholarship on black churches and public life—not only among the Project’s scholars, but also among other scholars that gained inspiration of some sort from the PIAAC Project.

Outreach to Emerging Leaders

Half of the African-American population is under the age of 35, according to the latest census, and there are numerous indicators that this generation of black youth and young adults are noticeably less involved in the voting process and in civic and social organizations than are middle-aged and senior blacks. Although there are many reasons for this, one factor has certainly been the lack of shared civic institutional space between emerging and established social leaders and spokespersons. Facilitating shared space where social and political leaders across generations can dialogue and interact has been a priority of the PIAAC Project. The Project’s denominational roundtable and national conference included delegates and speakers representing a variety of generational perspectives on the public role of black churches. At these conference events, student leaders and Civil Rights Movement leaders, and “old school” and “new school” political and religious leaders, could engage each other on critical issues of the day. The Project made a special effort to insure the presence of undergraduate students, graduates students, and seminarians at the national conference in

Washington, D.C., by providing sponsorship for dozens of these students—especially for students from the Atlanta University Center Schools. The national conference also facilitated a strategy workshop on youth leadership development—which was one of the most informative, energetic, and well-attended workshops of the conference. The dialogue and recommendations that were generated by the workshop made clear the need for black churches and civic organizations to work much harder at encouraging and inviting contributions from younger generation leaders.⁹

⁹ For a synopsis of the workshop discussion, see “Black Churches and Political Leadership in the New Millennium” (PIAAC Project, 2001), pp. 11-14; www.morehouse.edu/pubinfl.

Toward Broader Engagement by African American Churches: Challenges and Recommendations

TRADITIONS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM have been strong though, by no means, universally embraced among African-American churches. Still there is an increasingly widespread expectation that churches will play an integral part, somehow, in addressing social concerns within the African-American community. This expectation is driven in part by the sheer urgency of the social situation of many African-Americans, but also by the fact that churches continue to represent one of the most viable and elemental institutions in the African-American community. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the PIAAC Project (and many of the black church leaders who shared their insights with the Project),¹⁰ there are critical steps that need to be taken in order for African-American churches to achieve the potentially broad-based political influence they are capable of, including:

- Expansion of the advocacy infrastructure within historically black denominations

Church-based advocacy offices and organizations:

At the very least, it is important that each of the historically black denominations have a person designated to represent their denomination's public policy concerns on Capitol Hill and, preferably, at state and local levels as well. The majority of the historically black denominations have yet to designate such a person or office. The same could be said about the newer communions of black independent and non-denominational churches. Ideally, many of these black denominations and communions could collaborate with each other to

¹⁰ For additional context on many of the recommendations outlined here, see "Black Churches and Political Leadership in the New Millennium" (PIAAC Project, 2001) and "Social Witness, 'Prophetic' Discernment, and Post-Civil Rights Era Churches," (PIAAC Project, 2001); www.morehouse.edu/pubinfl.

develop an advocacy office or organization that advances their many mutual public policy interests and concerns.

Training and curriculum components:

The training needs of black clergy tend to outpace relevant and accessible training opportunities – especially as it relates to training for civic leadership. For example, given the fact that quite a few black denominations and communions do not have formal education requirements for their clergy, the numbers of clergy who take advantage of broad-based, liberal arts curricula offered by colleges and universities may be somewhat low compared to professionals in other sectors.¹¹ These types of curricula can provide insights into the culture and mechanics of civic and political life that seldom are emphasized in many of the Bible Schools and theological institutions where many black clergy receive their training. On the other hand, a factor that sometimes discourages matriculation by black clergy in liberal arts educational contexts is that theological and ministerial imperatives do not receive sufficient attention within these contexts. What could prove helpful are more contexts where black clergy, and lay leaders, can reflect theologically, and from the standpoint of social science disciplines, on the church's role within society. Bible schools and theological seminaries are two important contexts where a stronger emphasis on public affairs issues and social science analysis could contribute to the civic leadership of church leaders. Helpful, as well, would be special programs and conference events facilitated by ecclesiastical and educational institutions that focus on the church's public mission and that are offered to as many black clergy as possible.

Policy research and analysis:

Church-related policy advocacy and civic leadership training will need to be supported by a strong research and analytical component if it is to be effective. Currently, theological and social science assessments of the public roles of black churches are in short supply and, in any case,

¹¹ See data on this, for example, in Appendix B of this report; and in C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

require constant updating and contextualizing. Moreover, available research on these topics needs to more systematically inform the relationship between black churches and the public sphere. The task of both research production and research dissemination would benefit greatly from the creation of at least one black church-related, political think tank that focuses on national politics, and additional think tanks that focus on regional or local concerns.

- Facilitation of youth leadership development

Shared civic institutional space:

Very few of the national African-American advocacy organizations or ecclesiastical groups have welcomed youth and young adult voices onto their organizational center stage. Youth and young adults are often subjects of discussion, and function within the organization in an auxiliary capacity, but rarely are they positioned so that their concerns or voices inform the organization's central agenda. If national black advocacy and ecclesiastical structures are not places where genuine intergenerational dialogue and leadership can take place, younger generation blacks will continue to seek alternative venues where their issues and leadership will be taken seriously. All too often, however, younger blacks find no viable alternatives and become lost to the civic and community building process altogether. Black civic and ecclesiastical organizations can take steps to insure that younger blacks that are well prepared to make valuable contributions are given ample opportunity to do so. These organizations can also take steps to facilitate leadership preparation among many other youth and young adults through internship and mentorship programs. Given the existence of more than 8,000 black elected officials, dozens of black civic and lobby groups, and numerous offices and divisions within black ecclesiastical structures—there can be at least that many internships devoted to leadership development and civic exposure for black youth and young adults.

Emerging leaders programs and dialogues:

There is also a need for younger church leaders to dialogue systematically with leaders from across governmental, non-

governmental, and business sectors about the church's theological and social mission. Very few opportunities for this kind of dialogue are built into existing university or seminary curricula, or into the leadership training or teaching components within ecclesiastical organizations—and many of the younger leaders who would benefit most from this kind of dialogue may not have immediate access to these institutions to begin with. A way to respond to this would be through Emerging Leaders Programs that convene 2-3 day dialogues between 20 or so younger faith-based leaders and a smaller number of leaders from other sectors. Not only should dialogue between younger church leaders and leaders from other sectors be encouraged, but also dialogue between younger church leaders that cuts across racial-ethnic lines—especially between various racial-ethnic minorities. Coalitions and collaborations between racial-ethnic minorities will become increasingly important given the anticipated demographic shifts in the coming years, and emerging leaders within these various communities will need as many creative opportunities as possible to grapple with issues and to search for common ground.

APPENDIX A

Survey Sampling Methodology

The 90% black census tracts. Keywords included: "African," "Greater," "Missionary," and "COGIC" (Church of God in Christ). Yellow pages telephone books were then manually consulted to include other churches listed within categories of obviously black churches that were not discerned through prior steps. Categories included African Methodist Episcopal Churches, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Churches, Christian Methodist Episcopal Churches, Church of God in Christ Churches, and any Baptist churches listed according to one of the black Baptist conventions. Churches were similarly identified in largely black rural counties in six deep-South states (two counties per state). Census tracts that were 70% black (instead of the 90% black standard applied to urban census tracts) were selected. This slightly increased the chances that the churches selected might not be black churches, nevertheless the smallness of these rural counties necessitated casting a wider net to increase the overall number of churches. (Surveys completed by churches that were not predominantly black were not included in the final database).

Surveys were mailed to all the churches on the list and churches that did not respond to the first mailing of the survey received a second mailing. Those that did not respond to the second mailing received a third mailing. Churches who did not respond after the three mailings received telephone calls and were asked to complete the survey over the telephone. In addition, in order to supplement initially low numbers of Pentecostal respondents, surveys were administered at a national meeting of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). Surveys completed at the COGIC meeting were included in the database only if they were from congregations in the cities, suburbs, or rural counties designated by the Project as research sites. This multiple-step survey process yielded 1,956 completed surveys over a twelve-month period. With the completion of the national survey, a follow-up survey was conducted among the survey respondents. A total of 324 respondents of the 1,956 church leaders who responded to the initial survey provided answers to the follow-up survey. The follow-up survey solicited additional information on public policy matters probed in the initial survey.

METROPOLITAN AREAS COVERED IN SAMPLE

Atlanta (also suburban DeKalb County); Birmingham; Boston; Charlotte; Chicago; Columbus, Ohio; Dallas; Denver; Detroit; Jackson, Miss.; Los Angeles; Memphis; New Orleans; New York; Newark, N.J.; Oakland; Philadelphia; Trenton, N.J.; Washington, D.C. (also Prince George's County, Md.).

RURAL COUNTIES COVERED IN SAMPLE

Alabama: Bullock, Greene, Lowndes, Macon (including Tuskegee town)
Florida: Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison
Georgia: Hancock, Stewart, Talbot
Louisiana: East Carroll Parish, Madison Parish, West Feliciana Parish
Mississippi: Claiborne, Holmes, Jefferson
North Carolina: Herford, Northampton
South Carolina: Allendale, Lee, Williamsburg
Tennessee: Haywood, Hardeman, Lauderdale
Virginia: Greensville, Sussex

APPENDIX B
1999-2000 BLACK CHURCHES AND POLITICS SURVEY

PROFILE OF CHURCH SAMPLE

| | Overall Sample (N=1,956) | Follow-Up Sub-Sample (N=324) |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION | | |
| Northeast/Mid-Atlantic | 15.7% (307) | 10.4% (34) |
| Midwest | 20.0% (393) | 17.5% (57) |
| South | 47.6% (932) | 65.4% (212) |
| West | 6.6% (130) | 6.4% (21) |
| No Response | 9.9% (194) | 0.0% (0) |
| 2. CHURCH SAMPLE BY DENOMINATION | | |
| AME | 5.8% (115) | 11.1% (36) |
| AMEZ | 2.1% (41) | 3.4% (11) |
| CME | 5.7% (112) | 1.2% (4) |
| Nat'l Bapt. USA | 18.4% (361) | 26.2% (85) |
| Nat'l Bapt. of Amer. | 1.7% (34) | 1.2% (4) |
| Prog. Nat'l Bapt. | 5.8% (115) | 4.6% (15) |
| Other Baptist | 6.2% (123) | 7.7% (25) |
| COGIC | 10.3% (203) | 1.8% (6) |
| Church of God | 2.3% (46) | 2.7% (9) |
| Full Gospel | 2.3% (46) | 0.6% (2) |
| United Methodist | 3.3% (73) | 5.2% (17) |
| Nondenominational | 7.6% (150) | 11.1% (36) |
| Catholic | 3.8% (76) | 2.1% (7) |
| Episcopalian | 1.6% (32) | 0.6% (2) |
| Presbyterian | 1.8% (37) | 1.2% (4) |
| Lutheran | 1.8% (36) | 1.8% (6) |
| UCC/Congregational | 0.8% (16) | 1.2% (4) |
| Disciples of Christ | 0.7% (15) | 0.9% (3) |
| Other | 15.3% (300) | 14.8% (48) |
| No Response | 1.2% (25) | 0.0% (0) |
| 3. RESPONDENTS, CLERGY VS. NON-CLERGY | | |
| Pastors | 81.6% (1597) | 83.6% (271) |
| Other ministers | 5.4% (106) | 5.2% (17) |
| Non-clergy | 2.7% (53) | 0.3% (1) |
| Unconfirmed | 10.2% (200) | 10.8% (35) |
| 4. TENURE OF PASTOR | | |
| Five years or less | 27.5% (440) | 23.6% (64) |
| Six to ten years | 15.3% (246) | 19.5% (53) |
| Eleven to twenty years | 25.2% (403) | 31.3% (85) |
| Twenty-one years or more | 21.7% (348) | 22.5% (61) |
| No Response | 10.0% (160) | 2.9% (8) |
| 5. RESPONDENTS BY GENDER | | |
| Women | 10.9% (215) | 10.8% (35) |
| Men | 87.0% (1702) | 86.7% (281) |
| No Response | 1.9% (39) | 2.4% (8) |

6. RESPONDENTS BY AGE

| | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|
| Age 45 or less | 21.9% | (430) | 18.8% | (61) |
| Age 46 or more | 74.6% | (1,461) | 77.4% | (251) |
| No Response | 3.3% | (65) | 3.7% | (12) |
| Median age | 55 | | 58 | |

7. RESPONDENTS BY RACE*

| | | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| Black | 93.4% | (1827) | 91.9% | (298) |
| White | 3.6% | (72) | 4.3% | (14) |
| Other | 0.2% | (5) | 0.3% | (1) |
| No Response | 2.6% | (52) | 3.4% | (11) |

*Congregations can be majority black with non-black pastors or ministers.

8. RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Grammar (1-8 years) | 0.7% | (15) | 0.6% | (2) |
| High School (1-3 years) | 4.7% | (92) | 3.7% | (12) |
| High School (4 years) | 20.1% | (395) | 21.9% | (71) |
| College (1-3 years) | 15.2% | (299) | 17.5% | (57) |
| College (4 years) | 20.0% | (393) | 20.6% | (67) |
| College (5 plus years) | 32.9% | (645) | 29.6% | (96) |
| No Response | 5.9% | (117) | 5.8% | (19) |

9. CONGREGATIONS BY SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Less than 100 | 23.6% | (463) | 19.1% | (62) |
| 100-499 | 45.7% | (895) | 45.3% | (147) |
| 500-999 | 15.7% | (308) | 17.9% | (58) |
| 1,000-1,999 | 8.3% | (164) | 11.7% | (38) |
| 2,000-2,999 | 4.7% | (93) | 4.0% | (13) |
| 3,000 or more | 1.2% | (25) | 0.9% | (3) |
| No Response | 0.4% | (8) | 0.9% | (3) |

10. CONGREGATIONS BY ANNUAL INCOME

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| \$1-9,999 | 15.0% | (294) | 13.8% | (45) |
| \$10,000-49,999 | 20.4% | (400) | 20.6% | (67) |
| \$50,000-99,999 | 19.3% | (378) | 20.0% | (65) |
| \$100,000-249,999 | 20.4% | (399) | 19.4% | (63) |
| \$250,000-499,999 | 13.0% | (256) | 13.5% | (44) |
| \$500,000 and over | 1.8% | (37) | 1.8% | (6) |
| No Response | 9.8% | (192) | 10.4% | (34) |

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

| | % | # |
|---|---------|------|
| Q: Black churches should be involved in politics? | | |
| Strongly Agree | 37.68% | 713 |
| Agree | 41.75% | 790 |
| Don't Know/No Opinion | 4.76% | 90 |
| Disagree | 5.76% | 109 |
| Strongly Disagree | 10.04% | 190 |
| VALID CASES | 100.00% | 1892 |
| Q: In the last two years, how often have political candidates or elected officials delivered speeches or remarks within your worship services? | | |
| More than ten times | 5.40% | 104 |
| Five to ten times | 10.64% | 205 |
| A few times | 29.68% | 572 |
| Never | 54.28% | 1046 |
| VALID CASES | 100.00% | 1927 |
| Q: During the 1990s, how often have international, national, or local political issues been discussed as part of your regular worship service? | | |
| Frequently | 29.02% | 554 |
| Sometimes | 48.61% | 928 |
| Never | 22.37% | 427 |
| VALID CASES | 100.00% | 1909 |
| Q: During the 1980s, how often have international, national, or local political issues been discussed as part of your regular worship service? | | |
| Frequently | 19.89% | 337 |
| Sometimes | 55.14% | 934 |
| Never | 24.97% | 423 |
| VALID CASES | 100.00% | 1694 |
| Q: Is your congregation currently involved in the activities of any civic or political organization? | | |
| Yes | 49.74% | 973 |
| No | 50.26% | 983 |
| VALID CASES | 100.00% | 1956 |
| Q: In what ways has your congregation been involved with these organizations?* | | |
| Given money | 86.4% | 819 |
| Attended meetings | 92.2% | 898 |
| Advocated issues with public officials | 77.0% | 695 |
| Participated in programs or events | 85.6% | 792 |
| Served on a board or committee | 67.5% | 608 |
| Participated in protest rallies or marches | 45.5% | 398 |

*Respondents answering this question are from the 973 who indicated involvement with civic or political organizations.

Q: How regularly has your congregation had the following involvements with civic and political groups?*

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----|
| Given money | | |
| Frequently | 13.8% | 45 |
| Sometimes | 39.8% | 129 |
| Rarely | 33.3% | 108 |
| Never | 12.9% | 42 |
| TOTAL | | 324 |
| Attended meetings | | |
| Frequently | 2.4% | 8 |
| Sometimes | 35.8% | 116 |
| Rarely | 19.1% | 62 |
| Never | 42.5% | 138 |
| TOTAL | | 324 |
| Advocated Issues with officials | | |
| Frequently | 2.1% | 7 |
| Sometimes | 27.4% | 89 |
| Rarely | 18.2% | 59 |
| Never | 52.1% | 169 |
| TOTAL | | 324 |
| Served on board or committee | | |
| Frequently | 0.6% | 2 |
| Sometimes | 13.5% | 44 |
| Rarely | 21.6% | 70 |
| Never | 64.2% | 208 |
| TOTAL | | 324 |

*Follow-up question

Q: It is helpful that the government is now encouraging churches to apply for and use government funds to provide social services.*

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-----|
| Strongly Agree | 8.9% | 29 |
| Agree | 37.3% | 121 |
| Don't Know/No Opinion | 0.9% | 3 |
| Disagree | 19.1% | 62 |
| Strongly Disagree | 33.3% | 108 |
| Blank | 0.3% | 1 |
| TOTAL | 100.0% | 324 |

*Follow-up question

Q: Does your congregation have any programs for which it receives governmental funding?

| | | |
|-----|-------|------|
| Yes | 24.2% | 474 |
| No | 75.7% | 1482 |

Q: Tax dollars for public education can be put to better use in the form of vouchers that parents can apply toward private school fees for their children.*

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-----|
| Strongly Agree | 10.4% | 34 |
| Agree | 33.3% | 108 |
| Don't Know/No Opinion | 1.2% | 4 |
| Disagree | 19.1% | 62 |
| Strongly Disagree | 35.4% | 115 |
| Blank | 0.3% | 1 |
| TOTAL | 100.0% | 324 |

*Follow-up question

Q: During the last ten years has your congregation engaged in any of the following activities?

| | | |
|---|-------|------|
| Helped in voter registration drive | | |
| Yes | 67.7% | 1326 |
| No | 13.0% | 255 |
| Blank | 19.1% | 375 |
| Given rides to the election polls | | |
| Yes | 51.7% | 1013 |
| No | 29.7% | 582 |
| Blank | 18.4% | 361 |
| Handed out campaign materials | | |
| Yes | 24.9% | 487 |
| No | 55.2% | 1081 |
| Blank | 19.8% | 388 |
| Advocated on behalf of a ballot issue, proposition, or referendum | | |
| Yes | 22.0% | 432 |
| No | 57.5% | 1129 |
| Blank | 20.3% | 398 |
| Participated in protest rallies | | |
| Yes | 13.0% | 256 |
| No | 65.9% | 1289 |
| Blank | 21.0% | 411 |

Q: During the last ten years, has your congregation been directly involved with any of the following as part of their congregational mission?

| | | |
|--|-------|-----|
| Public school policies | | |
| Yes | 41.5% | 813 |
| No | 17.6% | 346 |
| Blank | 40.7% | 797 |
| Public welfare policies | | |
| Yes | 27.2% | 533 |
| No | 32.1% | 628 |
| Blank | 40.6% | 795 |
| Affirmative action policies | | |
| Yes | 24.1% | 473 |
| No | 34.6% | 678 |
| Blank | 41.1% | 805 |
| Civil rights policies | | |
| Yes | 31.0% | 608 |
| No | 28.2% | 553 |
| Blank | 40.6% | 795 |
| Criminal justice policies | | |
| Yes | 23.1% | 452 |
| No | 35.6% | 698 |
| Blank | 41.2% | 806 |
| Government economic development policies | | |
| Yes | 19.8% | 388 |
| No | 39.0% | 764 |
| Blank | 41.1% | 804 |

| | | |
|---|-------|------|
| Social rights and empowerment of women | | |
| Yes | 17.5% | 343 |
| No | 41.2% | 807 |
| Blank | 41.2% | 806 |
| U.S. policies related to Africa | | |
| Yes | 13.5% | 264 |
| No | 44.8% | 877 |
| Blank | 41.6% | 815 |
| U.S. policies related to the Caribbean or Latin America | | |
| Yes | 5.5% | 108 |
| No | 52.6% | 1030 |
| Blank | 41.8% | 818 |

APPENDIX C

PROJECT CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

Rationale: *A Primary objective of the PIAAC Project has been to increase scholarly focus and systematic dialogue among church leaders, policy officials, and scholars on matters pertaining to the contemporary political involvements of African-American churches. Since not nearly enough attention has been paid to this particular analysis and dialogue, the PIAAC Project invested considerable time and effort in identifying and mobilizing persons that bring strategic analysis and strategic institutional and social positioning to bear on these matters. The Project intentionally sought out scholars and ecclesiastical and political leaders that have attempted to integrate theological and political concerns, and that have attempted to integrate theory with practice. The Project also tried to insure that a good mix of both younger and well-established scholars and leaders were involved in the multifaceted dialogue facilitated by the PIAAC Project. The Project events that formally facilitated this dialogue are outlined below. Lists of conference and roundtable presenters and resource persons, and of Project scholars, are included in separate reports (as indicated below) or in Appendix C.*

2001 National Conference

A conference on “Black Churches and Political Leadership in the New Millennium” was held April 19-21, 2001 in the Washington D.C. area. The conference facilitated a rare cross-sector dialogue between scholars, students, church leaders, and political leaders on black faith-based activism. The discussions drew on the broad social leadership of the approximately 250 persons in attendance and on a significant body of PIAAC-sponsored research. The Project research featured at the conference included: (1) studies by twenty-five scholars across the country on the civic, electoral and public policy involvements of black churches; and (2) preliminary results from the PIAAC survey of 1,956 African-American churches. The conference also centered around six strategy workgroups designed to gain insights from conferees about ways to more effectively position black churches within American public life. Working groups discussed strategies for strengthening the public leadership of women and youth, and strategies for strengthening the contributions of ecclesiastical structures, theological education, and scholarly research to black public advocacy. Conferees and conference presenters represented liberal and conservative perspectives and a range of denominations, advocacy groups, governmental branches, and academic institutions. Also, while a large number of the presenters and attendees were either individually or by institutional association identified with well-established activist traditions and orientations, the conference also drew on perspectives and participation from black Evangelical, Charismatic, Pentecostal, and Holiness churches. A synopsis of the conference dialogue, including strategic recommendations, was published summer of 2001 and distributed to all conferees and to many others interested in the work of the Project. The conference synopsis is available from the PIAAC office upon request and on the PIAAC website: www.morehouse.edu/pubinfl.

2001 Denominational Roundtable

In March 2001, a roundtable discussion was convened to examine “Social Witness, Prophetic Discernment, and Post Civil Rights Churches.” This gathering assembled thirty religious leaders from families of churches not historically at the forefront of black political activism—although very much at the forefront of important ecclesiastical evolutions within American Protestantism—to assess the involvements of these churches within contemporary American public life. The denominations and

church bodies represented at the roundtable included the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, Church of Christ Holiness, Mount Sinai Holy Church of America, The National Black Evangelical Association, Mission Mississippi, and The National Ten Point Leadership Foundation. There were also representatives from a number of academic institutions and from a number of foundations including The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Ford Foundation, and The Pew Charitable Trusts. The roundtable was convened to explore the significant, though largely untapped, advocacy potential of black Evangelical, Charismatic, Pentecostal and Holiness churches. The advocacy potential of these churches stems both from numerical growth within the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in particular, and from evidence of new thinking among these churches on the importance of extending their influence into public affairs. A synopsis of the roundtable dialogue, including strategic recommendations, was published in the spring of 2001 and distributed to the roundtable participants and to many others interested in the work of the Project. The roundtable synopsis is available from the PIAAC office upon request and on the PIAAC website: www.morehouse.edu/pubinfl.

Project Scholars Seminars

Approximately thirty scholars commissioned to provide research chapters on various aspects of the civic, electoral, and public policy involvements of black churches were convened for a weekend seminar, first in 1999 and then in 2000. The general purpose of these gatherings was to facilitate dialogue between the Project scholars about the themes and methodologies that would guide the Project research. The seminar in 2000 provided the researchers with an opportunity to receive feedback on their chapters from other Project scholars and from a small group of evaluators.

APPENDIX D

PROJECT MEDIA COVERAGE

TELEVISION

- Public Television**—Interview excerpts from PIAAC national conference speakers broadcast on *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*. [April 2001]
- PAX Television Network**—Broadcast of 60 minute Town Hall Meeting held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C (April 19, 2001) as part of the PIAAC national conference. [May 2001]
- Chicago Broadcast Ministry**—Broadcast of 60 minute Town Hall Meeting held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C (April 19, 2001) as part of the PIAAC national conference. [June 2001]
- WISH TV, CBS, Indianapolis**—Principal Investigator and Project Media Coordinator interviewed on the *Religion in the News* program. [May 2001]

RADIO

- National Public Radio**—Principal Investigator was featured guest for an hour-long interview on *PowerPoint*, a weekly public affairs show. [February 2001]
- Powernomics Radio Network**—Principal Investigator was Featured Guest for an hour-long interview on *The Tom Pope Show*, a public affairs show that airs on a national radio network. [May 2001]

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

- Baltimore Sun**—Article on PIAAC national conference and survey data. [April 20, 2001]
- Detroit News**—Article on PIAAC national conference and survey data. [April 29, 2001]
- New Haven Register**—Editorial on PIAAC national conference. [May 3, 2001]
- Religion News Service**—Article on PIAAC national conference and survey data, which ran in a number of media sources including:
- (1) **Christian Century** [May 9, 2001]
 - (2) **Pittsburgh Post-Gazette** [April 29, 2001]
- Associated Press**—Article on PIAAC national conference and survey data, which ran in a number of newspapers and was posted on a number of websites including:
- (1) **Washington Post Online** [April 19, 2001]
 - (2) **Atlanta Journal-Constitution** [April 20, 2001]
 - (3) **Los Angeles Times** [April 21, 2001]
 - (4) **Dallas Morning News** [April 20, 2001]
 - (5) **Tampa Tribune** [April 20, 2001]
 - (6) **The State** (Columbia, SC) [April 20, 2001]
 - (7) **Naples Daily News** (Florida) [April 21, 2001]
 - (8) **Christianity.Com** [April 2001]
 - (9) **Free Republic.Com** [April 19, 2001]
- Chronicle of Philanthropy**—PIAAC research discussed in an article on government funding of faith-based social services. [May 17, 2001]
- Savannah Morning News**—PIAAC research cited in article on black churches, and politics. [April 24, 2001]

APPENDIX E

PROJECT ENDORSEMENTS

“This type of research is long overdue in the African-American community. That is why I applaud those who have envisioned this study. It will not only highlight with integrity that which the Black Church has done in the civic arena, but offer theological, economic, political, and social rationale for that responsible participation.”

Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., Presiding Bishop, Fourth Episcopal District, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

“As President of the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., I endorse this project and look forward to working with you.”

The Rev. Dr. E. Edward Jones, President, National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.

“I am pleased to endorse this project. It is my thinking that an effort such as this would coordinate and draw together in a documented way the influence and impact of the Black Church at every level of involvement.”

Bishop Cecil Bishop, Senior Bishop, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

“With African-American Churches facing some of the most critical and urgent issues in their history, this project will prove to be a timely and valuable resource in our communities.”

The Reverend Dr. Tyrone S. Pitts, General Secretary, Progressive National Baptist Convention

“I wholeheartedly endorse this project as a resource that will contribute to a process of discernment by African-American Churches in reflecting upon their history and the needs of a new millennium.”

The Reverend Dr. Yvonne Delk, United Church of Christ

“. . . Be it resolved that the 23rd Annual Legislative Conference of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, December 1st - December 3rd, 1999, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators endorse the Public Influence of African-American Churches, a project of the Leadership Center at Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia. Be it further resolved that NBCSL members actively fill out and return the surveys and encourage their clergy to also participate in the project.”

*Representative James Thomas, NBCSL President;
Representative Henrietta Turnquest, Liaison to the PIAAC Project*

APPENDIX F
PROJECT PERSONNEL

Project Director

The Rev. Dr. R. Drew Smith
Scholar-in-Residence
The Leadership Center at Morehouse College

Communications Liaison

The Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith
Executive Director
The Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis

Project Coordinator

Alexis Simmons
The Leadership Center at Morehouse College

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University of Maryland