

NEWS

These Black Conservative Pastors Are Men Of Action, And Soul pt. 2

(Editor’s Note: READ Part 1 in the CNC March 10, 2022 issue or online at chattnewschronicle.com) PART 2 & CONCLUSION

If anyone is in touch with the needs of the black community, it’s Williams. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, he attended Morehouse College in Atlanta on account of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who would later become a friend and even solicit his advice on how to become a more effective preacher. For the past 70 years, Williams has been preaching and serving his community week in and week out.

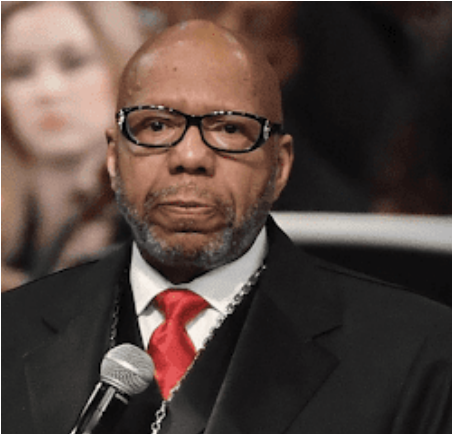
In 2014, after the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Williams said that “I heard the voice of God: Something needed to be done...and...[it] needed to be done through the church.” He considered protests and boycotts of white businesses, but after seeking the counsel of a close friend, he chose to call a meeting at the Commerce Club in Atlanta for civic leaders from every county in the metro area.

His goal was to “turn black America around.” After hearing from community leaders and conducting a listening tour during the next six months, he collected his data and met with Dr. Mary Langley at the Morehouse School of Medicine, who prepared a qualitative analysis of his findings. The results showed that the three greatest needs in the African-American community were family, home, and parenting.

Over the past six years, he’s developed a parenting curriculum that’s widely taught in churches and schools in the Atlanta area through his non-profit organization, A.A.C.T.S. (African-American Churches Transforming Society). Furthermore, his church also provides a wide range of services including welfare assistance programs, childcare, counseling, eldercare, and support for single-parent households.

If Williams emphasizes the reforms that can be made at the local level in African-American families, he also acknowledges the legacy of racism, and its impact on the black community. In his autobiography, It Ain’t But One, when discussing the issue of black-on-black crime—the lightning rod that sparked most of the criticism for his eulogy of Aretha Franklin—Williams cites “covert racism,” more than “overt racism” as the source of the problem. He explains that “the spirit of slavery still lingers” today. He notes that “white slave owners pitted their slaves against each other as a way of keeping them from uniting in opposition to slave holders.” This “atmosphere of suspicion,” he notes, “was a system of divide and conquer, and its terrible effect can be seen in our culture to this day.” Nevertheless, when looking for solutions to the grievances voiced by protest movements today, he believes that the most fruitful place to start is in the home.

What motivates Williams? Where does he get the courage to preach with such boldness as he did at Aretha’s funeral? “All you got to do is drive through our community and see how destitute our community is,” he said. He described the ethos as “lackadaisical,” “apathetic,” “nonchalant,” and lamented that there’s “no desire for true life.” Their pain is evident, and Williams understands it first hand. In the 1980s, Williams found himself addicted to cocaine while simultaneously trying to pastor his church. He hid his habit from the congregation, but his life began to spiral out of control. After battling with the addiction for years, he finally checked himself into rehab. He’s been clean ever since, and his testimony serves as a powerful example to those in his community struggling with the same issue. The situation on the ground is intolerable. “That’s drive enough for me,” he



Pastor Jasper Williams

concluded.

There is a stigma in the black community against being conservative or Republican. Presidential candidate Joe Biden, who later apologized for his comments, provided the case in point when he recently stated: “If you have a problem figuring out whether you’re for me or Trump, then you ain’t black.”

Pastor Corey Brooks is all too familiar with this presumptuous mindset. When he surprised his community by endorsing a Republican candidate, Bruce Rauner, for governor of Illinois in 2014, the costs were beyond anything he could have ever imagined. He received death threats and had to hire private security. His family had to go into hiding, and his church was broken into and burgled. Seventy-five percent of his 2,500-member congregation left (taking their tithes with them), and unions were bussed into his neighborhood to protest day after day.

While he was taken aback by the reaction, he can personally relate to their feelings. When he was a freshman in college, he recalled, a professor wrote a bunch of political positions on the board without any labels. Each student had to identify where they stood. He found the set of principles that most closely aligned with his values and waited for the professor to reveal the labels. He “almost fainted when he saw his views were conservative and Republican.” His family had always been liberal and Democrat. How could this be?

Pastor Jasper Williams, on the other hand, resists labels altogether. When I asked about his political affiliation during our video interview, he said that “I’m not a Democrat or a Republican,” and prefers to call himself a “theo-crat-con based on what God says about the issues.” He elaborated on this point by explaining his frustration with how both parties treat African Americans: “The Democrats take us for granted, and the Republicans don’t think enough of us to ask us.” While Williams eschews partisanship, there’s no question that his views about the family and personal responsibility align more closely with beliefs conventionally held by conservatives than by liberals.

When I pressed Brooks to define conservatism, he gave the following principles: “fiscal responsibility,” “less governmental involvement,” “family focused,” “entrepreneurship and free enterprise,” and “not need[ing] all these social programs...to succeed.” Brooks notes that “Blacks embody conservatism...we have conservative views and thoughts, but it doesn’t translate into our political party affiliation.” For example, the church is a recognized source of authority in black neighborhoods, even for those who do not attend services regularly. And the importance of family, and intergenerational bonds, is widely esteemed in their communities. In short, black conservatism is a way of life more than an ideology.

As I spoke with Brooks, I was curious about his thoughts on the ideological shifts that have taken place on the Right since Trump’s election in 2016. Many have talked about a conservative realignment



Pastor Corey Brooks

on issues like the Iraq war, immigration, and globalization. Mitt Romney’s platform looked a lot different than Donald Trump’s. The party of hedge fund managers became the Republican Workers Party, or so many have claimed. Did he identify with one brand of conservatism more than the other?

Brooks told me that the “working-man’s message is more appealing...[but] Trump himself makes it hard for the message to be received.” Reflecting on the issue of globalization, he said that it became hard for families to take care of themselves when they lost the strong economic bases in their communities. He also noted that “a lot of African Americans do believe that...[on account of] being so loose with immigration...a lot of jobs that young African Americans could have, they’re not available.” He discussed the pervasive myth among American elites that “nobody wants those jobs anyway.” He rejects that notion emphatically, saying “that’s not true,” and personally knows many people who would do these types of jobs if they had the opportunity.

When I asked Williams about the shifts in conservatism, he was more measured. While he agreed with Brooks’s analysis about the economic impact of immigration, he thought that the GOP was “too harsh and hard on keeping people out,” and that we should encourage immigration provided it’s done legally. And he noted that, when it comes to healthcare, it seems like Republicans “don’t have a plan.” On foreign policy, however, he acknowledged that Trump may have been right to a degree: “we have been too involved in other nations’ business.”

Where did it all go wrong? Both pastors pointed to the period immediately following the civil rights era. Speaking of Martin Luther King Jr., Williams said, “You can’t judge a man out of his times. Martin Luther King contributed a lot to the aggrandizement of the African-American community. No question about that. But with us looking back, we have 20/20 vision.” The civil rights movement accomplished many good things; however, the loss of the black economy and black-owned business that followed had far reaching consequences.

Brooks points to liberal policy: “Government got too involved...in our families, and they started to fall apart.” He acknowledged that there are “underlying racial issues” that disparately affect blacks, “but even more so it’s about poverty.” He complained that all of America’s largest cities have the same issues affecting African Americans, and they are all run by Democrats: “High unemployment,” “high incarceration,” “lack of businesses,” “high single-parent households,” and “high abortion” rates.

He was very excited to see Republicans pick up the criminal justice reform issue, saying that it’s “real important... we have a lot of people who were incarcerated for way too much time for non-violent offenses.” He blames Clinton and Biden-era liberals for locking up a lot of

men. “Hillary Clinton called them predators,” he said. Their policies “led to them [black men] being locked up more than anybody.” Williams had a slightly different take on the criminal justice issue. “If we change the culture of black America through parenting it would eliminate the justice system from being tilted the way it is,” he says. Politics is downstream of culture. Focus on the home and the politics will take care of itself.

When asked about the upcoming election, Brooks said that Joe Biden is popular “only because of one person: Obama...He gets the black card because [of] Obama.” Despite Biden’s success in the primaries with black voters, however, he thinks that he could lose the black vote the more that the incarceration issue is discussed on the campaign trail or at the debates. But don’t count on them pulling the lever for Republicans. While Brooks said that “I wish they would go out and vote for Trump and conservative values,” disenchantment with Biden over the crime issue is more likely to lead to them staying home, driving low voter turnout in black neighborhoods.

What about Kanye West? Perhaps the most influential black entertainer on the planet, and now, a Trump supporter. Brooks said, “I like Kayne,” specifically, “I appreciate his transformation. I like what he’s trying to do, that he’s being vocal about it. Speaking out about some of the ills of the music industry...I like that he’s talking about some conservative principles, especially as it relates to mass incarceration.” Are Brooks’s views about Kayne widespread in his local community? Not so fast. “They think Kanye is crazy, but [he] gets a pass because he’s a major entertainer, and he has great wealth.”

If someone with Kayne’s status and cultural capital is nevertheless written off for his rightward turn, Brooks and Williams face nearly insurmountable odds—at least as far as politics is concerned. Thankfully for their communities, and the country, their message is bigger than politics.

What does the Gospel mean to you? The answer that both men gave surprised me. Ask that question in other circles and you’re bound to get a lengthy explanation about different theories of the atonement. For them, the answer was simple: action. Pastor Brooks responded with enthusiasm: “Living it out in the flesh...It’s about loving God but it’s also about loving your neighbor. The Gospel has to be translated into action.” Similarly, Pastor Williams noted, “Seeing the need and then doing something to fulfill the need that you see.” Regardless of their politics, this is what makes their ministries so powerful. Both men possess seemingly boundless energy and unflinching courage. They’ve set out to change the world family by family and block by block. Their goal is to build a nationwide movement to provide resources for black communities to fight poverty by strengthening families, teaching job skills and entrepreneurship, and providing a place of refuge for those seeking to escape gang violence.

Conservatives like to retreat to seminars and conferences to debate ideology. While Brooks and Williams could no doubt hold their own in such a setting, they’ve taken a different path. Being men of action, they chose to spend their time building institutions that will continue to meet the spiritual, material, and intellectual needs of their communities long after they’re gone. Those in politics like to think in terms of election cycles, be it two years or four years. Brooks and Williams take the long view. What they’ve built will pay dividends for a century. In light of the ephemerality of our politics, we could learn from their example.

TIME: from page 10

to 1895 – into the history of daylight saving time.

A brief history of daylight saving time

Congress instituted daylight saving time during World War I and again during World War II, and once again during the energy crisis of the early 1970s. The idea was that having extra light later into the afternoon would save energy by decreasing the need for electric lighting. This idea has since been proved largely inaccurate, as heating needs may increase in the morning in the winter, while air conditioning needs can also increase in the late afternoon in the summer.

Another pro-daylight saving argument has been that crime rates drop with more light at the end of the day. While this has been proved true, the change is very small, and the health effects appear to outweigh the lower rates of crime.

After World War II, it was left to state governments to set the start and end dates for daylight saving time. Because this created many railroad scheduling and safety problems, however, Congress passed the Uniform Time Act in 1966. This law set the nationwide



dates of daylight saving time from the last Sunday in April until the last Sunday in October.

In 2007, Congress amended the Uniform Time Act to expand daylight saving time from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November, dates that remain in effect today.

The law allows states and territories to opt out of daylight saving time, however. Arizona and Hawaii are on permanent standard time, along with Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and American Samoa. Now, many other states are considering whether to stop falling back and springing ahead.

The question then becomes: Should they pick permanent daylight saving time or permanent standard time?

The strong case for permanent standard time

Americans are split on whether they prefer permanent daylight saving time or permanent standard time. However, my colleagues and I believe that the health-related science for establishing permanent standard time is strong.

Standard time most closely approximates natural light, with the sun directly overhead at or near noon. In contrast, during daylight saving time from March until November, the natural light is shifted unnaturally by one hour later.

Based on abundant evidence that daylight saving time is unnatural and unhealthy, I believe we should abolish daylight saving time and adopt permanent standard time.

FREEMAN: from page 4

offer. Brian Tibbs, who leads the Nashville office of architecture firm Moody Nolan, is working on designs for the space, Freeman said. ane Allen is the CEO of the Nashville Entrepreneur Center. Martin B. Cherry | Nashville Business Journal

Brian Tibbs leads the Nashville office of Moody Nolan.Nathan Morgan | For the Nashville Business Journal

A Metro Council resolution asks Freeman to convene a steering committee of at least nine people, including community members, business and religious leaders, as well as representatives from Fisk, Meharry and TSU (the last of which has an incubator on its campus).

The council asked for a report in three months that details design plans and initial cost estimates.

“My hope,” Cooper told the Rotary audience, “is that it’s really just the first of several coming around Nashville that’s ... a platform for workforce development, being able to make the match right there between the needs of a growing economy and the workforce.”