

“It’s All About Trust”

by

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Why are Black Americans so successful at creating, developing, and operating religious institutions? In part, it is because we have a long history with the church business. In addition, churches have roles and functions that permit almost everyone to find their niche. However, the most important reason why Blacks have successful churches may be because, given the inherent nature of our spirituality, we trust in God and we trust our relatives, neighbors, friends, and colleagues in religious settings. From time-to-time, we hear about the pastor who disappears with the secretary and the building fund, but, in general, we have trust and confidence in churches.

What we should come to realize is that trust is the key to most forms of success. Successful families are successful when husbands, wives, and children trust each other. Neighborhoods are most successful when residents believe that their neighbors are going to promote positive outcome; i.e., maintain their homes, contribute to neighborhood institutions, and not permit negative factors from infiltrating the neighborhood. A nation is successful when its citizens believe that those leading the nation have their best interest at heart, and when there are no glaring indications to the contrary. When there is trust and confidence, members of these social institutions can invest most of their energies on growing and expanding as opposed to protecting themselves from harm that is anticipated in an environment of distrust and fear.

What is the link between trust and economics? In a recent article in *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales contend that trust has everything to do with economic success. Trusting and confident individuals are more likely to be entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs believe that customers will be honest, and will compensate them for the goods and services that they produce. The authors conclude that the greater the degree of trust in an economy, the faster that economy will grow.

Black Americans, in particular, should make efforts to benefit from this research. We should do whatever it takes to build greater trust in our families and in our communities. We should use this increased level of trust to generate greater economic growth in our communities. If we want to benefit from America’s economic outcomes, we should engender trust with other ethnic groups in the nation. It may be that history serves as a high and thick barrier for creating the type of beneficial trust between Blacks and the broader community that will lead to Blacks enjoying the full benefits of Americans economic outcomes. However, what we know is that the current economic disparity between ethnic groups in the nation is explained, to a significant degree, by the lack of trust between these groups. Greater trust could help decrease economic disparity.

How can we operationalize this trust-building and improve economic outcomes? It’s simple: One individual at a time; one family at a time; one community at a time, and one day at a time. Once we begin to truly trust each other, then we can fearlessly and confidently direct our

energies to achieving our most productive and beneficial goals and, thereby, live lives that are satisfying.

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