



“Living Investment League”

Black America’s alignment with Christianity has been a very detrimental factor in our economic development. First and foremost, Christianity caused us to “cast all of our cares on God” (*Holy Bible, 1 Peter 5:7*). It also caused Black Americans to pray and look for miracles. There is absolutely nothing wrong with having faith and confidence in God, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with praying. However, for these rituals of life to produce fruit, one must be certain that one is praying to the proper god, and that one is engaging in the proper type of prayer.

Following *CHANGE: Black America’s Religion*, we need to embark upon a transformation of our thinking about religion. The first change that is required is to convince Black Americans that we can do better; that, in fact, we deserve better. When you have been a legal slave for 250 years, a Jim Crow slave for 100 years, and a Civil Rights slave for 50 years, it is difficult to get out of the slavery mindset. In the slavery mindset, every little easing of a burden seems like a major improvement. Just because legal slavery ended and we could stop working without receiving compensation, and we entered into a situation where we worked and only received enough pay as sharecroppers to pay the boss off at the end of the year and still ended up with nothing, does not sound like an improvement. Actually, it sounds like we have been placed in a worse condition. Under legal slavery, if the plantation did not yield sufficiently to produce a surplus for the master, then it was not our problem and we would not be held accountable. However, as a sharecropper, if the farm did not yield a surplus, then we were responsible—we owed the boss man. If we did not produce enough to pay off the boss man, then we were in the red (in the negative) to him, and it meant that we were bound to the boss man for another year—hoping that it would be a better year in which we could pay off the boss man for the current and past year.

Just because we went from Jim Crow slavery where we were tied to a farm or a company that virtually owned us because our boss in the company had to approve all of our financial transactions, to a point where all of our financial transactions are dependent on our credit score does not sound like an improvement to us. In both cases, we are still beholden to someone who does not have our best interest at heart. In the latter case, financial institutions lend to us at a higher rate than they lend to our employer, and our employer only pays us enough to just make ends meet. So although we may be buying a house, a car, and have a little change in the bank and in our retirement account, when all is said and done, we only have enough just to make ends meet—if we’re lucky.

Unfortunately, one reason why we are not in better condition is because of our religious affiliations. Our preacher demands that we tithe at his church; if we don't tithe, then he takes whatever we have to give. What we have to give is our hard-earned cash. Yet, we give in order to have a place to go and cry and sing and holler and release our pent-up emotions from living in a hell-like rat race all week long, and to have a place that people can come and view our dead body when we die. After the funeral, they will say, "Deacon, Brother, Mother, Sister so and so was sho, sho nuf a good member." We were good members because, like blind sheep, we brought our hard-earned money to church every week and put it in the collection plate. But after thirty or forty years of service, besides the hell-like life that we experience, what do we have to show for all of those donations?

During those 30 or 40 years, our preacher has received many appreciation gifts, many new cars, and probably a larger church building to call his own. All we have done is work every day to support him and his family, and work on weekends to help raise funds for him. What about us? Don't we deserve more?

Yes, we deserve more—a lot more. Why? Because, if we read the Bible, which we do little of because we count on the preacher to read it for us, we would find that, in the very beginning of the Book of Genesis, a very important statement is recorded. When we read the statement with overstanding, then we will find out who we really are.

Genesis 2:7 says that God made man out of the dust of the ground, then breathed into his nostrils the breadth of life, and man became a living soul. Later, in Chapter 2, verses 21-22, the *Genesis* notes the making of the woman. Irrespective of how one interprets the making of the woman, it boils down to the fact that she was made from the same material from which the man was made, and that she, too, was enlivened by the breadth of God.

Now we all know that our bodies are made of earth. All we have to do is allow a dead body to deteriorate in an open place and we will see that it returns to dust. In fact, if we were to think about it carefully, we would realize that that which sustains the body is food which is derived from the earth. Earth sustains earth. Therefore, we know that our real and essential self is other than earth. We say that we are from God, so if the body is of earth and not of God, then which part of us is of God? The answer is, "Our living spirit, our living breadth, our living soul." Where did it come from? Directly from God! If it came directly from God, then it must be of God, correct? Yes, it came directly from God and it is of God! But if it comes directly from God and is of God, then are we not part of God?

Let's go further. If a piece of cake comes from a cake do we call it other than "cake"? No we call a piece of cake, "cake". Well, if that is true, and our essential selves come from God and is of God, should not we call ourselves god? You say, "But we can't do the things that God can do, so how can we call ourselves god?" "Who told you that you were naked?" (*Genesis 3:11*) In other words, who told you that you can't do the things of God?

What did God tell us that we could do? He said in *Genesis 1:26*, that we have dominion over all of the creeping things of the earth, all of the plants, herbs, and trees, and that we were to have dominion over it and to keep it. God is our father, correct? Fathers give their children instructions, correct? The father may not require of the son and the daughter that they do all that he does or did, but he gives them the power and authority to do what they are instructed to do. If the daughter or son is of their father, and the father names is “X,” then the son and daughter have every right to call themselves “X,” whether they can or cannot perform exactly as their father performed, correct?

But let’s think about this a little more. Look at what the European has done on Earth. He has mastered the depths of the seas. He has mastered the highest mountains. He flies around this earth like a bird. He roams the land with complete dominion over it. Isn’t he doing exactly as God requested that man do? The European does not sit around waiting for God to come and help him. If he has a problem, being “God’s son,” he simply knows that God has given him dominion over all aspects of this Earth, so he begins to research and he invests sufficiently in research to solve every problem that he has confronted over the past 6,000 years. The European has been taught that he is God’s son and daughter, and he acts accordingly. Why don’t we act like we are God’s son and daughter? Why don’t we solve our problems? Why don’t we invest in research sufficiently to find answers to our predicament? No, we go to church to pray to God, when we are god or at least an extension of God; but we don’t really believe it. If we really believed it, then we would act like it. In other words, we would act like the European when it comes to doing the things that we need to do and to having the things that we need to have on this planet.

The foregoing comments are designed to help us see that we have been worshiping the wrong god in the wrong way. God says in *Exodus 20:3* to have no other god before him. That is, place no other god before ourselves and our father—who is our god. The *New Testament Book of Mark 12:30* says that you should worship and love God “with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind, and with all of your strength.” That is, we should worship our father and ourselves in this way because it is the way to ensure our well-being and to provide for our happiness.

Once we recognize that we are part of God, our father, then we will begin to behave differently. We are not part of some White God named Jesus. We are not part of some spooky God that is out there in the thin air. We are the direct descendants of god, who is man, the first man of which was made directly by God—“God breathed into his nostrils the breadth of life and man became a living soul.”

Now that we know that we are god, we can begin to believe that we can find a way out of our predicament. We have brains and we can think. Therefore, you don’t have to take the following suggestions to heart if you have a better idea. However, if you find that these statements make sense, and that these concepts will work for you, then please feel free to adopt them.

We believe that an effective way for Black Americans to resolve their predicament is to found their own nation. If we know that we are god, then we know that we can do whatever it takes to found our own new nation. To found our own new nation, we need land. Land is not free. Therefore, it is important that we have money to buy land. You say to yourself, “I barely have enough money to buy the things that I need for life now; how can I save money to buy land in a new location?” The answer is, stop giving all of your money to a preacher and a church that provides little-to-no return on your investment.

If we are superstitious and we believe that our preacher has power over us and that he can do us harm, then that tells us at the outset that he is an evil being and not a righteous person. He will try to convince us that we must stay with him, because otherwise we will be sinners and go to hell. Barring that, he will say that, if we want to be a part of his congregation, then we must give because he has a mortgage to pay on the building and utilities to pay. He will say that he has to pay the musicians, the janitorial staff, and the landscaping crew. In other words, he is telling us that he has a business, that we are his good customers because we tithe, and that he doesn't want to lose us. What about our own business? What business do we have, and who are our customers? What benefits are we receiving from patronizing the pastor's business? Listening to good music? Dancing and hollering? A place to show off our dead bodies at the end of life?

We can listen to any type of music we want in the privacy and comfort of our own homes. Moreover, we don't have to spend money for a new outfit every week or month or on a laundry bill so that we can look good in church. We can holler and cry to God our father or to ourselves in the privacy of our own homes. We can dance in the privacy and comfort of our own homes. And any mortuary is willing to place our dead bodies on display after we die, and it will cost us a very small fraction of all that we pay to a preacher and a church during the course of a lifetime.

Once we realize that Christianity, church, and pastors, have bamboozled and hoodwinked us our entire life, then we will realize that there is a better way to live and a better way to happiness.

Let us begin a process today to initiate our own Living Investment League (LIL). We will find that a “LIL bit at the time adds up, and can change our life.” We are not talking about starting a corporation. We are not talking about starting a business—at least initially. All we are suggesting is that we begin to save; by ourselves or with others.

Here's how the LIL works. You and your family members, neighbors, college roommates/classmates, and friends can form a LIL. You, your family members, and friends whom you trust and are willing to work with, should enter into an agreement (a type of club), in which you place your funds. You do not have to meet in a building, you do not have to travel and meet in each other's homes for long-winded meetings. You just need a way to make your contributions to the LIL.

A member of your LIL can agree to contribute as much or as little as he or she wants every week or as often as you all agree to make contributions to the LIL. There should be a onetime contribution, which is equivalent to the total cost of establishing a LIL: i.e., the minimum balance that is required for a savings account at your local bank. (If at all possible, we should use Black-owned financial institutions. Otherwise, we should use banking institutions in our community, which will use our savings to create loans for our community.) The total amount should be split evenly between members. For example, if the minimum balance that is required to establish a savings account is \$100, then the minimum one-time contribution to the LIL should be $\$100/X$, where X is the number of members in your LIL. Members of your LIL do not have to pay the one-time contribution all at once if they cannot afford such an expenditure. They may spread out their one-time contribution over as many payments as they like. Once the one-time contributions have been made, then the LIL can be formed and a savings account can be established at the local financial institution.

A key question is, “Who is going to be responsible for the savings account?” We suggest that you decide that three or four members of the LIL should be responsible for the savings account for the following reason. If one of the Responsible Parties or even two of the Responsible Parties are tempted to abscond with the funds, then they will not be successful. The savings account should be established so that at least three or four signatures are required for a withdrawal. Anyone of the Responsible Parties should be able to make deposits.

Once the LIL saving account has been established, LIL members will make regular contributions to the LIL. They can never lose their contributions; they can only receive “assistance offerings” with respect to their contributions. Initially, given that the amount of money in the LIL is likely to be small, LIL members should make a commitment to not request assistance offerings (no emergency swamps this requirement), until they have contributed at least \$250. LIL member should make a strong effort to always maintain a minimum of \$250 in the LIL; never touch it.

After the LIL has \$1000 or more, then LIL members must decide what proportion of their contributions can be extended as assistance offerings to members or that can be converted into secure financial assets. For example, if a LIL member has contributed a total of \$500, then he or she could decide that some portion of the \$250 in available funds, say \$150 can be pooled with other LIL members’ contributions to provide an assistance offering to a member who is in need; or they can agree to pool the \$150 with other LIL members’ contributions to purchase risk-free financial instruments—i.e., certificates of deposit or government securities. Note that assistance offerings must be repaid to the LIL, and a “love offering” must also be extended to the LIL. (A love offering is an amount that is agreed upon by the assistance offering recipients and the LIL, which should be less than the going amount of total interest on a commercial loan.)

However, LIL members are restricted from using more than their available funds ((total LIL contributions + love offerings + returns from risk-free assets) – (\$250 + personal

withdrawals + outstanding contributions to assistance offerings + outstanding contributions to secure assets)) for assistance offerings for themselves or others.

For example, if there are six LIL members and five of them have made sufficient contributions to allocate \$100 each for an assistance offering to the sixth member, then the sixth LIL member can receive a \$500 assistance offering. The five LIL members who allocate a portion of their contributions to the assistance offering must pledge not to request those funds until they are repaid by the sixth LIL member. The sixth member must repay the \$500 that was received plus a love offering.

While we agree that it is acceptable to receive “interest” on risk-free assets that are issued by commercial banking institutions or by governments (Federal, state, or local), we do not agree that LIL members should be required to pay interest *per se* for the assistance that they receive.

LIL members who need to receive assistance from the LIL fund must make an application for assistance, must pledge to repay the assistance offering, and must be willing to agree to pay a love offering back to the fund when they are in a position to do so. A LIL can suggest the amount of a love offering that might be paid following the receipt of an assistance offering. For example, the LIL may suggest a love offering of \$2.00 in response to the extension of an assistance offering of \$100 over a one week period; similarly, the LIL may suggest a love offering of \$50 from a recipient of a \$500 assistance offering that is extended, say for three months. The LIL is free to set the parameters of its assistance program, keeping in mind the LIL membership.

It is recommended that LILs be kept small, no more than 10 to 15 members. As already mentioned, the LIL should select three or four person to be the Responsible Parties for the LIL; i.e., individuals whose signatures are required to withdraw funds from the LIL account. In addition to the LIL Responsible Parties, LILs should select at least three members to be on the LIL Assistance Offering Decision Board. The LIL Assistance Offering Decision Board will be responsible for receiving requests for assistance, for reviewing requests, and for deciding whether to extend assistance. Remember, receiving assistance from the LIL is different from removing one’s contributions from the LIL. A LIL member is always able to withdraw the full amount of his/her contributions to, or available funds in, the LIL.

All of these requirements mean that only members who trust each other, whether it be two or three, or five, or seven, or 11, or 15 will join together in a LIL. The *New Testament Book of St. Matthew 18:20* says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” In other words, if you are engaged in doing the will of God (i.e., looking out for yourself, your family, and your community), then the spirit of God and good will be with you.

As a final component of the LIL, if multiple LILs spring up in a community, then they may join together to engage in extending even larger assistance offerings. For example, if three LILs, that are familiar with each other have each amassed \$ 5,000 in

contributions, which are not committed to a risk-free investment or to assistance offerings, then if all members of all three LILs agree, then three LILs might combine to each extend assistance offerings in the amount of \$2,500 for a total assistance offering of \$7,500 to a LIL member or to acquire a risk-free asset. If three LIL's agree to such an arrangement, it is suggested that each LIL extend one Responsible Party each to shape and manage this arrangement until its maturity.

Responsible Parties for the LIL must be careful to maintain detailed accounts of transactions. The attached EXCEL Spreadsheet may provide guidance on how such accounts may be developed; (<http://www.BlackEconomics.org/BEAP/LIL.xls>). Specifically, interest earned and love gifts received must be allocated appropriately to LIL members. LIL members, in turn, must be certain to report such interest earnings, as appropriate, on their income tax returns.

If, for some reason, a decision is made by all members to dissolve the LIL, then the LIL Responsible Parties must agree on appropriate distribution of all LIL funds—including the one-time payment to join the LIL. Members from a dissolved LIL may form a smaller LIL or they may join another LIL.

LILs are entities that are designed to help us save and provide needy assistance to ourselves and to our broader community. They teach us how to save, how to keep accurate records, and, most importantly, they allow us to plan for the future.

If the best method for Black Americans to enjoy peace and happiness is in our own land, and if we ultimately must purchase the land, then LILs provide a mechanism for saving to purchase that land. If we planned to be a member of a church for, say, 30 years during which we would contribute, say, \$10 a week. At the end of 30 years, assuming we made no withdrawals (which is the situation at a church), we would have a guaranteed amount of \$15,600. We invite you to take the time to calculate the amount you would amass if you were to contribute at a higher level to a LIL for a similar period.

The principle is clear: “Do for self, and do for self first.”

B.B. Robinson, Ph.D.
05/16/10

BlackEconomics@BlackEconomics.org
+1.808.232.7363