



## BlackEconomics.org

### “No Donations without Revelations”

It may be appropriate (righteous) to give without revealing, but it is important to see (both in words and deeds) how your gifts are used to improve the lives of those about whom you care. The *status quo* among most US Black religious organizations is to only meet one requirement—namely showing deeds. Where are the records concerning how your gifts are used?

Don't words matter? That is, don't you deserve an accounting? Every government is required to report on its financial operations. Why not Black religious organizations? What do they have to hide? The accepted religious text says: “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (Holy Bible, 1 Thessalonians 5:22). Not only that, but the US Government requires that charitable organizations report annually on their financial operations. If these organizations are required to report to the US government, why shouldn't they also report to you? You are their primary supporters?

The Internet can be a wonderful thing! Today, you can visit the following website (<https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/>) and search for the tax returns of charitable organizations. Just enter the organization's name and you can obtain results of the latest filed tax returns (Form 990 or 990-EZ).

The **problem** is that it is not so simple to obtain tax returns from the website for most large Black religious organizations that are well known today. Try the “Church of God in Christ” or “COGIC”; the “National Baptist Convention” or “NBC”; the “National Baptist Convention-USA”; the “African Methodist Episcopal Church” or “AME”; or the “Nation of Islam” or “NOI”. We tried searching on November 10, 2018.<sup>1</sup>

When you search for these organizations, you will find that they have organized themselves into fractured suborganizations, they do not present a consolidated picture of their organization's financial operations, or they file their returns under other than their “doing business as” names.

As an antithesis of this type of obfuscation, you can easily find the tax returns of the two most important and vaunted Black “civil rights” organizations (the National Urban League and the NAACP) on the website. However, tax returns for Black Lives Matter are not available.

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<sup>1</sup> We wrote to these organizations and requested a copy of their tax returns. They did not respond. The US Internal Revenue Service requires that these organizations make their returns available to the public upon request.

For a people who have been taught not to trust each other and who need to build trust, why do Black religious organizations engage in an apparent breach of trust by not making their tax returns readily available to the public? Are they afraid to show that they are “paper tigers?” Are they afraid to reveal the compensation that is extended to the corporations’ principal officers? What are they hiding? What are they afraid to reveal to the public?

As we close the calendar year with feelings of goodwill and giving, we should consider withholding our hard-earned and honest gifts from those who are less than honest and transparent with us. We should tell them, “No Donations without Revelations.”

B.B. Robinson

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