



BlackEconomics.org®

“Reversing the Pointed Finger”

Purpose: To motivate Black Americans (Afrodescendants) to redirect a considerable amount of energy from naming, blaming, and shaming to analyzing, planning, and executing.

This essay is a puzzle for your consideration, contemplation, and decision-making. It reflects a minimum amount of analysis. It discusses pieces of the puzzle that you will pick up, scrutinize, flip and turn between your fingers, put down, and then pick up again as you assemble in your mind how best for Black Americans (Afrodescendants) to pursue and ensure better outcomes for our future.

In the past few years, BlackEconomics.org pointed to our leadership as an important cause of our slow progress—at least seemingly so.ⁱ This puzzle will be further evidence of this point. However, now is the time for us to leap from problem identification to problem solving with great haste and intensity. Time appears to be running out on those who are not very productive economically or whose opinions about the development of society countervail the *status quo*. Many Black Americans fit these two conditions perfectly.

We reference the “time is running out” clause because we operate on someone else’s calendar and clock. We would stand in better stead as a people if we were sufficiently independent in space, time, and resources vis-à-vis the remainder of the U.S. Over 400-plus years of history is evidence enough that the “First Law of Nature” (self-preservation) is always correct; the term “capitalist economy” is always correct because those at the top of the economy will always be those with the most financial capital; and the concept of undeniable control (i.e., when those under your control not only do what you want them to do, but they do it voluntarily without your intervention) will always be true. Our weak socioeconomic position makes us very vulnerable and expungable.

Our hope is that we awaken to the reality of the just-described conditions. Afterwards, we can act strategically to reposition ourselves inside a more independent environment and manage our own survival, plan and execute our own growth and development, and have a better chance of standing tall even after “larger” powers attempt to dislodge us.

How do we produce these outcomes? By emulating the recommendation of those, like His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who says that we point outward too often when identifying a/the culprit. We need to point our finger in the reverse direction and observe our own shortcomings. This more balanced, broader, and introspective viewpoint will likely assist us improve our future decision making.

If we do not become our own worst critics, then we will fail to see that not only does our slow progress result significantly from inadequate leadership, but we reinforce our snail's pace progress by failing to demand that our leaders improve their efforts in serving as our guides. The latter condition is revealed explicitly and immediately in the puzzle that we promised to provide.

Consider Black America's long history of annual conferences and conventions. Even as a nonexpert on this topic, we know that Black Americans began conducting annual conferences and conventions during the second half of the 19th century mainly as gatherings for Black labor groups. Also, Blacks joined Whites in labor and political conferences and conventions. But it was not long before religious, educational, political, benevolent and other organizations and associations were conducting annual conferences and conventions. This tradition did not abate during the 20th century but expanded and proliferated. Pivot points for these conferences and conventions were "themes." Conference and convention themes usually highlighted and characterized Black Americans' important concerns and interests of the day.

Now consider Table 1 (next page), which lists 13 important Black American associations/organizations and the themes of their 2025 conferences/conventions.ⁱⁱ The table also reflects the names of related leaders and membership sizes.ⁱⁱⁱ This information was and is common knowledge and/or was obtained from the Internet using Google's Gemini AI Bot. Please take note of the conference/convention themes.^{iv} Table 1 and its elements are pieces of the puzzle that we are providing for your consideration, contemplation, and decision making.

Now to Table 2 (next page), which lists 15 important issues that Black Americans confronted and listed as important during 2025. The first five of the 15 issues concern the "economic justice" topic; the second five emphasize the "criminal justice;" and the final five issues reflect concerns about the Black Americans' voting and civil rights" topic.^v

Now for a test of your puzzle-solving powers. Consider Table 1's themes and Table 2's issues. Can you identify specific and unique "**matches**;" i.e., themes from Black American associations and organizations from Table 1 that are closely aligned with Black American issues presented in Table 2. Without solving this puzzle, we note that one-to-one matches are made difficult because Table 2 issues reflect little within topic variation and are restricted to three overarching topics. On the other hand, Table 1's themes show significant variation when compared with Table 2's issues. Hence, prospects for direct matches are reduced because of Table 2's restriction.

If there are not many specific and unique matches, then are there general topical matches; e.g., Table 1 themes that closely align with one or more of the 15 Table 2 sub-topical issues?

Without regard to success in matching Table 1 themes with Table 2 issues, a logical question to pose is: "If the three overarching topical issues of Table 2 and their related 15 sub-topical issues are critical concerns for Black Americans (Afrodescendants) in 2025, then why are there so few matching Table 1 themes? Are the annual conferences/conventions more concerned with meeting and greeting friends, contributing to favorite associations and organizations with an expectation of a return, and participating in elite capture than with resolving Black Americans' issues?

Table 1.—Black Associations’/Organizations’ 2025 Conference/Convention Themes, Leadership, and Membership Sizes*

Line No.	Association/Organization	2025 Conference/Convention Themes	Top Leadership	Membership Size
1	African Methodist Episcopal Church	"Rise Up and Sing" and "Leading with Purpose"	Bishop D. B. Starnes, Sr.	2.5 million
2	Black Lives Matter	Guiding Principles for Education; formulating Education Policy to Benefit Black Americans; Marching Toward Health Equity; Seeking Racial Justice through the Criminal Justice System; Achieving Racial Equity via Communications; and Becoming a Beloved Community.	D'zhane Parker Cicley Gay Shalomyah Bowers	No formal membership
3	Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	"Rise Up and Sing a New Song to the Lord"	Bishop L. L. Reddick, III	1.2 million
4	Conference of National Black Churches	"Leading with Compassion, Acting with Civility, Standing with Courage"	Rev. W. Franklin Richardson (Chairman) and Dr. J. L. Burton (President)	25 plus million; and 31 thousand congregations
5	Church of God in Christ	"Unfinished Business"	Bishop J.D. Sheard	6.5 million; and 12 thousand congregations
6	Color of Change	"Turning Power Into Policy;" "Speak. Shape. Elevate."	Ms. Portia Allen-Kyle	10 million (unpaid)
7	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	"The Fierce Urgency of Now"	Mr. Derick Johnson	2.0+ million**
8	National Association of Black Journalists	"Resilience, Advocacy, Excellence: Evolution of Our Voices"	Ms. Errin Haines	4.1 thousands
9	National Action Network	"Being a Light in Dark Times"	Rev. Al Sharpton	Membership unavailable; 100 plus chapters
10	National Baptist Convention, USA	"The Gospel Still Works"	Dr. Boisie Kimber	7.5 million worldwide; and 21,145 congregations
11	National of Islam	"Repent for the Kingdom of God is at Hand"	Minister Louis Farrakhan	Up to 50 thousand
12	National Urban League	"Policy Solutions to Expand Housing Opportunities" and "Unwavering Commitment to Advancing Urban League's Empowerment Pillars"	Mr. Marc Morial	90 affiliates serving 300 communities
13	Progressive National Baptist Convention	"It's Time;" "What Do We Preach Now?" "It's Time to Empower;" and "#EmpoweredToLead"	Dr. David Peoples	2.5 million worldwide

*—Source: Google’s Gemini AI Bot; **—Membership size conveyed by an NAACP membership enrollment center operator.

Table 2.—Top 15 Black American (Afrodescendant) Issues for 2025*

Line No.	Economic Justice	Criminal Justice	Voting and Civil Rights
1	Addressing the racial wealth gap	Redefining public safety	Securing voting rights
2	Raising the minimum wage	Combating punitive legal policies	Defending civil rights protections
3	Protecting against labor discrimination	Ending discriminatory practices	Ensuring equitable representation
4	Strengthening the social safety net	Addressing voter intimidation	Accurate census counting
5	Supporting Black Entrepreneurs	Reforming the justice system	Protecting Black history and culture

*—Source: Google’s Gemini AI Bot.

As you know conferences/conventions feature gatherings of likeminded person, who are committed to “the cause” and uniquely configured and easy to teach and motivate to function favorably on behalf of their associations/organizations. The gatherings seem to be ideal venues and perfect environments for advancing associations’/organizations’ themes, agendas, and goals. However, if the themes, agendas, and goals are **disconnected** from important Black American issues, then of what real benefit are the conferences/conventions to Black Americans broadly?

In other words, it is important for Black Americans (Afrodescendants) to ask whether we are using our valuable resources wisely to support our cause or are we going through motions to benefit only ourselves and a small, related collective. If the latter, then our slow progress will continue, and

time may run out before we can achieve sufficient independence to protect and save ourselves and our future generations. If we want to experience the “change” that we say we desire, then let us intensify or self-critiques, assume more responsibility for solving our own problems, and engage in more and more intense efforts to improve our condition. This is a definitive way to accelerate our progress, achieve more Kujichagulia, and elevate our quality of life individually and collectively.

B Robinson
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End Notes

ⁱ As examples, see “A Historical Critique of Black American Leadership” (<https://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/leadership.pdf>, 589 KB); and “Revisiting Black American Leadership” (<https://blackeconomics.org/BELit/rbal022825.pdf>, 229 KB).

ⁱⁱ The selected associations/organizations are listed in alphabetical order with no intent to establish a hierarchy. This list was not determined in any statistically systematic manner. Rather it represents religious and legacy groups with which we were familiar, and it includes a few popular activist groups.

ⁱⁱⁱ Membership statistics are from basic Internet searches. In most cases, the membership counts were not linked to a specific year. Therefore, direct annual comparisons of association/organization memberships are not recommended.

^{iv} Associations/organizations that conducted multiple conferences/conventions during 2025 reflect multiple themes.

^v This is a list of 15 important Black American issues mainly from the Internet using Google’s Gemini AI Bot, which were derived mainly from Black American legacy and civil rights associations/organizations.