

Servant Church:

Preaching and Teaching Servant theology to African American Leaders in Union Baptist Church of Baltimore

Servant Leadership Research Roundtable – August 2006

Alvin Carl Hathaway, Sr.
United Theological Seminary

This project proposes to study the reactions of African American leaders of Union Baptist Church after hearing or reading sermons, attending Bible studies, or participating in workshops on Servant Theology. It will assess their understanding and willingness to adopt Servant Leadership methodology in church ministries. Through the use of qualitative surveys the leaders will describe their reactions to sermons, Bible studies, or workshops. A compilation of their reactions will shape future sermons topics and assess their willingness to engage in further Bible study, workshop training on patterning church ministries based upon their desire for a deeper understanding of Servant Leadership.

In 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf coined the term, “servant-leadership.” After a career in top level management positions, he realized that, “leadership ought to be based on serving the needs of others and on helping those who are served to become ‘healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants’.”¹

One of the earliest doctoral dissertations on the topic of “Servant Leadership” was written by The Rev. Dr. David S. Young in 1976.² His work entitled, “How the Pastor Can Help Motivate and Supervise Renewal in the Local Congregation,” was one of the first attempts to develop “Servant Leadership” into a post graduate academic research paper.

In 1996, Dr. Lea E. Williams chronicles the servant leadership style of African Americans who contributed to the civil rights movement in “Servants of the People: The 1960s Legacy of African American Leadership.”³

¹Larry C. Spears, ed., *The Power of Servant Leadership: Essays by Robert K. Greenleaf* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1998), 4.

²David S. Young, “*How The Pastor Can Help Motivate and Supervise Renewal in the Local Congregation*” D.Min. diss., Bethany Theological Seminary, 1976.

³Lea E. Williams, *Servants of the People: The 1960s Legacy of African American Leadership* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996).

In 2003, Dr. Kathleen K. Patterson, Professor at Regents University, earned her doctoral degree by writing, “A Practical Theology of Servant Leadership.”⁴ An explosion of post graduate dissertations followed on this subject.

After an examination of these and other writings, this project focuses upon the genesis of servant church and servant leadership theology as it has evolved within the Black Church, particularly the independent African American Baptist Church named Union Baptist Church of Baltimore.

This writer surveyed the activities and ministries of Union Baptist Church that began its quest to be a “servant church” in 1852. Since that period, Union Baptist Church of Baltimore has been served by nine ministers and assisted in the creation of 15 churches.⁵ Through these ministries this project concludes that servant church and servant theology has as within its central core definition the empowerment of individuals and community that enhances the quality of life, which insures the liberty and human dignity of individuals, avoids celebrity by embracing servility. This idea of servant church and servant theology is not only philosophical, but is also practical. The activities of a servant church that follows servant theology can be measured and quantified.

The effects of slavery reached every corner of American life. “In 1860, there were 87,000 slaves in Maryland, and almost as many free blacks.”⁶ Earlier, in 1852, a small band of former slaves and freemen banded together in Baltimore to form the “Lewis Street Baptist Church.”⁷ With a willingness to forge an independent path towards freedom, the Lewis Street Baptist Church became the “North Street Baptist Church,”⁸ when it moved to a new location on North Street in 1868. According to its Constitution, the Lewis Street Baptist Church and later North Street Baptist Church, was incorporated as the Union Baptist Church of Baltimore on May 10, 1852.⁹

The Union Baptist Church experienced growing pains, but its progress was slow and steady. From the organizing minister, Rev. John Carey, 1852 - 1855, through the tenure of Rev. William P. Thompson, 1869 - 1872, Union Baptist Church experienced steady growth largely due to the expanding population of Freemen in Baltimore. In fact, “From 1810 to the abolition of slavery in the state in November 1864, Maryland contained the largest free Negro population in the country.”¹⁰ After the Civil War the Negro population in Baltimore City experienced “significant growth ...from 27,898 in 1860 to 39,558 in 1870.”¹¹

Concurrently with the growth in population, Union Baptist Church called a pivotal minister to its pastorate in 1872 – The Reverend Dr. Harvey Johnson. The genesis of Union Baptist Church as the servant church parallels his outstanding career. His life’s works epitomized Servant Leadership. Almost 100 years after his call to Union Baptist’s pulpit, Robert Greenleaf would coin the phrase that best describes his leadership style - “Servant Leadership.”¹²

“Leadership means that one individual has a better than average sense of what should be done now, and is willing to take the risk to say: Let us do this now. The process of consensus is followed up to the point where some individual must take this risk – this leap of faith.

⁴Kathleen Ann Patterson, *Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model Ph.D. diss.* Regent University, 2003.

⁵A. Briscoe Koger, *The Union Baptist Church of Baltimore: And The Ministers Who Made Her Famous* (Baltimore: A. B. Koger, 1941), 5.

⁶Jeffrey R. Brackett, *Notes on the Progress of The Colored People of Maryland Since The War* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1890), 6.

⁷Koger, *The Union Baptist Church of Baltimore: And The Ministers Who Made Her Famous*, 3.

⁸Ibid

⁹*Constitution and Manual of The Union Baptist Church* (Baltimore: A. F. Weishampel, Jr., Printer and Bookseller, 1885), 1.

¹⁰Ralph Clayton, *Black Baltimore: 1820 - 1870* (Bowie: Heritage Books, Inc., 1987), 2.

¹¹Ibid, 77.

¹²Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 13.

Spontaneous consensus rarely goes to the point of clearly indicating action. Inspiration is usually received by the best prepared individual who, for this immediate act, is the leader.

Followership is an equally responsible role because it means that the individual must take the risk to empower the leader and to say that, in the matter at hand, I will trust your insight. Followership implies another preparation in order that trusting, empowering the leader, will be a strength-giving element in the institution.

Both leading and following, in an institution that becomes a thing of beauty because of the serving power that is generated, require of all a common purpose and a clear definition of obligations...the institution that becomes distinguished as servant in the contemporary world ... will have learned to act in a serving way with great economy of resources, both human and material.”¹³

Reverend Dr. Harvey Johnson served as Pastor of Union Baptist Church for fifty years from 1872 to 1922¹⁴. Along with his wife, Amelia E. Johnson,¹⁵ they created a team ministry that served the Negro community in every form of human endeavor and addressed the critical issues of the day. Together they shaped a practice of servant leadership that merits the examination of modern day scholarship. Their story provides insight into the Black Community’s quest to liberate itself from the vestiges of slavery, to serve God with dignity and respect, and to develop a quality communal life that educates its children and provides economic opportunity for its members.

During the period of Johnson ministry at Union Baptist Church, conditions in America for the Black community produced a plethora of leadership to address the injustice Black Americans faced at the hands of a governmental system that denied them full human rights.

“The ethical precondition for democracy is to allow every voice of the citizenry to be heard in the basic decisions that shape the destiny of its people. The political prerequisite for democracy is to secure the rights and liberties for every citizen, especially the most vulnerable ones. And the economic requirement for democracy is fair opportunity to every citizen.”¹⁶

Dr. Gates and Dr. West identify during this same period: W. E. B. DuBois, T. Thomas Fortune, Matthew Henson, Jack Johnson, Scott Joplin, Henry O. Tanner, Madame C.J. Walker, Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Bert Williams, Mary McLeod Bethune, George W. Carver, Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., Thomas Dorsey, W.C. Handy, James Weldon Johnson, Jelly Roll Morton, Charles Henry Turner, Jimmy Winkfield, Carter G. Woodson, Louis Armstrong, Junius Austin, Josephine Baker, Bessie Coleman, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, Ernest Everett Just, Oscar Micheaux, Bessie Smith, and Jean Toomer as contemporary Black Leaders who have shaped the century.¹⁷

While these names deserve their place in America’s Hall of Fame, the ministry of Reverend Dr. Harvey Johnson deserves the notoriety his “servant leadership style” never sought during his lifetime. That is one of the hallmarks of “servant leadership” a desire for servility and not celebrity.

Dr. Johnson began his ministry in this context.

“Although Negroes had voted in great numbers in the Southern States since 1867, Maryland Negroes did not receive the franchise until after ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in

¹³Ibid, 244.

¹⁴Koger, *The Union Baptist Church of Baltimore: And The Ministers Who Made Her Famous*, 7.

¹⁵Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 66.

¹⁶Gates, Jr. Henry Louis, and Cornel West, *The African American Century: How Black Americans Have Shaped Our Century* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), xiii.

¹⁷Ibid, vi.

1870. The reconstruction policies of the Congress had forced all of the former Confederate states to grant universal manhood suffrage in their state constitutions, but Maryland, a loyal Union state, had been untouched by these policies. Maryland had made no move to extend suffrage to the Negro of its own volition. The Fifteenth Amendment, therefore, was aimed in part at border states, such as Maryland, that had sizable Negro populations and that would not grant them political participation without outside pressure. Negro enfranchisement immediately increased Maryland's potential electorate by approximately 30 per cent, adding 39,120 Negroes to the already eligible 130,725 white male citizens of voting age.

Absorption of such a large new element in Maryland's political structure was complicated by the uneven distribution of the Negro population within the state. Maryland's Negro population in 1870 was only 22 percent of the total population, but thirteen of its twenty-two counties far exceeded this overall average. All of the counties with a large Negro population were on the Eastern Shore or in southern Maryland. The population of three counties, all in southern Maryland, was more than 50 percent Negro, and that of ten other counties ranged from 31 percent to 48 percent Negro. Western and central Maryland, on the other hand, had very small Negro populations, both absolutely and proportionately, with the single exception of Baltimore City, where a sizable group of Negroes resided. Almost, 40,000 Negroes – one fifth of the state's Negro population – lived in Baltimore, but they comprised barely 15 percent of that booming urban center's total inhabitants."¹⁸

Dr. Johnson's ministry career established the early development of servant leadership qualities: commitment to lifelong learning, willingness to mentor another level of leadership, ability to organize collective action, focused action on specific structural impediments, ability to dream big, prudent fiscal manager, advocacy on behalf of those who are treated unjustly, a resolve to confront persons with positions of power, a healthy sense of self that allows one to promote others, and the nurturing of institutional capacity.

Committed to lifelong learning, Dr. Johnson was born on August 4, 1843 in Fauquier County, Virginia. "He entered Wayland Seminary in 1868 and graduated in 1872..."¹⁹ He was a prolific writer through letters, sermons, pamphlets and a book. His book, *The Nations: From a New Point of View*, was published in 1903.

His sermons and pamphlets include: *A Gross Theological Error Corrected: White Men Were the First Slaves. Ham, the Son of Noah, Not Cursed, but Canaan, Ham's Youngest Son; Race Prejudice and Pride: On what are they based? What has the White Man Ever done to Equal the Tremendous Achievements of the Sons of Ham?; Adventists and Adventism: Their Belief, Teaching and Doctrine; The Holy Spirit and The Limits of His Office; The Nature and Person of God: As Revealed and Defined in the New Testament; The Hamite: The Only Original Historical Nation Now in Existence; The Nature and Government of The Church of Christ; God's Purpose in Creation: Man's Greatly Mistaken Idea of It; The Seed of Abraham: Who are They?; A Constitutional Treatise on The National Government and States Rights; The Doctrine of The Eternal Sonship and Deity of Jesus Christ – Is it Scriptural?; The Question of Race; A Reply to W. Cabell Bruce, Esq.; Plea for Our Work as Colored Baptists apart from The Whites; and White Man's Failure in Government* are examples of his prolific writing and probative mind.

His wife, Amelia E. Johnson, shared his quest for lifelong learning and wrote extensively in journals and publications.

"Amelia Johnson's literary status has been diminished by the scant, almost anorexic, information that has accompanied her recovery. Instead of finding meaning in Johnson's life and writing through concrete social interactions, to borrow from historian Elsa Barkely Brown, we have a 'tendency to attribute inherent meaning to certain activities' in ways that obscure rather than explain 'historically specific developments of social relations between black man and black women.' Such reductive class-and gender-based assumptions have

¹⁸Margaret Law Callcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics, 1870-1912*, p., (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 3-5.

¹⁹William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark* (Cleveland: Geo. M. Rewell and Co., 1887), 728.

adhered to Johnson, who is often seen simply as ‘a preacher’s wife’ instead of being placed in the context of what Evelyn Higginbotham characterizes as the complex and also ‘deep horizontal comradeship’ possible across genders.”²⁰

Mr. A. B. Koger writes that, “On April 17, 1887 Rev. Johnson claimed for his wife a Miss Amelia E. Hall, a very accomplished woman of Montreal, Canada. Within her own right Mrs. Johnson was popular and proved a great help to her distinguished husband. She was author of a tree charming and beautiful stories [*Clarence and Corinne; or God’s Way* (1890), *The Hazeley Family* (1894), and *Martina Meriden, or, What Is My Motive* (1901)?] which were published by the American Baptist Publishing Company.”²¹ Amelia and Harvey had a true partnership in marriage and in their life work. As literary giants of their day, persons throughout the country where aware of their work and joined in their cause. Dr. Johnson moved easily among the leading male figures of the day. Mrs. A. E. Johnson moved equally as well among the leading female figures of the day. As a testimony to Amelia’s writing prowess, she wrote the foreword for Dr. Johnson’s book, *The Nations: From A New Point of View*.

She writes, “He has been honored in many ways: in positions offered; by invitations to take part in public gatherings, and in numberless other directions. When these honors have not conflicted either with his work, duty, or conscience, they have been gratefully accepted; otherwise they have been respectfully declined, for he has never cared for honors that would merely benefit himself; but such as he felt would reflect credit on his race and be of service to mankind, he has not refused. He was enrolled a member of the Virginia Teachers’ Association, in 1892. It was in 1888, that the degree of ‘Doctor of Divinity’ was conferred upon him by the Richmond Theological Seminary, this being the first degree, I believe, conferred by this institution.”²²

Reverend Dr. Harvey Johnson and his wife, Amelia Johnson, demonstrated a lifelong commitment to learning.

Dr. Johnson manifested a willingness to mentor another level of leadership.

Dr. Lea Williams writes, “The servant-leader is one who guided by an overarching, prophetic, transforming vision – carefully conceived and simply articulated. By precept and example, the leader guides others toward that vision, converting followers one-by-one through singular acts of bravery, courage, and determination. Generally, the servant-leader avoids the limelight to work behind the scenes where the needs are greatest and the rewards, when they come, are most gratifying.

Since the terrain over which the leader and followers traverse is usually fraught with obstacles and resistance, the servant-leader must be willing to lead in the face of danger and adversity. Shared trails and tribulations nurture the bonds of trust between the leader and followers, which is critically important given the risks to personal safety often involved in trying to achieve the goals they are moving toward. Honesty and integrity validate the leader’s credibility, which makes followers also willing to assume a high degree of risk. Typically, the servant leader possesses a charismatic, persuasive personality that inspires confidence, helping to weather the times of doubt and despair that inevitably arise in emotion-laden causes in which ideological lines are sharply drawn and opponents attempt to derail efforts and discredit leaders’ motives”²³

²⁰Gabrielle Foreman, *Defense in the Life and Writings of Amelia E. Johnson* (California: TMs (photocopy), 2005), 4.

²¹A. Briscoe Koger, *Dr. Harvey Johnson: Minister and Pioneer Civic Leader* (Baltimore: A. Briscoe Koger, 1957), 22.

²²Harvey Johnson, *The Nations: From A New Point of View* (Nashville: National Baptist Publishing Board, 1902), 39.

²³Lea E. Williams, *Servants of the People: The 19660s Legacy of African American Leadership* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), 143.

During his ministry he established 15 churches and ordained 11 ministers.²⁴ The significant aspect of this effort is the ministers became some of his closest collaborators, and the churches became the institutional base from which he addressed local, national, and international issues. An examination of a few of the leaders he mentored demonstrates his commitment to true servant-leadership as described.

At the top of the list, this writer places Reverend William Moncure Alexander as a protégé of Reverend Dr. Harvey Johnson. Born in 1852, Rev. William M. Alexander was so strongly influenced by Reverend Harvey Johnson that in 1879, at the age of 27 after being ordained, he enrolled in Dr. Johnson's alma mater, Wayland Seminary.²⁵ He graduated in 1882 as valedictorian. Within three years after his graduation, on February 5, 1985, he founded Sharon Baptist Church and became its first Pastor.²⁶

Inspired by his mentor, Rev. William M. Alexander "encouraged the establishment of the Northwestern Supply Company and inspired his members to rent stalls in Lafayette Market for the sale of vegetables, fruits, meats, poultry and the life...he organized and was the first editor of the *Afro-American Newspaper*...was elected chairman of the group known as the Colored Men's Suffrage League ... was founder of the People's Fraternal and Beneficial Society...was editor and manager of the *Maryland Voice*...and organized The Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention."²⁷

"A group of leaders met at the Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., on December 19, 1897, and organized the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission. It was aimed, chiefly, as a protest against the policy of the National Baptist Convention, which at that time was using approximately 75 percent of its foreign mission funds for operating expenses and spending 25 percent of these funds on the foreign fields...the convention elected Rev. William Alexander, founder and great developer of Sharon Baptist Church of the city of Baltimore, to serve as its first corresponding secretary."²⁸

Next would be Rev. Garrett Russell Waller who formed Trinity Baptist Church in 1887.²⁹ Rev. Waller organized and The Baptist Minister's Conference of Baltimore and Vicinity in 1908 and became its first President.³⁰

The list of mentors and their accomplishments would be quite extensive, but for the purpose of this section of the paper, it will end with the mention of Rev. Frank Randolph Williams, founder and first Pastor of Perkins Square Baptist Church, organized in 1881. Through his ministry at Perkins Square Baptist, Rev. Frank R. Williams influenced the creation of ten churches: Enon Baptist Church, Reverend Jones Watkins, Pastor; Ebenezer Baptist Church, Reverend Johnnie Jones, Pastor; Antioch Baptist Church, Waverly, Reverend I.W. Scott, Pastor; Abyssinia Baptist Church, Reverend George Washington King, Pastor; Bethlehem Baptist Church, Reverend Lloyd Reed, Pastor; Zion Baptist Church, Salem, New Jersey, Reverend Robert D. Johnson, Pastor; First Baptist Church, Port Deposit, Maryland, Reverend Benjamin Brown, Pastor; Gallilee Baptist Church, Reverend Jeremiah Williams, Pastor; Mount Sinai Baptist Church, Reverend Phillip Wilson, Pastor; and First Baptist Church, Annapolis, Maryland, which was established and organized by Dr. Williams, himself, while on two months leave from Perkins Square.³¹

Rev. Dr. Harvey Johnson's ability to organize collective action was instrumental in the early freedom rights gains of Black Americans in Baltimore and around the country.

²⁴Koger, *Dr. Harvey Johnson: Minister and Pioneer Civic Leader*, 3.

²⁵*Rev. William Alexander: Personal Life* [book on-line] (accessed 12 July 2006); available from <http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/stagser/s1259/121/6050/html/26141000.html>; Internet.

²⁶*Commemorative Journal -108th Anniversary: 1885-1993* (Baltimore: Sharon Baptist Church, 1993), 25.

²⁷*Ibid*, 27, 28.

²⁸Leroy Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy of African American Missions* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1994), 71-74.

²⁹*Union Baptist Church: One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration Journal* (Baltimore: Union Baptist Church, 2002).

³⁰Rev. Dr. A.C. D. Vaughn, Pastor of Sharon Baptist Church, interview by author, Baltimore, MD., 13 July 2006.

³¹Rev, Dr. Cleveland Mason III, Pastor of Perkins Square Baptist Church, interview by author, 11 July 2006.

Around the nation Dr. Johnson was known for his ability to galvanize people around the logic of his thinking. An example of this is his address delivered to the National Baptist Convention in September 1897, entitled, *A Plea for Our Work as Colored Baptists, Apart from the Whites*.³² From this action the formation of The Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention was established and his mentor Rev. William Alexander was elected its first corresponding secretary.³³ He was also the “originator of the ‘Baptist State Convention,’ which comprises all the Colored Baptist Churches in the State [of Maryland].”³⁴

What the author suggests is Dr. Johnson most significant action to establish the basis for the civil and freedom rights efforts of Black Americans was when he called together some of his closes friends.

“On June 22nd (1885), Dr. Johnson invited five of his confidential friends to come to his study at 775 West Lexington Street. They were the Revs. J. C. Allen, pastor of the First Baptist Church; F.H.A. Braxton, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, now extinct; William M. Alexander, pastor at the Sharon Baptist Church and W.C. Lawson, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church.

Very carefully, Dr. Johnson unfolded to these men the gigantic vision that he held. They were transformed. They urged him to launch the plan there and then. Dr. Johnson, in characteristic fashion, then produced the tentative Constitution, revealed his immediate plans and a giant was born.

Dr. Johnson accepted the presidency himself, and the Rev. W. M. Alexander was elected secretary.”³⁵

The Mutual United Brotherhood of Liberty was born with the stated mission, “to use all legal means within our power to procure and maintain our rights as citizens of this our common country.”³⁶

Dr. Johnson was convinced that through the legal process the rights of Black Americans could be secured and protected. As citizens of the United States of America Black American could exercise all the rights the United States Constitution afforded them.

“Of the ideals that animated the American nation at its beginning, none was more radiant or honored than the inherent equality of mankind. There was dignity in all human flesh, Americans proclaimed, and all must have its chance to strive and to excel. All men were to be protected alike from the threat of rapacious neighbors and from the prying or coercive state. If it is a sin to aspire to conduct of a higher order than one may at the moment be capable of, then Americans surely sinned in professing that all men are created equal – and then acting otherwise. Nor did time close the gap between that profession and the widespread practice of racism in the land. The nation prospered mightily nonetheless, and few were willing to raise their voice and suggest that what might once have been forgiven as the excesses of a buoyant national youth had widened into systematic and undiminishing cruelty.”³⁷

The Mutual United Brotherhood of Liberty was Dr. Johnson voice and vehicle to hold America to its professed standard of equal rights under the law and to punish individuals and intuitions that would dare to violate the rights of Black Americans.

He recognized the need in 1883 for such a vehicle when, “four members of his church made a journey to Norfolk, Virginia by Bay Steamer. These passengers were grossly discriminated against and segregated to their

³²Leroy Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy of African American Missions* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1994), 68-70.

³³*Ibid.*, 71-74.

³⁴J. F. Weishampel, *History of Baptist Churches in Maryland Connected with the Maryland Baptist Union Association* (Baltimore: J. F. Weishampel, 1885), 132.

³⁵Koger, *Dr. Harvey Johnson: Minister and Pioneer Civic Leader*, 12.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 12.

³⁷Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), ix.

discomforture... He consulted counsel and a suit was filed for damages. The case, The Steamer Sue Case is noteworthy, for it proves one of the first cases wherein 'separate but equal' law was openly projected."³⁸

Through the Mutual United Brotherhood of Liberty, Dr. Harvey Johnson had a based of financial support, committed and trained leaders, and the ability to command political attention; he now needed a Black lawyer to champion the causes of his race.

"At the close of Reconstruction Charles S. Taylor went to Baltimore to practice law...Believing that his admission to the Federal District Court in Maryland would satisfy Maryland State law, Taylor applied for admission to the state bar in Baltimore...Taylor's application was rejected...In 1877 the Maryland Court of Appeals upheld the right of the state to bar the admission of blacks to the legal profession as a matter of state rights...Disappointed by the Taylor case, a group of black citizens organized the Colored Equal Rights League, which was determined to see that blacks were seated on juries and admitted to the bar. The league received support from a group of black ministers led by the vociferous Reverend Harvey Johnson. The ministers formed an adjunct group called the Brotherhood of Liberty, which was organized to crusade against denial of liberty according to race...The members of the Brotherhood of Liberty pooled their funds and retained Alexander Hobbs, a white attorney, to assist them in their cause. Charles S. Wilson, a black member of the Massachusetts bar and a teacher in Maryland, was persuaded to test the law excluding blacks from bar membership, as Charles S. Taylor had done before him...On February 7, 1885, Wilson applied for admission to the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City...Hobbs argued that Wilson was fit and otherwise qualified to practice law in the state of Maryland...On March 19, 1885, 'the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City, in a unanimous opinion...held...that...color alone would never bar a person from receiving justice within its limits and jurisdiction...The Brotherhood of Liberty had won the battle but not the war, for Charles S. Wilson was found not qualified for admission to the bar for reasons other than race...The Brotherhood of Liberty...persuaded Everett J. Waring to apply to the Maryland bar after graduation [from Howard Law School], Waring 'presented himself to the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City and was admitted to the bar, becoming the first Negro Lawyer admitted to practice in the courts in Maryland."³⁹

Focused action on specific structural impediments is a hallmark of servant leadership that the author identifies. Dr. Harvey Johnson had to ability to focus on strategic action to address structural social, political, or legal impediments current conditions presented as barriers to Black progress. He possessed this unique attribute within the context of a time when Blacks had been denied opportunities for education and social advancement that gave them access to the levels of power.

The calculated and strategic creation of the Mutual United Brotherhood of Liberty proved to be a vehicle, later modeled with the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which reasoned that the rights of Black Americans could be secured through the legal means. After a series of successful legal battles, The Mutual United Brotherhood of Liberty commissioned a pamphlet entitled, *Justice and Jurisprudence*.

"In 1889, when *Justice and Jurisprudence* rolled off the presses at J.B. Lippincott Company, priced at three dollars, the 'pagan theology' embodied in the jurisprudence of *Dred Scott*, called 'the antique foot-rule,' ominously hung over the fate of the slave progeny. In *Justice and Jurisprudence*, the Brotherhood of Liberty did not call for armed insurrection or anarchy, as others might have felt justified to do. It called for a 'new graduation' of jurisprudence capable of adjusting to modern times, 'in keeping with the sociological and industrial progress which [had] naturally followed this new standard of political truth.'

The extent to which *Justice and Jurisprudence* would or has influenced the law cannot be answered with precision. It surely must have made an impact on those who read it, and

³⁸Koger, *Dr. Harvey Johnson: Minister and Pioneer Civic Leader*, 10.

³⁹J. Clay Smith, *Emancipation: The Making of The Black Lawyer 1844-1944*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 143-144.

inspired the lawyers who produced it to incorporate its themes in civil rights litigation. For the Brotherhood of Liberty, Justice was the end to be achieved, and Jurisprudence was the means to achieve it. This would secure the future of black Americans. The Brotherhood of Liberty consisted of former slaves who, after emancipation, continued to be treated as slaves. They hungered for the trappings of citizenship, and were determined to repudiate past ages of slave jurisprudence which classified people of color as inferior and provided little protection for this rights.

Since its publication in 1889, whatever influence *Justice and Jurisprudence* has had on American law, its origination stands as the Magna Carta of black people, and its powerful themes now grace the matrix of American law.”⁴⁰

Causing a Black Lawyer to be admitted to the Maryland Bar provided the Brotherhood of Liberty a key strategic weapon in addressing the legal rights of Black Americans at the highest level. The highest level of redress is The United States Supreme Court. If a Black Lawyer could argue a case on behalf of Black Americans before the court, the precedent would be established for the Supreme Court to be the final arbiter for legal issues facing Black Americans and remove the fate of Black Americans from the hands of local states.

The Navassa Phosphate Company, operating out of Baltimore, used the common nineteenth century mode of enlistment in hiring contract labor: deception...The company was aided in its search for workers by the short supply of jobs for Negroes in Baltimore...seventy of the men were notified that they were in debt to the company and would have to work for three months without pay to absolve their indebtedness...On September 14, 1889...Charles Robey...threatened a worker with a revolver once two often...when the ensuing melee ended, six of the company’s officers were dead... News of the ‘insurrection’ and ‘massacre’ was headlined in leading dailies...To the Negroes of Baltimore, there was no question where the guilt of Navassa lay and no question that they must rally to the defense of the accused...A.J. Reed, then president of the Brotherhood of Liberty, instructed Waring to represent the men at their hearing...after the first trial, which began November 18 and lasted for twelve days, the jury deliberated two days and two nights before convicting George Keys of first degree murder. The complete series of trials did not conclude until February 20. By then, three men, Keys, Henry Jones, and Edward Smith, had been sentenced to hang for murder, fourteen others were convicted of manslaughter, and twenty-three of rioting...When the case was carried to the Supreme Court, in *Jones vs. United States*. John Henry Keene was chief counsel for the defense...But according to the *Baltimore Sun* of October 30, 1890, Waring began the argument against the constitutionality of the guano law, and in so doing was the first Negro lawyer to speak before the court.”⁴¹

Dr. Johnson ability to think big is best illustrated by his attempt to convince the United States government to allow Black Americans to buy the state of Texas. After expressing his displeasure with “the white man’s ability in affairs of state and of his ability to ever rise to the heights where he would grant freedom under the laws of the land, to the Negro people,”⁴² Dr. Johnson met with a number of his confidants in 1910 and created *The National Texas Purchase Movement*, whose expressed purpose was to have the United States Government sell the State of Texas to Black Americans.

“The National Texas Purchase Movement Association is organized for the specific purpose of bringing about a permanent settlement between the colored people and this government. We are told that we are burdensome to the government, and such talk is a reflection upon the moral stamina of our race, whose conduct for loyalty and justice has attracted the admiration of the civilized world. But the inordinate, extravagant and unreasonable conduct of the government toward its colored citizens called forth indignation and resentment among us, necessitating the formation of this association whose final objects are independence and [and] free government. A government that will perpetuate liberty, friendship, and justice. A

⁴⁰J. Clay Smith Jr., *Justice and Jurisprudence and The Black Lawyer*, Vol. 69, no. 5 (Notre Dame Law Review, 1994), 1103-1104.

⁴¹Elaine Freeman, *Harvey Johnson and Everett Waring: A Study of Leadership in the Baltimore Negro Community, 1880-1900*. M.A. diss., The George Washington University, 1968, 52.

⁴²Koger, *Dr. Harvey Johnson: Minister and Pioneer Civic Leader*, 15.

republic which believes in patriotism, honesty, sobriety, and integrity. These virtues are the cornerstones of our association and upon them the structure will be reared, imparting lessons of thrilling interest and lasting benefits to the race.”⁴³

Dr. Johnson proved early in his career to be a prudent fiscal manager.

“In 1874, the membership had reached 787, and the next year, 928. The church building had now become inadequate to hold the congregation, and it became necessary to tear it down, and erect a larger one. This was done, at a cost of \$20,000, including refitting. The undertaking was great, for this people, but they were equal to it; and by the energy and perseverance of Bro. Johnson and his leading members, it was carried through triumphantly. The necessary money was collected, partly by subscription books placed in the hands of those who could solicit from the public; but mainly by the envelope system from the members themselves, each of whom subscribed from \$5 to \$100, paying it by installments from week to week, as they were able. The whole \$20,000, with the exception of about \$500, was raised by the Church in the above manner, within four years. The \$500 were contributed by friends in Baltimore and in the North. The new edifice was dedicated in January, 1876.”⁴⁴

His advocacy on behalf of those who are treated unjustly is best seen in the fight to develop public high school educational facilities for Negroes.

“The only gain made by Negroes was in the opening in 1883 of a combined Negro grammar and high school. Of the 424 pupils enrolled in this school however, only eighteen were in the high school division. The building used for this school, according to Brackett, ‘was in very bad condition,’ The Negroes referred to it as the ‘so-called high school.’”⁴⁵ Clearly, Dr. Johnson perceived that this situation was unjust and because of the fine education he had received at Wayland Seminary, he knew education was the key to the advancement of the race and all people. He along with his colleagues began a systematic attack to address the issue of no public high for Negroes in the City of Baltimore.

Dr. Johnson writes, “Our friends may say, ‘we are to forgive our injuries;’ but, my dear sir, we are not required, as I understand it, to forgive injuries that still continue to be inflicted...Right here, in the city of Baltimore, we are not allowed to teach our own children in the colored schools. I hold that this is a gross injustice. Shall we forgive it while the injustice continues?...This so-called High School for the colored children is a simple class, consisting of 22 scholars, who are taught by the Principal of the Grammar School, who receives the pay of a Grammar School teacher only. To crown it all, these children are not allowed to graduate even from this so-called High School Department. Is this right? Is it just? Is it an equal chance in the race for life? Is it fair? Especially in the face of the fact that there are being kept from year to year, statistical records of our progress, which are to count for or against us in after years...”⁴⁶

An examination of the comprehensive strategy, Dr. Johnson and his colleagues took provides a model for later civil rights actions on a national scale. They used public pressure, political acumen, and organized their resources to address this issue.

“The Committee to whom had been referred the matter of securing a high school and other educational facilities for the colored citizens of Maryland, first secured the cooperation of

⁴³*The National Texas Purchase Movement Association*, Apparently written by Rev. Harvey Johnson as Chairman of the Board of Managers. Baltimore, 1910, 1.

⁴⁴J. F. Weishampel, *History of Baptist Churches in Maryland Connected with the Maryland Baptist Union Association* (Baltimore: J. F. Weishampel, 1885), 132.

⁴⁵Elaine Freeman, *Harvey Johnson and Everett Waring: A Study of Leadership in the Baltimore Negro Community, 1880-1900* (The George Washington University: M.A. diss., 1968), 7.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

leading colored men in every section of the city. They then went before the educational committee of the City Council and made their complaint in the form of a petition. In a short time an ordinance was offered to appropriate sufficient funds to erect a high school and two primary schools; one in northwest and one in northeast Baltimore. After many visits to the educational committee, the ordinance was passed, appropriating money for three schools; but the Mayor of the city vetoed the appropriation on the ground that it would increase taxation. However he stated to our committee that if the Council would pass an ordinance for a high school only, he would sign it. Our committee again waited upon the educational committee and requested them to accede to the Mayor's proposition, which they did; and a high school building was subsequently erected, at a cost of \$25,000. The curriculum was so arranged as to make the school equal in every way to the State Normal School for whites."⁴⁷

Thus, Douglas High School in Baltimore City was built and graduated its first class "in June 1889,"⁴⁸ as the oldest public high school for colored students in America.

Reverend Dr. Harvey Johnson's resolve to confront persons with position of power to seek change for his people is best demonstrated by his attack against the lynching practice of Negroes in America by white citizens.

"The frequent lynching of colored men in Maryland and other Southern States is also an important question for the consideration of the Brotherhood. The law of the land provides that all men charged with crime shall have a 'fair and impartial trial;' and the fact that doubt has been expressed by the leading daily papers of Baltimore, as to the guilt of many colored men who have been lynched, makes it necessary that his Organization give the matter special attention."⁴⁹

In the Navassa case, three of the defendants were sentenced to death by hanging.

The "case was carried to the Supreme Court, in *Jones vs. United States*...The defense contended that the United States lacked jurisdiction over Navassa. The court ruled otherwise...With the Supreme Court appeal lost, the execution of the three convicted of murder was set for May 15, 1891. The Brotherhood, realizing 'that all friends of fair play are not identified with one racial group and that a minority group has much to gain by reinforcing its own mass pressure through the prestige of the larger group,' circulated a petition for clemency among white, as well as Negro, Baltimoreans...This petition was presented to President Harrison on April 1, 1891 by a committee of eight Negroes, including Rev. Alexander and Rev. Johnson...President Harrison accordingly commuted the sentence to life imprisonment"⁵⁰

Dr. Johnson resolve to confront person in positions of power took him and his colleagues directly to the White House to meet with President Harrison. This was an amazing action in that day that will be replicated many times other during the Civil Rights struggle.

Dr. Johnson healthy sense of self that allowed him to promote others is seen in his relationship with Rev. William M. Alexander and Rev. G. R. Waller. Close confidants, they were involved in every action Dr. Johnson undertook. At appropriate times each individually would take a leadership position with Dr. Johnson in the background as a strategist. His development of additional Baptist Churches and fellowship during a time when

⁴⁷William M. Alexander, *The Brotherhood of liberty: or, Our day in court. Including the Navassa case* (Baltimore: J. F. Weishampel, 1891), 16.

⁴⁸Freeman, *Harvey Johnson and Everett Waring: A Study of Leadership in the Baltimore Negro Community, 1880-1900*, 12.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁰Freeman, *Harvey Johnson and Everett Waring: A Study of Leadership in the Baltimore Negro Community, 1880-1900*, 52-54.

Union Baptist Church was experiencing unprecedented growth into the largest Baptist Church in the State of Maryland with over 3,000 members.⁵¹

In modern day times one of the challenges of the growth of “mega churches” is its inability to replicate itself into smaller fellowships. Dr. Johnson addressed this latter day issue by grooming talented leaders to grow smaller fellowships out of Union Baptist Church which provided opportunities for other ministries to flourish without diminishing his ministry.

Dr. Johnson's ability to nurture institutional capacity is seen in the growth of Union Baptist Church, the development of 15 other churches, the creation of a Black Baptist Convention, and the creation of The Mutual United Brotherhood of Liberty. Every area of modern day Black American life has been influenced by his foresight in the development of institutional capacity. The tragedy of his servant leadership style is that history infrequently mentions his tremendous contributions.

⁵¹Koger, *Dr. Harvey Johnson: Minister and Pioneer Civic Leader*, 3.

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