

Announcer:

Welcome to the Vanderbloemen Leadership Podcast. February is Black History Month. To continue learning about the establishing, evolution, and culture of the Black church, we spoke with African American Christian leaders and educators to guide us through the history of the Black church and the critical purpose it serves as part of the full kingdom. These conversations cover some of the critical events in early US history all the way up to current events in order to help us appreciate the roots and establishment of the Black church.

Announcer:

In today's conversation, our director of special initiatives and operations and executive search consultant, Chantel McHenry, spoke with Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, professor of religion at Shaw University Divinity School in Raleigh, North Carolina, and an ordained elder in The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. They discuss the significant role of the Black church all the way from 1900 to the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. Kirk-Duggan shares how enslavement evolved into Jim Crow laws, mass incarceration, and voter suppression as well as how white Christians contributed to these issues and their long-term effects on Black Americans and the Black church.

Announcer:

At Vanderbloemen, we value constant improvement and we invite you to walk alongside us as we learn more about how to better love and serve the whole church. We hope you enjoy Chantel's conversation with Dr. Kirk-Duggan.

Chantel McHenry:

Dr. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, thank you so much for joining me today on the Vanderbloemen Leadership Podcast. You're actually a part of our series that we're doing in February called The History and Evolution of the Black Church. I am so, so happy to have you on. I know that you are a professor of religion at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, but can you just tell our listening audience a little bit about you and what you do for Shaw University, which is a historically Black college and university?

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Yes. Thank you, Sister Chantel, for having me on. I am thrilled and happy to be here. I am professor of religion and director of women's studies at Shaw University in the Divinity School. Shaw was founded in 1865 when Dr. Martin and his beloved wife, Sarah Baker Leonard Tupper, came to the South to help people who were new to freedom to get an education. In fact, it was started more or less like a theological school and at one time had a medical school and a law school until about 1918 when they closed, of course, for financial resources.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Shaw is the oldest historically Black college and university in the South. Many of the other schools, including North Carolina A&T, which is one of the largest HBCUs, came from people who went to Shaw. Also people like Ella Baker and SNCC and many of the luminaries that we'll be talking about today either attended school at Shaw, worked at Shaw, or visited the campus.

Chantel McHenry:

How wonderful. What a rich, rich history. You have the opportunity not only to be a part of it, but to impact the next generations that are coming through that university. That's so wonderful. So you and I today, we're going to talk a little bit about ... Curing this series, we are talking about the Jim Crow era to the civil rights, leading up into Dr. King's civil rights movement. Before we really dive deep, could you give us a little understanding, some context about what is the Jim Crow era?

Chantel McHenry:

We hear this word often and maybe some people don't quite understand what that really is. What was going on also in our nation during that time?

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Thank you. That is a great question. You're right. With attorney Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow*, that came out a few years ago that deals with mass incarceration, all of a sudden, that language became back parlance into the vocabulary. To understand Jim Crow, I need to back up a little bit because many people aren't aware of the fact that in the year 98 Tacitus, a philosopher, wrote a book called *Germania*. In that book, he espoused Anglo-Saxon superiority.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

People can read more about that in the book by The Reverend Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas who's dean of the Episcopal School at Union Theological Seminary in New York, her book, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, which she wrote in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin. So she tells about Tacitus. Just think about it. 60 years after the time Jesus did ministry, was crucified and resurrected, Tacitus coined this ideology of Anglo-Saxon superiority.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

It marks its way through the late Greco-Roman era through the time of Victorian era and it comes to the United States with the Pilgrims and the Puritans. They take that sense of white superiority and marry it to other concepts. One was Manifest Destiny which says God has called us to this work. We are the new Israel. We are the new Jerusalem. Therefore, we are to come to this place which becomes the United States. We can conquer the land, clear anybody off of it. So they could justify the murder and then later putting on plantations, because that's what a reservation is, of all our Native American brothers and sisters.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

In fact, even putting things like smallpox in blankets to give to them to kill them, those that they did not kill with guns and those that they did not then put on reservations, including at that time, many of the children were taken from their parents and put in missionary schools. So the larger reality of Christianity as it has been lived and practiced in the United States, we have a lot to atone for because it really does not parallel the religion of Jesus. That's the background.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

They took Manifest Destiny plus white supremacy and merged it with American exceptionalism. In other words, we're the best. We're the brightest. So those three then set the tone for where we are today and when we get to Jim Crow. After the Civil War and President Abraham Lincoln, which was fought not to free those who were enslaved, but to keep the Union together. The release of those who were enslaved,

because that's the language rather than saying slavery, because slavery implies that people had a chance to choose that.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So in biblical terms, people can say, "I will be your slave to work off a debt." Those who are stolen or kidnapped from Africa are sold into enslavement by other folks who are in Africa, did not choose this. They made it through the Middle Passage. They get to this country. So when you get to after the Emancipation Proclamation, then you have the 13th Amendment being ratified which says enslavement should not happen, except for that funny little clause in there which people can be made slaves in terms of if they've done something wrong.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So I also commend to your listeners the movie, 13th, by Ava DuVernay which explores that. After the ratification, we had Reconstruction which, at that time, the Republicans were on the side of justice. People are supposed to get their 40 acres and a mule. People have been made free, but what happened was the troops were taken out of the South. There are many instances where more Black people than white people, so there's this element of fear. Imagery is very important. You also have DW Griffith doing his movie at that time. I'm blanking on the name right now.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

But the imagery of the movie, Birth of a Nation, the imagery of that movie, two things stick out to me on that. One is that they depict Black legislators as buffoons, as idiots, as people jumping up and down tables with comedic actions, which was far from the truth. But this is what hit the movie houses, one of the first movies in the United States. That scene as well as a white woman jumping off a mountain because she so-called fears being raped by a Black man. So this is the imagery that's put forward, which instills fear, which negates any of the beauty of Blackness, negates the intellectual prowess and capacities of the Black legislators that we had.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Also it continues to stereotype and even to this day where Black men are often stereotyped as hyper-sexualized studs, as thieves, as criminals. Black women are often stereotyped either as a mammy, asexual, or as a Jezebel, a harlot and a whore, or as a Sapphire, one who's always cutting Black men down, or as a welfare queen, one who's out to have babies to just get money. All of these are myths, but they have been broadly broadcast. So we have to help people think about what are you seeing? Who's selling it to you and for what purpose? All to discount Black people, their intelligence, their gifts, their graces.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So after you have the 13th Amendment, there's a lot of fear of what are these Black people going to do now that they can vote? Because during enslavement, it was illegal for Black people to vote, to read, to write, or to get married. Thus, when emancipation does happen but you have people who are newly freed but no place to go and no skills and no money, many people ended up back doing sharecropping and they had to get their supplies from the company store, as it were. Therefore, it's a different type of enslavement.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

At the same time this has happened, you have Jim Crow developing in terms of Black codes which were strict codes, both local codes and state law that orchestrated when and where Black people could vote, when and where they could work, and how much they could be paid. Most often, they were paid little to no compensation. There was voter suppression put in place. You had those persons who had been Confederate soldiers. Many times they became judges and police.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So the next thing you have happen is labor camps and convict leasing. Back in 1865, you also have the birth of the Klan, the Ku Klux Klan, in Pulaski, Tennessee. So you have white supremacy growing. Also, you have the Red Shirts that happen a little bit later in the 1800s, 1890s in North Carolina. Those red shirts that we saw at the Capitol insurrection, January 6th of 2021, was some of the same people that did insurrections in places like Wilmington, North Carolina where there were many Black businesses thriving. People were murdered on their properties and lands were stolen.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

They were run out of town. The same thing happened in Florida. The same thing happened in Oklahoma, what they called Black Wall Street. That happened in 1920s when, again, people were murdered and run out of town and their properties were taken. Many times the Black schools were destroyed. Black citizens were tortured and lynched. With the Prohibition coming, that also fueled more desperation, more work by the KKK, and you had all the voter suppression. You had people, if they were allowed to vote, then they would have to either pay poll taxes to vote or pass a constitutional test which a lot of times the people that were administering them could not.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Meanwhile, while all these bad things were happening, you also had some good things happening, like Charlotte Hawkins Brown who raised funds and started the Palmer Institute as a place of education for children in North Carolina. You had Isaiah Montgomery who thought, he like Marcus Garvey, who thought, "I don't know if this integration experiment is going to work, therefore we need separate." So Isaiah Montgomery founded the town of Mount Bound, Mississippi, which still exists today. It's about 100% Black. So you had those instances.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

There's also Grambling, Louisiana was a predominantly Black town in Louisiana. I'm blanking on the town in Florida that also had a similar experience. In the 1920s with all of these insurrections, all these lynchings, you also had people like Ida Wells-Barnett who was a person who lived in Memphis. One day she was removed from a train that she paid passage to ride. So she got very active and had a newspaper and was advocating against lynching. Things got so bad that they burned her business. So she left and went to the North. I'll mention some other names as well.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

The NAACP noticed that at the end of World War I, lynchings increased. You have Black soldiers coming back, both in World War I and World War II, fought for their country, and especially in World War II in Paris. I got a chance to do the Black Paris tour. Soldiers really helped Paris. France would not be the same without the Black soldiers that came over to help liberate that area. But when these Black soldiers came back, how dare they wear uniforms. Many of them were lynched because they said, "No, you aren't a person."

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Some of it goes back to that three-fifths compromise when, for the purpose of census, that's why you always have to follow the Benjamins. Enslavement was started because of money. They needed cheap labor or no-cost labor, which you go throughout history, every time there's an influx of attack on Black and brown bodies, there's always a financial element. It's a sad state of affairs for us that US capitalism is tied into greed. With the 1920s came the Great Migration. So you had a lot of people leaving the South, especially Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North and South Carolinas, Florida.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Many went to Chicago. You can track it with the music and the blues and follow the Mississippi River. Many also relocated to New York. In fact, during my New York years, like the early, well, late '70s, early '80s, I was at a church, Williams Institutional CME Church, where I was organist and directed two choirs up in Harlem. They had a Carolina Club. I'm going, "I've been Methodist all my life. I've never heard of the Carolina Club." I said, "What's a Carolina Club?" There were so many people who had migrated from North and South Carolina who attended that church that they had a Carolina Club.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So with the migration, you also had the Great Depression, excuse me. Because of the Depression, when resources get smaller, people get nervous and have a need to control. So there was more, again, suppression of Black people. You had more segregation. The laws were put in place that there were separate toilet facilities, separate fountains. Black people could not use any public facilities. You could have them and you could still not go into a Hilton or a Marriott.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

If you went to a professional football or basketball or baseball game, there was a Black section. Movie theaters, there was a Black section. At this time, you also had in many Black communities that were thriving, you would have Black businesses where Black people could attend. So I grew up, my primary care doctor, his office was across the street from my house. He was Black. My dentist, I walked two blocks down the other direction. We had Black barbers, Black beauticians, Black dry cleaners, mortuaries. Pretty much everything we needed to have because I did grow up in the segregated South, we had it.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

We went to church with our teachers. Because of redlining, it didn't matter how much money you made. There were certain areas you were not allowed to live in. In fact, I was on sabbatical in Austin, Texas. I learned in the 1920s, there were Black people who lived all over Austin, but the city of Austin had this decree that if you were Black you had to live in East Austin. If you lived other places, they would cut off your utilities. So even if you kept a house there, you wouldn't be able to get utilities, nor would your children be able to go to school.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

You could track it because when I did my master's of music at the University of Texas at Austin, where are the Black people? And then I noticed literally I-35 split the town in half. Now, once the University of Texas started morphing across I-35 over to the east side and major manufacturers like Dell and Google and others, people who relocated from Silicon Valley to push those out in San Francisco, those in San

Francisco pushed them out into Oakland. Those who lived in Oakland, they got pushed out. So many of them have come to Texas, places like North Carolina.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Gentrification is horrible. I was just in Austin, like I said. I left in 2020. There were places I couldn't even recognize. It's like, "What street am I on?" Many of the Black churches that had been in East Austin have now pushed out much further because their people are living much further. So I know of people who are making six figures, Black folk, white folk as well, they cannot build in Austin. They have to go two, three, four towns over if they're going to build housing because it's gotten so expensive.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Many people coming from California, they sold their houses for high six figures. They can come in. And then what they've done, they've bought housing, saved 120, 250,000 and they will tear that down or remodel. It's now valued at 650,000.

Chantel McHenry:

Correct.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So Black people that lived in that area now cannot afford the property taxes. So that's been another major, major issue. The other things that happened, in 1948, the military was integrated. 1954, you had Brown v. Board of Education. That was the Supreme Court's case which said separate is not equal. '64, you have the Civil Rights Act ending segregation or at least on the books. 1965, the Voters Rights Act, in 1968, the Fair Housing Act. At the same time, many of our so-called Christians started all of these public Christian academies.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

That was specifically designed so with the integration, so-called integration of schools, they didn't want those Black boys sitting next to those white girls and those white boys sitting next to those Black girls, so they created all these private academies. And then you get down to, like I said, Fair Housing in 1968 and then the assassination of King, April 4th. I will say that Dr. William Barber has headed up the Poor People's Campaign and Repairers of the Breach. So that movement is now going on today.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

But that sort of gives an overview of what happened in terms of dates and some major places and things with Jim Crow.

Chantel McHenry:

Thank you.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So that's it. In one sentence, I would say Jim Crow has been the systematic move of white supremacist patriarchal misogyny across class, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability to keep people contained. What's happened now is the wealthy have gotten wealthier and the poor have gotten

poorer. The last thing is, in many instances, the Constitution has lived out its original premise because the Preamble said, "All men are created equal." That meant all white male Protestant landowners.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So if you weren't in that total category, if you were a white male Catholic, if you were a woman, if you were any person of color, the Constitution did not pertain to you as originally written.

Chantel McHenry:

You're absolutely correct. People of color, females were not included in the minds of those who crafted that document. But I do think that that's how big our God is that the language was so broad that today we have the opportunity to grab hold of what was written then to not include us, but truly it does because we are all mankind as the document says. So will you talk a little bit about, because you have given us a lot of meat to chew on and some great resources to look up and partake of.

Chantel McHenry:

Will you now wrap that in Christianity? How has Christianity been used from Jim Crow to Dr. King's day, we'll get into that civil rights, how has Christianity been used to sort of control or keep enslaved Black people and, with that. came the emerging of the Black church into the civil rights movement? How did those two marry?

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Thank you. Great question. As I said, Tacitus coined white supremacy. So that came with the Pilgrims. The Pilgrims and Puritans came with their understanding of Christian commitment to take the land to make this the new Israel. People used the Bible to support enslavement. In fact, when I was doing my dissertation several years ago and I was looking at theodicy and the redacted African American spirituals of the 1960s civil rights, which I'll unpack. Theodicy's a doctrine that basically said there's a good God, bad things happen. Why does that happen?

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So philosophers and theologians have written tons and tons of ink about that. So I wanted to look at how do you deal with justice? How do we deal with God with enslavement and specifically looking at this music? Because the civil rights activists used music, four different types of music because, to your point, they met in churches at mass meetings. That was one place where people could be safe, where they could be heard, where they could rally, so that people used hymns.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

They used spirituals that they redacted or revised so, "Over my head I hear music in the air," becomes, "Over my head I hear freedom in the air. There must be a God somewhere." There were also popular music that they then took and changed the words. So the song that the great civil rights activist, Harry Belafonte, had popularized, The Banana Boat Song. (singing) "Daylight come and I want to go home," becomes (singing). Those and then there were some music by folks like Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon was in a quartet of freedom singers and they wrote specific songs, because this one song goes that, "My dog all over your dog and your dog all over my dog. Why can't we, like the dog, sit under the apple tree?"

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So what we have to do is people literally suspend logic many times when they deal with their faith. Unfortunately, no place does the Bible or either the Hebrew scriptures or New Testament say that slavery is wrong. In the Hebrew Bible it talks about the year of jubilee. So if I've put myself in slavery to pay off a debt, then when the year of jubilee comes I should be released after I've lived off my debt. In the New Testament, in Philemon, Paul says, "Treat your slave," and the term for slave and servant is the same term, *doulos*, it's translated either servant or slave, "like a brother."

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

But we don't want to be treated like some people treat their brothers. It never says that slavery is wrong. And then there's a text where it says, "Servants or slaves, be obedient to your masters." So people use that text, in fact, Howard Thurman, the great theologian and mystic who was basically a pastor and a mentor to many of that 1960 civil rights era, his grandmother would say, "You could read me anything in the Bible, but do not read me from Paul," because she knew that scripture had been used to support slavery.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

It was actually during the mid 1700s, like as early as 1787, you have Richard Allen and Absalom Jones who were Black ministers, part of the St. George's Church who were told that, "You can no longer pray here," because the Methodism altar prayer is one of the big important things that happens in worship. They said, "You can no longer pray here." They said, "Well, if we can no longer pray here, we can no longer stay here." As early as the 1790s, you have the beginnings of African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

The AME started in Philadelphia. The AME Zion started in New York. The CME Church gets its founding dates December of 1870, but that started back in 1844 when the Bishop James Andrews had two slaves, male and female. He said he would let the male slave go, but would not let the female slave go. So at that time, those persons were part of it was the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Because most of the churches, I need to back up, had split over the slavery question. So you had churches in the North and the South.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Bishop Andrews was at Methodist Church South, so those that came out of that church became CME. It was Colored Methodist 1870. And then in 1954, it changed the name to Christian Methodist Episcopal. So the church has been on both sides of the question because prior to the Emancipation Proclamation, many times slaves would worship with the congregation with white folk. Many times they'd been in the balcony or on a separate side. Sometimes, depending upon where you were located, a slave master might bring a preacher to come in and preach to the slaves.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Sometimes the enslaved had their own worship activities, they called them, in the hush harbors. So many times when they'd sing something like, (singing), they weren't singing about when they died. That might be the message that the Underground Railroad is coming, be ready. So you have then during the times of enslavement, during Reconstruction, Black churches started becoming independent from white churches. So the church at that moment became the place where people could advocate.



Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

We have to be clear, not all churches were activists. We tend to romanticize Dr. King today. Number one, he was so young when he died, 39 years old. We still see him. If he was still alive today he'd be in late 80s, almost 90s. Many of the churches didn't want to have anything to do with King. King happened to be the new kid on the block when he got there in Montgomery, had not yet owned a lot of property, hadn't a lot of made debt, hadn't met a lot of people. So a lot of the fellows said, "Well, King," also he happened to have the gifts and graces, very charismatic, very articulate, "You be the spokesperson."

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

In other words, "You have a lot less to lose than we do. You're just getting here." So then in 1954, you have, again, the Supreme Court decision. And then 1955, you also have the murder of Emmett Till. So for our white sisters have to be very careful about how they understand who they are. Emmett had a lisp. He grew up in Chicago. He had a girlfriend who happened to be white, came to Money, Mississippi to hang out in the summer, as a lot of people did, to go visit relatives in the summer. His cousins tried to tell him, "Be very careful." What we do know is they were in the store.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

They went in for some cold drinks or sodas or something. It's not clear even to this day whether he whistled at the woman or spoke to her. But she lied and before she died, she did tell the truth. But by this time, her husband and her brother were already dead. But she told them that basically Emmett had accosted her or made a pass at her. They came to Emmett's uncle's house, took him, brutalized him, beat him up, wired him to a part of an engine of a cotton gin, put him in the river. Mamie Till, his mother said, "I want the world to know what happened to my son."

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So she required an open casket funeral. I'm amazed, number one, that they even allowed the body to be retrieved-

Chantel McHenry:

Yes. It's the truth.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

... and that she was able to get his body back to Chicago, and it made the news. It made Jet Magazine, other magazines. People were horrified, this 14-year-old child. Of course, some of the churches were in the foregrounds of activism, not all the churches, because a lot of them didn't like King. They were afraid. So now we romanticize now. We do have a King's holiday. But that's why it's important to read the history. I'm also amazed, let me back up, that the Montgomery bus boycott was successful. No one rode the bus for 360+ days. Again, what we see is a lot of times laws cannot change people's hearts.

Chantel McHenry:

That timeframe of the civil rights movement, there was a lot of violence going on. There was violence against the Black church, violence against young children, as you mentioned Emmett Till. There were lynchings and beatings that were taking place, lots of it under the auspice of Christianity. So can you talk a little bit about what was the church's identity at that time, the Black church?

Chantel McHenry:

You talked about where everyone wasn't necessarily a part of the civil rights movement when it came to the Black church. But what was the church's identity? Where was its purpose rooted in? Talk a little bit. You've touched on it some, but talk a little bit about the differences between the church in the South and the church in the North. I come from the family that migrated from Louisiana, both sides of my family, and ended up in the Midwest outside of Chicago.

Chantel McHenry:

My grandparents on my mother's side, they were probably one of the first few Black families that lived in that community. So there was definitely this migration that was happening, but there was an identity that was tied to the difference between the South and the difference between the North, even as it related to our churches. Talk a little bit about that.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Sure. But first, I have to ask you, what part of Louisiana were your folks from?

Chantel McHenry:

Yes. My mother's side of the family is from a small town called Colfax or if you say it proper, Colfax, which is about 20 miles outside of Alexandria. My dad's side of the family is from a really small town right outside Monroe, Louisiana.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

See, I've got there are Kirks and Kirkpatricks all up in there. So if we got to talking offline at some point, I may know some of your folk.

Chantel McHenry:

Okay.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Because my dad was the first African American deputy sheriff in the state of Louisiana since Reconstruction. He grew up in Homer, H-O-M-E-R, which is northwest Louisiana in Claiborne Parish, came south as part of a CCC, the Civilian Conservation Corps, which is part of that New Deal. He did cement finishing. As a part of the CCC, he was a spiritual leader, I'm doing some research on his life, of some 9000 young men.

Chantel McHenry:

Wow. How awesome.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

For many of them, this was the first time they were going to actually be able to get a job and have money to send back. Many of them got education through this process. In fact, Dad was with a group of men that helped to remodel the church that I grew up in, Reeves Temple CME Church in Lake Charles over on Winterhalter Street. Mother grew up in Lake Charles, which is Calcasieu Parish. So I'm sure we've got some other connections.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

What's very interesting, the church, again, was founded to help people who were, many of them, formerly enslaved to have a chance to worship as full citizens. No matter what type of work people did during the week, in the South a lot of Black women cleaned houses. They did domestic work. The movie, *The Help*, shows a lot of that story. Some Black folks had their own businesses in the Black community. The church was a place where they could be called Mr. Brown and Ms. Brown, the church where they were somebody, where they could hold offices, where they could pool their resources. Excuse me.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

In many instances, before there were public schools, churches had elementary and junior high schools. That's where children got to learn how to read and write. When people moved North, churches were doing some of the same thing. The difference between the North and the South in large is that both did not like Black people. In the South, individuals could be part of white families. In fact, a lot of families, white families, if they didn't have anything else they had a maid. Many a white child was raised by that Black maid.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

In the North, Black people were generally accepted but not necessarily liked in individually. So there was racism in both areas. It's just a matter of how it presented itself. So for example, when many people leave the South they're taking the blues with them. The late Dr. Jim Cone wrote the book, *The Spirituals and the Blues*. Well, Thomas Dorsey played honky-tonk throughout the week and on Sunday played in church late and ministered. So where we get gospel music is a combination of hymns and blue notes. Most churches have gospel choirs now. Many churches have pre-COVID, they'll have electric guitar.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

They'll have somebody on drums, electronic keyboard that can transpose for them. They may have a Hammond B3 organ, maybe have a saxophone. People didn't want gospel music. Dance in church? I don't think so. So for a lot of our folks who are under the age of 40, they don't know there was a time you did not have drums in church. You might have had a pipe organ and a grand piano or an upright. It was only we're talking '70s. Let's see. You'll get some of the early gospels '20s, '30s, '40s, '50s, '60s. When James Hawkins and the Hawkins Singers, Walter Hawkins, when *Oh Happy Day* became popularized, then people started having gospel music was more okay to have in the church.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

And then you started to get a few combos and drums. Liturgical dance, we're talking the '90s before you're getting liturgical dance. Now we have liturgical dance and mime. All of that was more recent. Some churches would have hissy fits. Folks broke from churches because of that. So churches, some dependent upon the denomination and their traditions, some were more active with social ministries and social justice. Some weren't. Again, in the '20s especially in the North, you had what was called institutional churches.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Institutional churches were those that were intent on making sure if people needed education then they had reading and writing classes taught at church. If they needed to sew, to get a trade, sewing classes. Some of the churches had nursing classes. Also, the churches partnered with institutions like the YMCA.

In Harlem, some people would learn how to be an LPN through the YMCA. Other churches like Abyssinia Church and Williams Institutional Church, these churches ministered to the whole community.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Even today, a lot of times these churches are open throughout the week doing ministry along with having places where people do 12-step programs, education, sewing, those kinds of things. Some of the churches aren't doing that as much. But many churches though also started a nonprofit arm of the church. Some of the churches also have housing. So for example, I grew up in Lake Charles. Sunlight Baptist Church with the late Dr. V. Washington, they created a whole housing unit so that people would have a place to stay.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Dr. J. Alfred Smith in Oakland, he's now emeritus pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church. During when AIDS pandemic broke out, one of the doctors in the church came to Dr. Smith and said, "I am tired of people saying that they died of cancer and we're not having a way to treat people." So then Allen Temple Church, they were one of the first churches to have a credit union. Then they formed I think it's called Allen Temple Arms. They built housing so AIDS patients could have a place to stay.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

So the church throughout has had an opportunity to do those kinds of social justice ministry. More recently, you had the BlackPAC coming through with persons like Reverend Mike McBride who came through and had buses and advocating for justice and advocating work with persons like Honorable Stacey Abrams and now Senator Warnock and pastors like Reverend Dr. Otis Moss III. If people have not seen Otis' Dream, it's available on YouTube. It shows when, let's see, there's the younger son, Otis Moss III, Otis Moss, Jr. It was his dad. The first Otis Moss, he wanted to go and vote.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

He got his voter's registration card and he walked, got dressed up, walked to go and vote. They said, "Oh no. You can't vote here. Oh yeah. We see this piece of paper. You at the wrong polling place. Go so-and-so place." So he walked there. "We're sorry. You got to go so-and-so." By the time he got to the place where they allegedly said he could vote, they closed the doors and said, "You're too late." So I really commend people to watch. It's a beautifully-done documentary to get a sense of what it was like when people couldn't vote.

Chantel McHenry:

Fantastic. Thank you for that charge for the church, what they can be doing today, how to bring that civil rights movement into today's vernacular and how do we move the needle forward to help our people continue to grow and kind of take charge of their life in the system that's out here, to allow that to be torn down that is against a population of people, gender, race. It's just phenomenal. I got to tell you. You are a wealth of knowledge. You have shared so much with our listeners today.

Chantel McHenry:

I really appreciate it. I would like, as we close out, if you know ... Because you've given us so many resources and hopefully we'll be able to pool those and put those into some type of document people could access. But if you could leave our audience with, let's say, one piece of document, article, book, or

documentary that you would charge them to watch as it relates to helping understand the Black church and the Black community as we move forward with this reconciliation, what would that be?

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

That is a hard one because several books come to mind. But one, I would say the book by Resmaa, R-E-S-M-A-A, Menakem, M-E-N-A-K-E-M, My Grandmother's Hands. He's a practicing psychologist in Minnesota. He talks about the Black body, the white body, and the police body. Now, I think if people tapped into that, that would help them understand what it is that they're seeing, why Black bodies are traumatized, why a lot of white people believe that a Black body's impervious to pain.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Then Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas' book, Stand Your Ground, it gives a history about white supremacy and how a Trayvon Martin could die. I cannot think of just one book that I would suggest, but those two in terms of the larger picture. There's several books. I can give some author's names. But Dr. Willie Jennings has done a book, Dr. Raphael Warnock, Dr. Emilie Townes, Kelly Brown Douglas. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, If It Wasn't For The Women talks about women. I'm going to not name some people because I'm just not thinking about it now, but there are just so many. What I would invite them to do-

Chantel McHenry:

Thank you, Dr. Kirk-Duggan. This has been fantastic. I appreciate you so much and thank you for your time.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure and I hope we can continue to have further conversations because I have to figure out if we might be kin.

Chantel McHenry:

Exactly. You never know.

Dr. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan:

Blessings to you.

Chantel McHenry:

Thank you. You too.

Announcer:

Thanks for listening to this important series on the history and evolution of the Black church. We hope you learned as much as we did from this conversation. At Vanderbloemen, we're passionate about helping Christian organizations build and maintain an environment where people of different backgrounds, cultures, and interests can come together to advance the kingdom in a fuller way.

Announcer:

Please reach out to us if you're interested in our diversity consulting practice or if we can serve you in any way. Thanks-

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