

# HubPages

## Being a Latter-Day Saint and a Black American: Forgive and Be One Episode Five

RODRIC ANTHONY JOHNSON • OCT 27, 2022

On June 1, 2018, the Be One Celebration put on by the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints characterizes what the Lord wants for Saints of all races and differences. 2018 marked the 40th anniversary of the priesthood being extended to all worthy men of the Church.

The racial history of the Church is one of inclusion, even with the specific segregation of its Black members from priesthood service and temple sacraments before 1978. With the announcement of the Be One celebration, a number of things came to light that Black Latter-day Saints feel intensely aware of, though these feelings are largely kept at bay.

Two questions come to my mind as I ponder what it might take for some of us to feel "one" in the Church:

1. Should the Church apologize for the priesthood ban and the racist teachings used to support it?
2. If the church apologizes or not, how does that affect the faith of the members—particularly the Black American saints?

Perspective is what I want to offer in this article on being a Latter-day Saint (Mormon) and a Black American.

**After he listened for a few hours of us share and cry about our intense experiences as Black members of the church, he asked, "Should the church apologize?"**

## To Apologize or Not to Apologize

The NAACP and the First Presidency of the Church met to announce a joint statement of civility on May 17, 2018. Before the announcement could occur, a former member of the Church released an announcement attributed to President Nelson of the First Presidency of the Church, which states,

**I offer a full unqualified apology for the error of racism which was taught from this office and in the tabernacle and over the pulpits of our churches the world over...**

This fake announcement started a series of celebrations in the Black American "Mormon" community, as small as it is, that were short-lived when news surfaced that it was a hoax perpetrated by a well-intentioned former member of the Church who thought he could at least ignite discussion on the issue.

The emotional trauma to many Black Church members after the event caused one sister to post a tearful video expressing her hurt and dismay, which lasted for over an hour! Tamu Smith and Zandra Vranes, the authors of *Diary of Two Mad Black Mormons* and *Sistas in Zion* creators both posted videos reacting to the poor judgment of the people involved in the fake news about the leader of the Church. The reaction to the aftermath of finding out the apology was not real is in the video below and sums up what many have felt.

**To be Black and "Mormon" in the US is to learn how to put Christ first and allow the hurt to roll off our spirits like the water from the feathers of a swan.**

There are many Black Latter-day Saints who want an apology from the Church. Not all of us agree on what we want an apology about. Some want an apology for the racist ideas taught by leaders in the Church and other members who still teach it. Some of us want an apology for the priesthood ban itself. Others of us do not care if the Church apologizes for anything one way or the other. A few of us do not want the Church to apologize because we may feel it is not necessary to do so.

Years ago, I was invited to the mission presidents home in the Atlanta area along with a number of Black members of the Church. We sat around and expressed our feelings to the mission president about the priesthood ban and the racist teachings allowed in the Church. After he listened for a few hours of us sharing and crying about our intense experiences as Black members of the Church, he asked, "Should the Church apologize?"

After thinking about it for a period, we all said *no*! Why apologize for the priesthood ban? God allowed it. Let Him apologize to us individually if we need it. God allowed the ban to happen for over 100 years. He then fixed it with a revelation. That, we concluded, was apology enough for it.

Over a decade later, I believe that the only thing to apologize about is the racist teachings about Blacks sitting on the fence before mortal life. Maybe an acknowledgment of the hurt and pain so many of us endure when members bring the topic up and still teach falsehoods about Blacks and the reason for the Priesthood Ban. Maybe no apologies are needed--just acknowledgment that people are injuriously affected by the subject of the ban by leaders of the church is a step in a consoling direction.

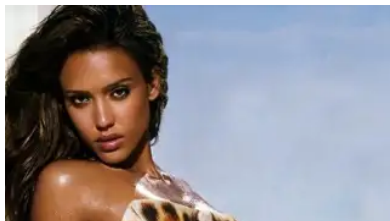
## Why Apologize if the Church is God's

Many members of the Church have an all-or-nothing mentality regarding the veracity of the Church.

- "How could the Church allow a ban on a race if it is true? Therefore it is not true," some will reason.
- "God is the one who allowed the ban," others will say, "So He is the One to complain to about the Church apologizing."
- "If the Church was wrong in that one thing, how do we not know it is not wrong in other things," others will reason.

The list could go on for as many people who have opinions about the matter. For Black members of the Church in America and other locations where Blacks compose only a small population of the Church membership, the questions may have a deeper meaning than simply explaining the dynamics of human fallibility, forgiveness, and correction. Feelings, hurt feelings and oppression real or imagined can cloud the exercise of the tenets of Christian culture for Black members.

Scroll to Continue



**Beautiful Native  
American Women  
2**



**Too Short Dresses  
and Skirts- the  
Equivalent of  
Wearing a Tee**



**Help! My Cat  
Stopped Eating  
Wet Food After I  
Brought Home a  
Baby**

Because the Church has not tenured an apology specifically to Blacks, some Black members assume that the Church leadership supports White supremacy. Admitting that Church culture in the past and in US cultural centers of Latter-day Saints still support the "White is right" sentimentality with art and media would count as an indication to some that the aging mostly White leaders of the Church realize a change needs to be made.

However, if those changes come, then many of the same advocates of change will claim that change should have come in the past if the leaders of the Church claimed to be prophets from the inception of the organization. Why did God not tell the first person in a revelation to stop doing racist things? The Church is more than an organization to its members generally. It is the Kingdom of God on Earth. Latter-day Saints do not teach that leaders are infallible, but many believe it anyway.

Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Restored Church and prophet who instituted the ban on Black members of the Church expressed,

**What a pity it would be it we were [led] by one man to utter destruction! Are you afraid of this? I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purpose of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders did they know for themselves by the revelations of Jesus that they are led in the right way.**

**Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves whether their leaders are walking in the path the lord dictates or not. This has been my exhortation continually. [1]**

Brigham did not say that a possibility does not exist that the leaders may get things wrong. He did hope that if the leaders did get something wrong, the members of the Church would be so close to the Spirit of God that they would be able to know the answer for themselves.

## Related

- [Being a Latter-Day Saint and a Black American the "Novelty" Episode Six](#)  
The leadership gets it. The rest of us Saints still need to work on it. Being a Black American and a Latter-day Saint is volumes of books waiting to be written condensed into articles Faith to endure to the end.
- [Being a Latter-Day Saint and a Black American: Revelation & Observations Episode Four](#)  
Leadership gets it. Lay members of the Church still need to work on it. Being Black and Latter-day Saint in America is an experience that could fill volumes of books, condensed here into articles.

## Supporting Source

J. Max Wilson - [Debunking that Quote about Brigham Young's Greatest Fear](#)<sup>1</sup>

© 2018 Rodric Anthony

## Comments

**Rodric Anthony (author)** from Surprise, Arizona on June 04, 2018:

Thanks, Brad. That is an old picture, but it is my favorite. My little girl is in it! She passed away in 2010. It is neat to know who has a Mormon connection. My condolences for your loss.

**Brad** on June 03, 2018:

Rodric

Great looking family.

BTW, my wife's aunt was a Mormon until the day she died, and went through the Mormon ceremony.

**Rodric Anthony (author)** from Surprise, Arizona on June 02, 2018:

Thanks Bill. I am going to do it.

**Bill Holland** from Olympia, WA on June 01, 2018:

I think it's important that you do write about it, Rodric, and I hope you do.

**Rodric Anthony (author)** from Surprise, Arizona on June 01, 2018:

Bill, thanks for posting and reading here. I am glad that you recognize your heritage and the blessings it has inherently in America. So few good White people will talk about loving to be who they are for fear of some retribution from the minorities. Being White has its own challenges that are not apparent to minorities. We all have our crosses to bear. Some of those crosses are dealing with racism. Other crosses could be health related, emotional concerns, relationship problems, what article to write next, etc.

Some of us will deal with a number of problems at a time while others of us deal with one. Now, I do not mean to minimize anyone's experiences. I only submit that our experiences are challenges to each of us differently but equally. I want to write an article about it. White privilege only goes so far before it wraps around and slaps some White people in the face. There is a dark side to White privilege. I do not know if I am qualified to write about it. I have seen the dark side. Just like there is a benefit for being a Black American. I experience it daily. I can write about that.

**Rodric Anthony (author)** from Surprise, Arizona on June 01, 2018:

Eric, thanks for reading and commenting. It would be interesting to read about your experiences in those churches. If you have written something I want to read it. I am sorry that some people were disrespectful. I do not agree with that in any setting. There is no excuse for ill-treatment of others in my book.

When I lived in South Africa as a missionary, the White missionaries would be the only Whites in the church. They would feel like they did not fit in or that they stood out. It took a psychological toll on some of them that helped them have more compassion for other minorities. Sometimes the Black member would say harmless things that were insulting because they had never dealt with White people so intimately as sharing a church. I know that when White people showed up these missionaries were happy to see someone who looked like them as I was happy to be surrounded by a congregation of people who looked like me and were of my faith. I do not think it is wrong to want to be with people who look like us and share our faith. I do think it is wrong to make those who look differently feel like they do not belong for that reason.

**Bill Holland** from Olympia, WA on June 01, 2018:

I applaud you for your strong faith. I am also left with this thought, and in no way do I mean for this to be disparaging: I'm sure glad I was born white in this country.

Have a great weekend, Rodric!

**Eric Dierker** from Spring Valley, CA. U.S.A. on June 01, 2018:

Well I will be thinking of this today. I am trying to wrap my pea brain around it. But as I think of it sometimes I am the only white guy at a Southern Baptist church I attend. And I am the only white guy at the Vietnamese Missionary church. I just have never been excluded although not respected maybe.

### Related Articles