ISSUES IN PLANTING A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

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Introduction

Church planting in contemporary mission studies has become one of the most discussed topics, thanks to the **Church Growth Movement** that reintroduced the debate starting with McGavran's publication of his book, *The Bridges of God* in 1955. Since then, church planting has emerged as a distinct subject within missiological world. Much of the debate at the time starting from the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and even 1990s has been focused on the narrow part of church planting, the target group. Especially because of the emphases on the homogenous principle by those in **Church Growth Movement**, church planting became a contentious issue.

Today, much of the pendulum has shifted as more multicultural or multi-ethnic churches are being planted. However, in considering a multicultural church plant, there are certain issues that must be settled. Some of the issues might be theological, socio-cultural, leadership questions, missiological strategies, and demographic realities. It is my intention in this paper to consider some of these issues.

Theological Issues

In the book of Proverbs, it is said, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (29:18 KJV); the New International Version of the Bible renders the passage this way, "Where there is

no revelation, the people cast off restraint." Whichever word is employed, "revelation" or "vision," both translations are correct and carry the same idea.

Clear Vision

The church of God must have a clear vision that the task to reach the lost world encompasses all peoples, regardless of where they are coming from: their economic, socio-political, or cultural backgrounds.

Obedience to the Great Commission in the context of multicultural church plant demands that the gospel be proclaimed to all peoples, nationals, internationals, immigrants, both legal and illegal; those living in freedom and in incarceration; and those belonging to diverse groups, race, color, or creed. All are loved by God, and it is not His will that any should perish, but that all will come to repentance (John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). The purpose statement of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention reads, "That all peoples may know Him," and its vision is, "We will lead Southern Baptists to be on mission with God to bring all the peoples of the world to saving faith in Jesus Christ."[1]

For many reasons, such as funding and health, not everyone or every local congregation can travel overseas to share the gospel with non-Christians; but, in reaching out to all peoples in our neighborhoods, one is participating in sharing the gospel with all the peoples of the world. It is a clear vision that will generate compassion. The apostle Paul in his testimony during the trial before King Agrippa, states the vision he received from the risen Christ.

> Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes

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[1] Jerry Rankin, *Empowering Kingdom Growth to the Ends of the Earth: Churches Fulfilling the Great Commission* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 9.

and turn them from darkness to light, and from power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me (Acts 26:16-18).

In response to the vision, Paul declared to King Agrippa, "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:19-20).

In the same vein, the present-day church must proclaim the gospel both at home and abroad. One significant part of the home population that is directly connected to overseas population is the immigrant group and diverse cultures. Reaching them should be a part of a deliberate and thoughtful strategy for world evangelization.

Aubrey Malphurs states, "Vision is crucial to any ministry. Ministry without vision is like a surgeon without a scalpel, a cowboy who has lost his horse, a carpenter who has broken his hammer. To attempt a ministry without a clear, well-articulated vision is to invite a stillbirth."[2] Vision, in respect to a multicultural church, goes beyond the comfort zone of a local congregation; it sees the world through diversity of God's creation and receives a vision of what God wants to accomplish through the church in order to build His kingdom.

A Clear Theology of the Church

One of the challenges that will affect or influence the nature of the church that is planted is the *ekklesialogy* of the planter. Often, pragmatism has truncated sound theology of the church. Because of the desire to see quick growth and self-supportiveness of the new church, we have given much more credence to socio-cultural factors than biblical standards. For example, one of

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[2]Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 19.

the greatest principles in Church Growth Movement, and one of its most controversial parts is the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP).

Homogeneous in its common usage denotes properties "composed of similar or identical parts or elements, of uniform nature…."[3] But among church growth experts, it conveys the concept of society. McGavran defines 'homogeneous unit' as "a section of society in which all the members have some characteristic in common. The homogeneous unit is frequently a segment of society whose common characteristic is a culture or a language."[4] The bond in the homogeneous unit could be anything like geographical, ethnic, linguistic, social, educational, vocational, economical, or a combination of several of these and other factors.

Church Growth scholars argue that on the average, homogeneous churches grow more rapidly than the multi-ethnic ones. That "people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers."[5] Furthermore, that "human beings do build barriers around their own societies."[6] However, while this may be a socio-cultural fact, and could serve well in initial evangelical encounter, it will negate the essence of the church as a new community, a counter-culture, a new humanity in Christ. Emphasis on homogeneity reinforces racial segregations, and preservation of cultural differences often could foster attitudes of cultural superiority and exclusiveness.

Rene Padilla demands whether the principle of homogeneity can be justified biblically or theologically. According to him, "no amount of exegetical maneuvering can ever bring this approach in line with the explicit teaching of the New Testament."[7] Padilla notes that in the New

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[3]"Homogeneous" in *Collins English Dictionary*, ed. by Patrick Hanks (London: Collins, 1980), 702.
[4]Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* 3[rd,] ed., C. Peter Wagner, ed. (Grand Rapids, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 69.
[5]Ibid., 163.
[6]Ibid.
[7]Rene Padilla, *Mission Between The Times: Essays on The Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 31.

Testament: (1) the early church proclaimed the gospel to all people, whether Jew or Gentile, slave, or rich, without partiality. (2), Breaking down of barriers that separate people in the world was regarded as an essential aspect of the gospel, not merely as a result of it. (3), The Church grew across social and cultural barriers and there is no example of homogenous church in the New Testament. (4), The apostles while rejecting assimilationist racism never contemplated the possibility of forming homogenous unit churches that would then express their unity in terms of inter-congregational relationship or fellowship.[8]

There is no doubt that in some areas, for the sake of language and communication difficulties, a separate church may be planted, but it should be a temporary measure. But the "strategy of forming homogenous unit churches for the sake of mere quantitative church growth reflects fear of diversity and chauvinistic desire to ignore, barely tolerate, subordinate or eliminate pluralism."[9] Therefore, there must be a genuine conviction that all peoples are created in the image of God, hence equal before God (Gen 1; 2).

The fall of Adam (humanity) implies the fall and corruption of all cultures. (Rom 1-2) All cultures (the whole world) are under the control of the devil (I John 5: 19) regardless of their level of sophistication or crudeness. Salvation in Christ is possible for any person or group of people regardless of their cultural background or race (John 3:16; 1Tim 2:3-6; 2Peter 3:9).

From the New Testament perspectives, the church is a new community, a new race composed of people of all races, tribes and cultures (Eph 2:11-18, Rev.7:9). Therefore, people of all races, traditions, and cultures, when regenerated in Christ and filled by the Holy Spirit can live, work, worship together in harmony (Acts 2; 13). John Stott in his commentary on the book of Ephesians states, "Through Jesus Christ, who died for sinners and was raised from the death,

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[8]Ibid., see also p. 168-169.
[9]Ibid., 168.

God is creating something entirely new, not just a new life for individuals for a new society. Paul sees an alienated humanity being reconciled, a fractured humanity being united, even a new humanity being created. It is a magnificent vision."[10] Anyone who has been part of a multi-cultural church would agree with Paul that it is truly a magnificent sight to behold, not only on the richness of its diversity, but the worship experience is awesome.

DNA of the Planter

It is obvious that the United States is becoming more diverse in population than ever before. I live in a small suburban community north of Seattle, in a street of 20 houses. Out of these twenty houses, we have families whose roots are from Indonesia, Japan, Nigeria, China, Europe (white Americans), Korea, Singapore, Peru, Mexico, and the Philippines. My street, it seems, is a microcosm of the new America. In the City of Seattle, services and community information are provided in 28 languages in the Seattle government web site. Some of the languages include; Arabic, Cambodia, Farsi, Hindu, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Somali, Urdu, and Vietnamese. David A. Anderson in his book, *Multicultural Ministry*, asked the question, "Did you know that by 2050 almost 50 percent of the American population will probably be racial or ethnic minorities?"[11] Anderson's question was based on the projected population of the US using the 2000 census data. Here are some figures;

> The projections, based on assumptions about future childbearing, mortality, and international migration, foretell a potential cultural shift.
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> The nation's Hispanic and Asian populations are expected to triple by 2050, while non-Hispanic whites are expected to grow more slowly to represent about one-half of the nation's population. 'More than half of U.S. population growth is now among Hispanics and Asians.' Between 2000 and 2050, the population of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) will increase from 36 million to 103 million. Their portion of the country's population will nearly double, from 13 percent to 24 percent, during that period.

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[10]John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 146.
[11]David A. Anderson in his book, *Multicultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 38.

The Asian population is projected to triple, from 11 million to 33 million. This will slightly more than double their population share, from 4 percent to 8 percent.

According to the projections, the non-Hispanic white and black populations would increase more slowly than other groups. Non-Hispanic whites are expected to increase from 196 million in 2000 to 210 million in 2050, representing a 7 percent increase. Beginning in the 2040s, non-Hispanic whites are projected to start losing population and to make up 50 percent of the total population in 2050, a drop from 69 percent in 2000.

The black population is projected to grow from 36 million to 61 million in 2050, an increase of 71 percent. That change will increase blacks' share of the nation's population from 13 percent in 2000 to 15 percent in 2050."[12]

The truth is that the world is around us, and our world as we know it is changing. We can no longer hide in our little ethnic cocoons and pretend that it is all about us. Globally, "almost 200 million people live in a country that is different from their place of birth. Thirteen and a half million are refugees. Within this worldwide wave of migration, the United States is home to the largest population of international migrants. Thirty –three million people –about twelve percent of the U.S. population –are foreign born."[13]

In a city like Miami, Florida, six out of ten people are foreign born, and a quarter of all Californians are immigrants. In the city of Sacramento, it seems everyone is a minority— including whites according to Ron Stodghill and Amanda Bower. "Of the city's inhabitants, 41% are non-Hispanic white, 15.5% are black, 22% are Hispanic and 17.5% are Asian/Pacific Islander. Although many cities are diverse (think New York City or Los Angeles), in Sacramento people seem to live side by side more successfully."[14]

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[12]Paola Scommegna *"U.S. Growing Bigger, Older, More Diverse"* in *Population Reference* Bureau [online]; accessed 20 October 2008; available from http://www.prb.org/Articles/2004/USGrowing BiggerOlderandMoreDiverse.

[13]Robert B. Kruschwitz, "Introduction" in *Immigration: Christian Reflection* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2008), 8.

[14]Ron Stodghill and Amanda Bower, "Welcome to America's Most Diverse City**"** *Time*, August 25, 2002 [online]; accessed 20 October 2008; available from http://www.time.com/time/printout/ 0,8816,340694,00.html

It follows that you have to be comfortable in your skin not only to live in, but to minister in multi-cultural America of the twenty-first century. Immigrants in the days of early pioneers assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon tradition, and their relationships with their former countries were cut off. However, modern technology as Mark Krikorian argues, "enables newcomers to retain ties to their homelands, even to the extent of living in both countries simultaneously…"[15] Therefore, with the interaction of various cultures and traditions, individuals begin to build consensus in relationship and tolerant of each other thereby developing multicultural mindset.

Diversity in essence brings about a change in worldview from mono-cultural state of mind to multiculturalism. Canada is an example of multi-cultural society. Canadian Heritage site states,

> Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence.[16]

From the biblical perspective, Apostle Paul was a good example of a multiculturalist, he was comfortable with diversity unlike Apostle Peter. Paul insists,

> Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.[17]

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[15]Mark Krikorian, *The New Case Against Immigration Both Legal and Illegal* (New York: Sentinel, 2008), 13.
[16]"What is Multiculturalism?" Canadian Heritage, [online]; accessed 20 October 2008; available from http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/what-multi_e.cfm
[17]I Corinthians 9: 19-23, NIV.

The Question of Leadership

It should be noted from the onset that any and everything that is not genetically inherited is cultural. We are all products of our cultural upbringings and are often ignorant of how we are immersed into them and have become slaves to our cultures and traditions. The blindfolding of culture can even be more subtle as Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett argued.

For example, "If I belong to a given culture and am ministering to people who, for the most part, share the same culture, we may together be essentially blind to how that culture is affecting our perspective. This type of problem is even more vexing if the group in question represents the majority culture within a larger context."[18] The result is that more often than not, our leadership style becomes more culturally structured than biblically oriented.

To achieve harmony in a multicultural church, leadership has to be shared. Any spiritually qualified person who is willing to serve should be given the opportunity. The body of Christ should never concentrate power to one ethnic group as it can easily create dissention and mistrust. The same is true of trusting younger people with power and leadership according to Bruce Milne. "Obviously, maturity is an important biblical quality in leaders; the very term "elders" expresses that. But young people also need to be affirmed as having gifts to contribute to a congregation's life and direction."[19]

Therefore leaders should reflect the racial diversity of the congregation, because "members of different racial groups desire to feel represented by the members of the church, especially racial minorities who historically have received a lack of respect for their opinions and

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[18]Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 128.

[19]Bruce Milne, *Dynamic Diversity: Bridging Class, Age, Race and Gender in the Church* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007), 119.

perspectives."[20] Generally, in leadership, areas of conflict may relate to three issues; 1.Task, or in the case of a church, the vision or direction of where and what it should be. 2. Process of reaching the goals, and (3), relationship of the team players. To avoid crisis, vision should be well communicated and well understood by the leadership team.

As to the process of reaching the set goals, this is where leadership style and culture could create conflict. The process has to be spelled out, agreed upon and worked together. The third aspect is the relationship between the leaders; there must be love and trust. Remember that every culture is egocentric, and biased against the other. Therefore, emphasis should always be placed in Christ, the unity of the body and sincere love for all believers.

Intentional Multiracial Evangelism

Intentionality means that it has to be deliberate. Leaders must plan outreach towards all ethnic groups within its catchment area. In most communities there are social networks that connect different racial and ethnic groups; such avenues may be targeted in evangelistic programs. Activities like sporting events, children programs, movies, community service and meeting of felt needs tend to bring people together. Remember that our cultures have created barriers and have influenced the way we see and perceive others that are not like us. Sherwood Lingenfelter notes, "Because we are born into a social world, socialized into its language and thought, we will always be blinded by its sin."[21]

Bringing people together will reduce tension and build trust across ethnic lines because naturally, "human nature encourages the formation of exclusive groupings."[22] As people of

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[20]George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVersity Press, 2003), 67.
[21]Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 21.
[22]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 174.

different races are reached, effort should also be made in maintaining harmony and the new

converts loved and accepted. Again George Yancey states, "Intentionality is the attitude that one

is not going to just allow a multiracial atmosphere to develop but is going to take deliberate steps

to produce that atmosphere."[23] The Willowbank Report states.

> Culture holds people together over a span of time. It is received from the past, but not by any process of natural inheritance. Culture has to be learned afresh by each generation. This [enculturation] takes place broadly by the process of absorption from the social environment, especially in the home. In many societies, certain elements of the culture are communicated directly in rites of initiation, and by many other forms of deliberate instruction.[24]

> Furthermore, "At its center is a worldview, that is, a general understanding of the nature

of the universe and one's place in it. This center may be 'religious' (concerning God, or gods and

spirits, and of our relation to them), or it may express a 'secular' concept of reality, as in a

Marxist society."[25]

Consequently, worldview is a way people look at and judge the world; it is their

perception of reality. There may be as many worldviews as there are cultures. Each culture looks

at the world differently, and its perception determines to a certain extent how the gospel is

presented to that culture. Unless there is a good grasp of a people's worldview, sharing the

gospel in a way that will have a lasting impact in their culture will be difficult. It is not that

converts will not be made; but there will be certain cultural norms that may not be transformed

because of ignorance. And for a multicultural church, the leaders have no choice to being a

perpetual student of culture and worldview if they are to maintain a truly multiracial

congregation.

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[23]Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches*, 68.

[24]"The Willowbank Report: Report of a Consultation on Gospel and Culture," Lausanne Committee of World Evangelization [on-line]; accessed 12 September 2003; available from http://www. gospelcom.net/lcwe/LOP/lop02.htm, 3; Internet. See also "The Willowbank Report: Report of a Consultation on Gospel and Culture," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 484.

[25]"The Willowbank Report: Report of a Consultation on Gospel and Culture," Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

Worship Style

Ethnomusicology is a new academic discipline that recognizes that music is cultural and each ethnic group has its own musical style. From the colonial missionary endeavor of the 18th, 19th, and part of the 20th centuries, western missionaries had simply translated the old traditional hymns. It was almost the same tune, rhythm, and style from London to New York, Hong Kong to Mexico City, and from Lagos to Sao Paulo. The colonial missionaries, because of their lack of interest in the culture of the people they were serving, imposed their musical style on the indigenous population.

However, with the help of anthropology and ethnomusicology, we now recognize the difference in music style of different races and peoples group. For examples, unlike Western music that specializes in polytonality, African music tends to be polyrhythmic. Mendonsa observes,

> African musical traditions also greatly emphasize dance, for movement is regarded as an important mode of communication. The dance utilizes symbolic gestures, mime, props, masks, costumes, body painting and other visual devices. The basic movements may be simple, emphasizing the upper body, torso, or feet; or they may be complex, involving coordination of different body parts and intricate actions such as fast rotation, ripples of the body, and contraction and release, as well as variation in dynamics and use of space.[26]

Because of the differences in style of music, it becomes extremely challenging for a multicultural church to determine the worship style to adopt. In considering music style, it will be necessary to remind us what Rick Warren said in *The Purpose Driven Life*. "Worship has nothing to do with the style or volume or speed of a song. God loves all kinds of music because he invented it all-fast and slow, loud and soft, old and new. You probably don't like it all, but God does! If it is offered to God in spirit and truth, it is an act of worship."[27] Again, Warren

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[26]Eugene L. Mendonsa, *West Africa: An Introduction to Its History, Civilization, and Contemporary Situation* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 196.
[27]Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002), 65.

notes, "Frankly, the music style you like best says more about you –your background and personality –than it does about God. One ethnic group's music can sound like noise to another. But God likes variety and enjoys it all."[28]

Therefore, it becomes imperative that the worship style of a multicultural church has to be inclusive in nature. The music style of one ethnic or cultural group must not be allowed to dominate; elements of other cultures have to be factored into the worship. Yancey notes, "An inclusive worship style communicates to visitors of different races that they and their culture are respected. Therefore, it is vitally important to include worship style elements from the racial groups that a ministry hopes to reach."[29]

Neighborhood Factor

In his book, *The Disuniting of America*, Arthur Schlesinger posses this question, "What happens when people of different ethnic origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions, settle in the same geographical locality and live under the same geographical locality and live under the same political sovereignty?[30] Again, Schlesinger states, "Unless a common purpose binds them together, tribal hostilities will drive them apart. Ethnic and racial conflict, it seems evident, will now replace the conflict of ideologies as the explosive issue of our times."[31] And to me, faith in Christ, and a multicultural church could give them a true purpose.

The neighborhood where a church is located will play a critical role on who attends and who does not. Biblically, Paul planted his churches in major population and cosmopolitan centers of the Roman Empire. Roland Allen, in *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* insists

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[28]Ibid., 66.
[29]Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches*, 67.
[30]Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 10. See also Stephen A. Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World*, (Downers Grove: InterVersity Press, 1998), 15.
[31]Ibid.

that "All the cities, or towns, in which he planted churches were centers of Roman administration, of Greek civilization, of Jewish influence, or of some commercial importance."[32] The Pauline cities of the New Testament like many of our cities today were immigration centers, and focal points of change. Most changes would occur in the cities first and then spread to the country side. The cities represent the cutting edge of every society.

It should be noted that it is not just any neighborhood in every city that can be suitable for a multicultural church. It has to be in a mixed neighborhood, an industrial area, or an academic community, and not some exclusive neighborhoods.   Downtown areas, transitional areas of a city, low and middle integrated areas, and commercial districts because of their diversities could be excellent locations for a new multicultural church plant.

Reality of Racism

In October 2008, Ashley Todd, a twenty year old, of College Station, Texas, was charged of a misdemeanor in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for alleging attack by a black man. In October 1994, Susan Smith, claimed that she had been carjacked by a black man, only to be discovered that she killed her own two sons. Charles Stuart, October 23, 1989, killed his wife and child, and blamed a black man. The sermons of preachers like Jeremiah Wright and the three stories reinforce the stereotypes and racism in America.[33]

George Yancey states that racism "has been a staple of the cultural diet in the United States. The very birth of our nation was made possible by racist justifications that led to the annihilation of Native American tribes, and this nation has historically exploited the labor of

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[32]Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2003), 13.
[33]See The Rachel Maddow Show, MSNBC; http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26315908/

African, Hispanic and Asian Americans."[34] While racism is still a cultural factor, it seems that the younger generations according to *Time Magazine* are becoming color blind because, "having grown up in the era of Oprah Winfrey, Danzel Washington, Tiger Woods and, yes, Henry Louis Gates Jr., they are better able to credit Obama's thesis that 'there's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America."[35] But the challenge now is how would the church respond to the changing worldview? Or is the church going to plant 21st century church in the cultural grid of the 19th century mindset?

Relationship Factor

Whatever type of church you are planting or wish to plant, relationship is the key. Howard Gardner, who is John H. and Elisabeth A. Hobbs' Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Senior Director of Harvard Project Zero, insists:

> "When one trusts a person (or group or institution), one feels at ease, one resonates with that entity. By the same token, a loss of trust--in a parent, a lover, a boss, a president, a company, a medium of information--signals a diminution or disappearance, and a correlative rise in resistance. Much of one's capacity to change the minds of others hinges on whether or not one is trusted, seen as trustworthy, deemed to be a trustee. As with integrity, honesty, truthfulness, trust is not a property that can be faked in the long run. Trust is earned, and must periodically be confirmed."[36]

Another scholar and psychiatrist, Roberta M. Gilbert also states, "It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of human relationships. If love does not make the world go around, then surely relationships do. In the world of the personal, the world of work, and the world at large, relationships between people are critical and decisive force."[37]

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[34]Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches, 21.*
[35]David Von Drehle, "The Democrats Five Faces" *Time,* September 1, 2008, 31.
[36]Howard Gardner, *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), xiv-xv.
[37]Roberta M. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking about Human Interactions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1992), 3.

Politicians may often be wrong, but in the past two years, Barack Obama has demonstrated how the power of relationships can change the course of history. Against all odds, and running against formidable challengers like Senator Clinton, John Edward, and the host of other established politicians, he employed social networks like face book, my space, email, and text messaging of young people to connect his vision and agenda with them. Through relationships and social networking, he made history.

For example, according to Hans Riemer, the campaign's youth-vote director, in 2006, there were 175 students for Barack Obama chapters in existence, a group that started on Facebook before "morphing into a sophisticated grassroots organization."[38] The campaign said to their online supporters, "we love you, but we need you to actually go to work in your neighborhood." As of March 2008, Obama campaign social net-working "MyBo," claims more than half a million members and more than 8,000 affinity groups.[39] Building relationships across cultures, traditions and races can be challenging, but the politicians have done it, and the church can do better. You can start with food, common interest, develop friendship and trust, and allow God to guide you. Patty Lane states,

> We have a choice. We can respond with xenophobia –the fear of other cultures; ethnocentrism-believing one's own culture is superior; segregationist—wanting cultures to coexist separately; accepting –wanting others to become like us; or celebrating – learning from and enjoying the diversity of others. If we choose to celebrate the diversity God has created, the possibilities for his kingdom are great.[40]

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[38]Tim Dickinson, "The Machinery of Hope" *Rolling Stone, March 20, 2008, 38.*
[39]Ibid.
[40]Patty Lane, *Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove: InterVersity Press, 2002, 171.