



Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform

Andrew Billingsley

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Throughout the history of the African American people there has been no stronger resource for overcoming adversity than the black church. From its role in leading a group of free Blacks to form a colony in Sierra Leone in the 1790s to helping ex-slaves after the Civil War, and from playing major roles in the Civil Rights Movement to offering community outreach programs in American cities today, black churches have been the focal point of social change in their communities. Based on extensive research over several years, *Mighty Like a River* is the first comprehensive account of how black churches have helped shape American society. An expert in African American culture, Andrew Billingsley surveys nearly a thousand black churches across the country, including its oldest, the First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia. These black churches, whose roots extend back to antebellum times, have periodically confronted social, economic, and political problems facing the African American community. *Mighty Like a River* addresses such questions as: How widespread and effective is the community activity of black churches? What are the patterns of activities being undertaken today? How do activist churches confront such problems as family instability, youth development, AIDS and other health issues, and care for the elderly? With profiles of the remarkable black heroes and heroines who helped create the activist church, and a compelling agenda for expanding the black church's role in society at large, *Mighty Like a River* is an inspirational, visionary, and definitive account of the subject.

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