

## **The Black Church- by Vernā Myers**

[369 words]

As I was swaying, shouting, singing and sobbing in church this Easter, I felt so proud and blessed to be a part of this complicated quilt known as the “Black church.” Yet after the recent distorted peek into Reverend Wright’s former congregation, “the Black church” is making some white Americans uneasy.

Perhaps if they knew what I experience every time I go to any Black church, they too would feel comforted by the loud, rhythmic, emotional, powerful voice of this sacred institution. They would know it as the place where Black people for centuries have entered tired, disillusioned, isolated, broken, weary and, yes, sometimes angry, and left, not radicalized, not embittered, but relieved, restored, healed, strengthened and united, through Jesus’ unconditional love and his message to love thy neighbor and forgive thy enemies. Though imperfect, it is a multifaceted place that has functioned as school, bank, community center, psychiatric ward, soup kitchen, welfare office and social justice hall. I marvel at the creative power of African-Americans to claim a religion once used to oppress them, and infuse it with a culture, a music and a spirit that feeds and frees them. So many African-Americans have drawn on the strength of their faith to overcome great obstacles and to embrace with love and hope the values and ideals of a country that has often failed them.

Last week, Senator Obama dared, like the disciple Peter, to try to walk out on to the water, believing that if he spoke to Americans truthfully, we -- not just Black Americans, but all Americans -- would see that our futures are intrinsically linked and that our prospects grow brighter with every step we take to acknowledge and transcend our differences.

As a Black American, I might think that this act of courage, grace and patriotism was futile and naive – except that I know of his deep connection to the Black church, which teaches us to survive on faith, hard work, God’s mercy and a belief in justice. Sen. Obama has aligned his candidacy with what the Good Book requires of us: “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” May we all reach so high.

ABK7710