

UC Berkeley

Breslauer Symposium

Title

Building a New House of Hope: The Rise of the African-American Megachurch in Postindustrial Chicago

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3dm403kf>

Author

Carriere, Michael H.

Publication Date

2006-04-14

Building a New House of Hope: The Rise of the African-American Megachurch in
Postindustrial Chicago

Michael H. Carriere
The University of Chicago
Department of History

On July 3, 2005, a collection of Illinois political figures convened on the South Side of Chicago. Senator Barack Obama (D.-Ill), Governor Rod Blagojevich, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Illinois State Senate President Emil Jones Jr., US Representative Jesse Jackson Jr. (D.-Ill), and Jackson's father, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, all met under one roof to celebrate the opening of a new facility that promised to bring a new round of development to an area of the city sorely in need of any type of economic assistance. However, this collection of politicians were not toasting the construction of a new shopping center, nor were they celebrating the passage of legislation that provided tax breaks for businesses willing to relocate to this blighted area. Instead, they were attending the opening of Salem Baptist Church's House of Hope, a \$50 million "megachurch" that sits on 24 acres of long-vacant land in the Roseland neighborhood of the city and seats 10,008 (Salem's congregation currently stands at well over 22,000).ⁱT

What was perhaps most remarkable about the comments surrounding this opening ceremony for the House of Hope project was their rather curious mix of religious fervor with more secular concerns. First and foremost, many participants talked about the church's stunning physical attributes. The new facility – designed by renowned Chicago architectural firm Archideas Inc. - includes two regulation basketball courts, a state-of-the-art television studio, and a 3,000 spot parking lot. Yet many of those at the opening ceremony also noted the role of the church in the economic rebirth of the financially depressed Roseland community, pointing out that it was almost a spiritual imperative to help the area get back on its feet. "This facility now says that economic development should be spread out – not just in Arlington Heights, not just downtown, but even on the Far South Side of Chicago," noted senior pastor Reverend James Meeks (himself a state senator since 2002). "We have an obligation to try to make sure that all of Chicago is growing, not just certain segments of Chicago. It's about rebuilding life and rebuilding communities." Other participants in the opening ceremony noted this equalizing potential of religion, believing that the Salem Baptist Church would allow this section of the city to share in the economic boom that escaped it during the prosperous 1990s. "The audacity of the South Side of Chicago to look like the North Side," commented Jesse Jackson Jr. – a member of the congregation – "is about dreaming a big dream."ⁱⁱ

And initial reports seem to underline the distinct possibility that such a dream is within reach. Even before the church opened, Alderman Anthony Beale (9th Ward) reported that he had already fielded multiple calls from hotel and restaurant chains interested in locating facilities close to the House of Hope. The Chicago Bulls Training Academy had booked the church for the first basketball camp of its kind on the South Side by early July 2005, and there have been discussions between the church and the Chicago Park District regarding potential future partnerships. Beale also noted that many new homes, as well as an assisted-living facility, are also under construction in the area. To many of the parishioners, the church has allowed them to envision the rebirth of the South Side. Commenting on the economic possibilities of the church, member Theresa

Lumpkin said, “It’s going to be a real blessing for this community – a real big, big blessing.”ⁱⁱⁱ

But not all of the residents in the surrounding area see the church as such a godsend. A number of citizens of the predominantly white South Pullman neighborhood, which directly borders the grounds of the House of Hope, argue that the mammoth church has done little to aesthetically conform to the architectural standards of the historically rich Pullman District, nor have church officials shown much interest in the process of historical preservation, a subject near and dear to many area activists. Such opposition to the church has also cited parking, traffic, and pollution concerns, and a belief that the institution – with its close ties to numerous Illinois politicians and governmental agencies – may be overstepping the boundary between church and state. Perhaps most importantly, a number of activists have called into question the economic value of the megachurch, arguing that Salem’s track record in its previous locations is less than encouraging. At the same time, they posit an alternative strategy for economic development, one that rests heavily on the history of the region and the promise of tourism.^{iv}

There is little in terms of scholarship or even popular press coverage for those looking to make sense of the developments and concerns surrounding the growth of such urban megachurches. Recent works on American religion – if they pay any attention to such churches – suffer from “Willow Creek syndrome” when they discuss the rise of the megachurch. For such observers, the case of Willow Creek, a megachurch located in South Barrington, Illinois, highlights the two major characteristics of megachurches: their suburban (or exurban) location and their alignment to the desires of aging white baby boomers, many of whom have grown dissatisfied with conventional Christianity. At Willow Creek, located in suburban Chicago, such worshippers get more than a church service; they also have access to a food court, therapy sessions, and aerobics classes. Even works that focus specifically on the growth of the megachurch fall victim to this Willow Creek syndrome. For example, Nancy L. Eiseland, in an essay on megachurches in suburban Atlanta, finds that megachurch ministers balance theology with a “therapeutic personalism” that seeks “to address the specific familial and life style stresses of exurban baby boomers.” At the same time, the work of Os Guinness illustrates the relationship between the boomer consumerist mentality and these institutions. According to Guinness, these churches are more like shopping malls (even in their architecture), evidence of the continuation of the consumerism that has seeped into every aspect of our daily lives, and of the continuation of the growth of our service-oriented economy and society. To such scholars, megachurches thus begin to represent the secularization of the sacred, as the worship experience becomes further intertwined with the worlds of commerce and entertainment.^v

Such works are undoubtedly useful, as over 60 percent of megachurches are located in suburban communities in the southern Sunbelt of the United States (with California, Florida, Texas, and Georgia having the highest concentrations). Yet, as the case of Salem Baptist Church illustrates, not all megachurches are located in white, suburban areas. In fact, Salem is just one of a growing number of urban, African-American megachurches located in the “Rustbelt” of the Midwest and Northeast. In Chicago, one can find Christ Universal and the Apostolic Church of God, two megachurches with congregations in the thousands. The First Baptist Church in

Hammond, Indiana (which recently replaced an entire blighted city block with a 7,500-seat facility), the Christian Faith Fellowship Church on Milwaukee's Northwest Side (a 6,000 member congregation that recently opened a sister church on the city's South Side), and New York City's Allen African Methodist Church are but three more examples of urban Midwestern and Northeastern megachurches that cater to African Americans. And such institutions share Salem's stated commitment to economic development. Apostolic Church of God bishop Arthur M. Brazier has stated that the role of his church is "to do something to affect [sic] the redevelopment of this community," and he has served as the chairman of two economic development companies that have rehabilitated and constructed over 600 homes in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago. Similarly, the Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church recently transformed a row of deteriorating stores into a modernized strip mall.^{vi}

Yet despite their growing numbers, there is even less literature on these African-American urban megachurches. One academic essay notes that the phenomenon has "taken many by surprise," and that it is unclear what role these churches are to take in the black community. Not surprisingly, some have commented on the suburban locales of many of these churches, paying close attention to such megachurches as Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal in Maryland's Prince Georges County, one of the most affluent African-American communities in the nation. Others place these megachurches into the broader history of African-American churches, pointing out that large churches have always been a part of the black religious experience, and that such institutions have always had a hand in community development. With this history in mind, some have expressed initial disappointment with these urban megachurches. As churches have historically represented one of the most viable and elemental institutions in the African-American community, there is a belief that black megachurches should continue this tradition, and, because of their size, do more. Larger black churches have always been involved in civic life and public policy pursuits (particularly once African-Americans encountered industrial capitalism in the North), and since "black megachurches seem not to be following that pattern, the disappointment that has been expressed is understandable." The work of R. Drew Smith and Tamelyn Tucker-Worgs shows some evidence for this position, as they cite a 1999 poll of black megachurch attendees that found that only 10 percent reported participating in protest rallies or marches in the past ten years. Based on such numbers, it appears that the megachurch – in direct contrast to the history of the black church – has ended the tradition of calling on the state to respond to the needs of its parishioners.^{vii}

Yet the example of Salem Baptist Church does not seem to conform to such findings, and its presence may provide a new way to view the rise of the urban, black megachurch. With this essay, I wish to argue that, when examining the growth of such institutions, space – more so than other observers of the megachurch phenomenon have noted – matters. And in the case of Salem Baptist Church the space being occupied is postindustrial Chicago, an urban landscape marked by rampant deindustrialization, and the demographic, political, and cultural changes associated with this process. The Far South Side community that houses Salem has been undoubtedly harmed by the capital flight that goes hand-in-hand with deindustrialization, and, as the United States has shifted towards a service-based economy, this area – once a hub of manufacturing – has been devastated. Making matters worse is the fact that this flight coincided with large-

scale divestment in urban areas at the federal, state, and local governmental levels. As a result, many (predominantly white) workers that once toiled in the community's manufacturing facilities have followed the jobs to the suburbs of Chicago (if they could afford the move) while the remaining minority residents were forced to cope with a community lacking both jobs and much needed social services. Such developments have created a racially segregated neighborhood marked by empty storefronts, decaying homes and institutional facilities, and vacant lots that used to house factories and other industrial centers. The shift from the industrial to the postindustrial has not been kind to the residents of Roseland.^{viii}

It is within this space that Salem Baptist Church grew up and prospered; not surprisingly, the church was founded at a time – the mid-1980s – when the pains of deindustrialization were particularly acute (in fact, almost 90 percent of present-day black megachurches achieved such status after 1980). And, as the large black church of the twentieth century spoke to the concerns of the industrial era, Salem (and its Rustbelt compatriots) has begun to directly address the concerns of the postindustrial epoch. In this way, Salem represents a sense of continuity in African-American religious history, a constant dedication to the economic well-being of the community that it serves, regardless of historical context. Such a reality has led one observer to therefore note that “black megachurches symbolize the ongoing organizational dynamism of African-American (and American) church life.”^{ix}

Yet if the example of Salem points to a certain sense of continuity, it also highlights critical changes in both urban and religious life. It is apparent that the growth of Salem illustrates a response to a distinct shift in the economic landscape of the United States, a shift that has also had a tremendous impact on American politics and culture. This shift has transformed the way that such institutions view political engagement and economic development. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the black church responded to crises associated with industrialization, and the political liberalism that seemed to go along with this economic system. Thus, the black church helped its congregants find jobs in the private sector, connect with governmental social service agencies, and find a voice in the pluralist political system. In the climate of postindustrialism, these loud claims upon the state and industry are, for the most part, noticeably absent as these megachurches are doing much of this work themselves (or counting on others to come to them, rather than the other way around). The services that such churches once relied on from the government or the private sector are now being offered within the boundaries of the physical campuses of these imposing structures. In this way, African-American megachurches are filling the void left by the historical developments of the past thirty years. This is an important transformation, particularly for those that practice urban, African-American, or religious history.^x

Such a transformation may also have important consequences for questions of spatiality in urban America. These megachurches have both the power and the resources to significantly transform the spatial relations of the city, particularly in places where other forms of capital have left, and have no immediate plans to return. Such churches may lead to a reordering of the urban landscape, as they take over abandoned buildings, forgotten churches, and once vacant lots. And, as Salem grows, it will undoubtedly plan new construction while possibly attracting a fresh round of private development. At the same time, Salem has become a centralized location for services

previously dispersed throughout the city, if available at all. Such an examination of the space occupied by Salem will hopefully move the discussion of megachurches away from a focus on the perceived passive consumerism that they are seen as fostering, and towards the belief that they may offer a new understanding of civic and economic engagement for the twenty-first century. Perhaps more importantly, the example of Salem illustrates that such churches do not always lead to the secularization of the sacred; instead, it might be the other way around. For Salem is not only a huge, religiously-charged physical presence in the Roseland neighborhood, but also an institution with a track record of liberally mixing spirituality with its more secular projects. While it is unclear at this point exactly how such an approach to community affairs will play out in the House of Hope's new backyard, it is a development worth noticing at this historical moment.^{xi}

Yet, as the critique offered by residents of South Pullman illustrates, the influence of such institutions on the urban landscape may lead to a new range of concerns. For just as the rise of industrialism in the United States had its own set of problems, it appears that the shift to a postindustrial economy also raises a new round of questions: What does it mean that that it is a religious organization now reshaping the urban environment? Who does such a church answer to? Is Salem under any obligation to note the history of the area around them? Moreover, should an African-American institution care about preserving an urban landscape and history that has done little for them, and was already in decline when they arrived? Finally, is the construction of such megachurches a viable means of economic development in the postindustrial United States?^{xii}

It is with such potential promises, hazards, and questions in mind that we can turn our attention to a closer examination of Salem Baptist Church and its surrounding community. The first goal of this admittedly incomplete attempt is simply an informative one: that is, I wish to tell the story of a growing institution that, so far, has escaped the attention of historians of race, religion, and the city. Secondly, I plan to place this history into the broader narrative of deindustrialization, thereby providing a potential theoretical avenue through which to explore such megachurches and their relationship to their urban surroundings. Because of the length and nature of this essay, this exercise is more speculative than definitive, and the tone is kept questioning rather than authoritative. Let this brief piece serve as an invitation to further critique, comparison, and elaboration. Needless to say, the example of Salem Baptist Church should not be construed as any sort of "ideal type" of urban megachurch, and an examination of a different religious institution of a similar size may result in a vastly different theorization. Salem has been chosen because it raises both practical and analytical issues of great importance. It follows the lead of historian Thomas C. Holt, who has argued that a new approach to African-American history is needed in the "post-Fordist" world, and it answers the challenge put forward by such historians as Van Gosse and Richard Moser to begin to pay closer attention to the events of the 1970s, 80s, and even 90s. While this essay does not any offer any sort of comprehensive strategy to such a challenge, it does point to new ways to think about race, religion, economics, and urban space, and the intersection of the four.^{xiii}

Salem Baptist Church is located in the community of Roseland, 13 miles from the downtown Chicago Loop. Roseland was founded in 1849 by a group of Dutch families who settled along the Chicago-Thornton Road, in homes located on the ridge west of Lake Calumet between what is now 103rd and 111th Streets. In 1880, the Calumet and

Chicago Canal and Dock Company sold more than four thousand acres of land on Roseland's eastern edge to the Pullman Land Association for the Pullman Car Works and the town of Pullman, and, one year later, individuals began to move into Pullman's famous company town. Pullman workers also rented and bought homes from the Dutch who had come before them. "Within a decade," according to historian Janice L. Reiff, "Roseland's and Pullman's fates had been inextricably merged along with those of the other communities that eventually grew in Pullman's shadow." By the 1890s, when Roseland was annexed to the city of Chicago, the community had become an ethnically and religiously diverse neighborhood surrounded by a growing number of large industries. The Pullman strike of 1894 took away some of the sheen of this planned community, so it too, by the turn-of-the-century, was just another Chicago neighborhood.^{xiv}

Yet the community was never fully welcome to African-Americans, who began to appear in large numbers during the Great Migration. Beginning in the 1920s, local real-estate agents urged racially restrictive covenants on new developers and current homeowners, and, in 1947, Roselanders joined in the violence aimed at African American residents living in veterans' housing in Fernwood, one of Greater Roseland's oldest residential neighborhoods. Nor was the track record of the Pullman Company, the economic anchor of the community, spotless when it came to dealing with its African-American employees. By the 1920s, the company had become the largest single US employer of African-Americans, with over 9,000 porters, a position that, as many historians have noted, rested upon a notion of subservience and deference to white train riders. Pullman fought tooth and nail against A. Philip Randolph's efforts to organize The Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters, which was finally recognized by the federal government as the official representative of the Pullman porters in 1935. Pullman was also far from exemplary when it came to hiring African-Americans in his manufacturing facilities. There were next to no industrial workers in Pullman prior to World War I, and very few after that. Those that were employed in Pullman facilities tended to be relegated to service jobs. Such a history undoubtedly helps make historical preservation a hard sell to contemporary African-American residents of the greater Roseland community.^{xv}

Making matters worse was that, by the late 1950s and early 1960s – as more and more African Americans made their way to the community – production at Pullman and other companies slowed. As jobs disappeared, many workers followed their jobs to the suburbs, joined by those that feared integration. As a result, "the racial composition of the community area changed dramatically between 1965 and 1973." The inflation of the 1970s, followed by the collapse of the steel and automotive industries in the 1980s, left many of Roseland's newest families without jobs. Stores like Peoples Store, which had been a neighborhood institution since the Great Depression, moved to the suburbs. The Pullman Company, which had loaned money to the local bank and juggled jobs to keep income in the community during the same decade, closed its doors permanently in 1981. Largely due to such developments, the overall population of the neighborhood has decreased dramatically in the past 30 years, from 64,372 in 1980 to 56,493 in 1990 to 52,723 in 2000. The remaining population is nearly entirely African American: the community has gone from 77.3 percent white in 1960 to 0.9 percent in 1990 (today, nearly 99 in every 100 of Roseland's residents identify themselves as African-American). Once a predominantly blue-collar area for white European immigrants and southern

blacks who worked in Chicago's nearby steel mills and factories, Roseland now lacks a sit-down restaurant and a chain grocery store. Residents must drive an average of 40 minutes to and from work each day.^{xvi}

The troubles of Roseland were part of a larger South Side story. In the mid-1950s, this area of the city, according to historian Dominic A. Pacyga, "faced its first postindustrial crisis" as many of the large meatpacking companies began to close their production facilities. By 1964 most of the major packers had disappeared. The Union Stock Yard managed to hold on until 1971, when it finally closed its doors after nearly 106 years of operation. The 1970s and 80s also saw the closings of prominent steel mills on the city's Southwest Side. Wisconsin Steel went out of business in 1980, and U.S. Steel followed suit in 1992. Other companies laid off vast numbers of workers to remain competitive. Republic Steel dismissed half of its employees in 1984 after it merged with LTV Steel, a company that then declared bankruptcy in 1986. Such events had traumatic effects on such communities as Roseland, as these plants were centers of employment for all of the South Side. In 1970, only five community areas in Chicago had an unemployment rate of at least 15 percent; by 1980 twenty-five areas did, and, of these, ten (all predominantly African-American) had rates of at least 20 percent unemployment. Not surprisingly, the majority of these areas were located on the city's South Side. In the twenty-year period from 1967 to 1987, Chicago lost 60 percent of its manufacturing jobs. "Empty factories and warehouses," concludes Pacyga, "symbolized the shift in Chicago's employment base from manufacturing to the service industries."^{xvii}

At the same time, such urban communities saw a marked decrease in help available from the state. Throughout the 1980s, the Reagan Administration oversaw "the first reductions of consequence in grants-in-aid to expenditures since the 1940s." Federal government assistance to poor citizens barely grew, while human and social services grants to city governments and community groups actually declined. A 1989 survey of city financial officers revealed that 86 percent reported that their city governments received less federal aid than they did at the start of the decade. More than one-third of these city governments had also eliminated numerous municipal services and cut municipal workforces as a result of federal urban disinvestment. Such developments led one observer to comment that the actions of the federal government during this era were "savaging housing and neighborhood programs designed to help cities and their poor." This trend continued into the 1990s with the Clinton Administration and such legislation as the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, which eliminated a number of social services for poor and urban dwellers, and created a push – which the Bush Administration has carried forward – for faith-based institutions to pick up the slack.^{xviii}

It was in this troubled urban environment that the Salem Baptist Church held its first worship service on January 20, 1985 at 8201 South Jeffery Boulevard in Chicago. The average attendance for the church's first year of services was close to 200 people. In July of 1990, Salem purchased properties at 11800-24 South Indiana Avenue, formerly the home of St. Salomea Catholic Church, a once-Polish congregation that had been the victim, in part, of white flight and changing neighborhood demographics (Salem still uses this facility for its private school and numerous special functions). By 1993, Salem had grown to 3500 members, and such growth prompted the church to begin to look for a new location. By 1999, church leaders began negotiations for the property – once home to a Pullman manufacturing facility where porter cars were painted and finished and, by then,

a vacant lot – where the House of Hope now sits at its official address, 752 East 114th Street. Salem has also begun buying property in the vicinity of their new facility, including a building, once used by Sherwin Williams as a research facility, at 109th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue. This building now houses the church’s administrative offices. To Salem, such abandoned industrial sites are prime locations to fuel church expansion.^{xix}

And if Salem has begun to fill the physical void created by deindustrialization, they have also crafted programs that speak to the shift towards a service-based, technology-fueled economy. Salem now houses a day-care facility, a counseling center, a soup kitchen, a ministry to help members get out of debt, two basketball courts and other pieces of exercise equipment, and, as mentioned above, a private school. Salem also has programs in place that teach the skills needed for success in this “New Economy.” The church provides an avenue for members to learn vital computer skills (Salem was the first church to broadcast services live on the Internet in 2000), and, through its in-house television studio, the power of the media. Salem, in conjunction with the National Association of Investors Corp., has also helped its members form investment clubs. Over 100 clubs – averaging ten members – have been formed, with teams of volunteers (many of whom have experience in the financial arena) serving as coaches for the clubs. Each investment club must register through the church and present a report every month on its progress. One such club is the Millionaires-Thru-Christ, founded by church member Marcus Plump. “I started the club to help break the cycle of financial bondage and to teach my children to invest and save with the hope that they will do the same for their children,” noted Plump. Not only were such programs and services for the most part nonexistent in Roseland prior to the development of Salem, but they are now housed in one centralized location.^{xx}

At the same time, Salem has also begun to take on roles previously associated with the state. In one way, the church, with its constant activity and surveillance, has acted as something of a police presence in the neighborhood. According to Alderman Beale, crime has dropped 30 percent in the church’s Roseland neighborhood since Salem began the House of Hope project in 1999. Salem has also reached out to those already in jail. Women of the church minister to area prostitutes, and Salem recently worked out an agreement with the Cook County court system that, if such prostitutes are arrested, they will be turned over to the church for counseling. For those already incarcerated, Salem has created its own religiously-oriented rehabilitation program. In 2002, the church delivered the Bible on cassette to 42,000 jailed men and women in the state of Illinois. Salem would follow up this effort by providing direct satellite feeds of its weekly services to 24 prisons in Illinois and Louisiana, bringing more than 43,000 inmates into Salem’s house of worship. But Salem has not only addressed the needs of those behind bars. Concerned with the quality of area public schools, Salem, in 2001, went on a mission to tutor every third grader in the 60628 zip code (in addition to running its own private school). The result was a reported 12 percent average increase in standardized test scores. In the era of postindustrialism – when many of these previously government-sponsored services have been eliminated, cut back, or privatized (or allowed to fall into a state of disrepair) – Salem has, once again, stepped up to try to fill the void.^{xxi}

Finally, Salem has attempted to fuel the economic development that was once the domain of the private sector and government. Perhaps most obviously, Salem has become

an engine of job growth in and of itself, creating hundreds of jobs over its twenty year history. There is also some initial proof that the House of Hope project may bring private investment to the Roseland community: in 2003, McDonald's, in anticipation of Salem's construction plans, built a franchise blocks away from the site at 600 East 115th Street. Perhaps most impressively, Salem, as part of an economic revitalization strategy, led a 1998 campaign to close 26 liquor stores throughout the Roseland neighborhood – as such stores were seen as taking up valuable storefronts and scaring away legitimate investors. The community voted in favor of the church's proposal, and today the building that was once the area's largest liquor stores is the site of House of Peace, one of the three bookstores that Salem owns and operates. What is particularly suggestive in this example is that the church may now be regulating the economy of the community. Again, powers that were once the domain of other institutions have been commandeered by Salem. As noted earlier, the black church has a long history of community involvement and economic development. However, never before has the black church played such a leading role in all of these activities. Rather than voicing loud demands on the government or private industry to act on their behalf, Salem leaders and members are taking the lead in forging partnerships, or, in many instances, simply doing themselves what they once relied on others for. As once the black church made adjustments for the rise of industrial capitalism, it now does the same for the challenges of the postindustrial era.^{xxii}

It is this potential for almost absolute neighborhood governance that has led a number of Pullman residents to raise a series of important questions regarding the growth of Salem. To such citizens as Tom Shepherd, vice president of the Pullman Civic Association (and chairman of Pullman Planning Working Group, an ad hoc committee of the PCO set up to deal with all matters related to Salem), and Arthur Pearson, co-chairperson of the Pullman Civic Organization Beman Committee (which deals with issues of local historical preservation), the church has shown very little interest in opening a meaningful dialogue with its neighbors. Traffic continues to be a problem in the community, and the church has done little to make its design fit in with the surrounding architecture. Indeed, the church does look out of place, and its architecture – it shares the look of a large discount store or a faceless sports arena - is nothing short of unremarkable. Pearson also worries that the church will ignore issues of historical preservation and continue to expand however it sees fit, as Salem leaders can “always gloss their development-speak with religion.” Perhaps most importantly, certain Pullman leaders do not see the church as leading to any new economic development. Not only has the church, due to its nonprofit status, been taken off the city's property tax rolls, but, as Shepherd and Pearson note, the previous locations of Salem do not seem any better off as a result of Salem's presence in their immediate neighborhoods.^{xxiii}

As such concerns suggest, the debate between Pullman and the Salem Baptist Church may be, at its core, about the best economic strategy to deal with a postindustrial economy. This essay has described Salem's approach to the challenges of this era; individuals such as Shepherd and Pearson have a different vision. To them, the region should make tourism the cornerstone of its local economy, playing up the area's important history (the Pullman Historic District, with its remnants of George Pullman's meticulous planned company town, was designated a National Historical Landmark in 1971) as such locales as Lowell, Massachusetts have successfully done. Yet any such

plans must deal with the presence of Salem, as the church shows no sign of backing off its plan for rapid expansion. Perhaps the best strategy comes courtesy of Michael Shymanski, president of the Historic Pullman Foundation, and seconded by such individuals as Pearson and Shepherd. To Shymanski, those dedicated to such issues as historical preservation must do a better job of “selling” their concerns to a group of individuals that may not see the benefit to such programs (particularly when it comes to preserving the memory of Pullman, a company with a mixed track record when it came to African-American employment), and then must be willing to settle for a “mixed-use” plan of development, where both the church and a commitment to history have a place. As of now, those that are arguing for historical preservation are facing an uphill battle, as Salem has acquired a sense of dynamism that may prove difficult to counter. Whatever path the greater Roseland community chooses, there is little doubt that Salem will play an integral role in any development plans.^{xxiv}

ⁱ Throughout this essay, I use Scott Thumma’s definition of a megachurch as a church with at least two thousand people in weekly attendance. These large churches usually occupy land tracts of 50 to 100 acres near major traffic thoroughfares, and attract an average weekly attendance of 3857 persons. See Scott Thumma, “The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: Megachurches in Modern American Society” (PhD diss., Emory University, 1996).

ⁱⁱ For coverage of the Salem Baptist Church’s House of Hope opening ceremony, please see Manya A. Brachear, “City mega-church ready for its debuts,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 3, 2005, and Claire Heininger, “‘Big dreams’ realized as big church opens,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 4, 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ Claire Heininger, “‘Big dreams realized as big church opens,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 4, 2005.

^{iv} Arthur Pearson, interview by the author, January 9, 2006; Tom Shepherd, interview by the author, January 9, 2006. Many observers have tended to play up the racial components of this opposition. However, based upon conversations with Pullman activists, I believe that such accounts severely misjudge the concerns of such individuals. For a balanced account of this opposition, see Ben Joravsky, “The Unconverted,” *Chicago Reader*, May 25, 2001, and Cheryl Corley, “Chicagoans Fight ‘Mega-Church’ Plans,” *National Public Radio*, Morning Edition, September 26, 2003, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1447251.

^v For two recent works on American religion that fall victim to the “Willow Creek syndrome” in their discussion of megachurches, see Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), and Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner, *Protestantism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). For coverage of the megachurch phenomenon in the popular press, see “Superchurches and How They Grow,” *Time*, August 5, 1991: 62-3, “Megachurch!” *Christianity Today*, March 5, 1990: 20-4, and “Jesus, CEO,” *The Economist*, December 24, 2005-January 6, 2006: 41-42. Nancy L. Eiesland, “Contending with a Giant: The Impact of a Megachurch on Exurban Religious Institutions,” in *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*, eds. Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1997), 191-219, 196. Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993). For a work that actually focuses on urban megachurches, see *Central City Churches: The New Urban Frontier*, Lyle E. Schaller, ed., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

^{vi} Thumma, “The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory”; Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 156. For more on the contemporary connection between the black church and economic development, see Lloyd Gite, “The New Agenda of the Black Church: Economic Development for Black America,” *Black Enterprise*, December 1993, 54-59.

^{vii} R. Drew Smith and Tamelyn Tucker-Worgs, “Megachurches: African-American Churches in Social and Political Context,” in *The State of Black America 2000* (New York: National Urban League, 2000), 179, 194. On the suburban location of many black megachurches, see “Black megachurches surge,” *Christian Century*, July 3-10, 1996, 686-7. A thorough analysis of the black church’s historical commitment to issues of political and economic development is beyond the scope of this essay, but there is a valuable historiography available on these topics.

^{viii} My understanding of the postindustrial landscape – and its affect on African Americans – is informed by Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Race in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), and Kenneth L. Kusmer, “African Americans in the City since World War II: From the Industrial to the Post-Industrial Era,” *Journal of Urban History* 21 (1995): 458-504.

^{ix} R. Drew Smith and Tamelyn Tucker-Worgs, 194. For an essay that stresses such continuity in the African-American religious experience with regards to the megachurch phenomenon, see Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “Plenty Good Room: Adaptation in a Changing Black Church,” *The Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science* 558 (1998): 101-121.

^x For black church’s response to industrialization, see Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer, *African-American Religion in the Twentieth-Century* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992). Following the lead of historians Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, this essay views deindustrialization as a process, “a historical transformation that marks not just a quantitative and qualitative change in employment, but a fundamental change in the social fabric on par with industrialization itself.” I am not interested in retelling the story of plant closings, industrial decline, and other tales of victimization (though those narratives are important). Rather, I am more interested in how people have coped with deindustrialization. In this way, I hope to bring a much-needed sense of human agency to the familiar story of deindustrialization. See Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, “Introduction: The Meanings of Deindustrialization,” in *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*, eds. Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1-15, 1, 5, 6.

^{xi} Obviously, many studies have paid attention to the suburban spaces that these institutions occupy. Yet such examinations of the megachurch phenomenon have not adequately shown *why* these locales are logical homes for these churches, and how such environments have shaped their development. A similar argument based on issues of space can be made for suburban, predominantly white megachurches in the postindustrial age. In this age of exurban sprawl, they serve as convenient, centralized locations where one can get everything he needs – much like the central cities and even denser suburban spaces that many left for these new locales. As housing and industry continues to move further away from the core, these churches have become a type of “downtown.”

^{xii} For the problems that the rise of industrial capitalism wrought – and community response to such concerns – see Christine Meisner Rosen, “Businessmen Against Pollution in Late Nineteenth Century Chicago,” *Business History Review* 69 (1995): 351-397; William J. Novak, *The People’s Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

^{xiii} Holt, 90-1. For more on historians’ neglect of post-1960s America, see Van Gosse, “Postmodern America: A New Democratic Order in the Second Gilded Age,” in *The World the 60s Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, eds. Van Gosse and Richard Moser (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 1-36.

^{xiv} Janice L. Reiff, “Roseland,” in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, and Janice L. Reiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 722-3, 722.

^{xv} For Chicago and the Great Migration, see James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Reiff, “Roseland,” and Janice L. Reiff, “Pullman,” in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 665-6. For Pullman’s treatment of its African-American porters, see David D. Perata, *Those Pullman Blues: An Oral History of the African American Railroad Attendant* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996). For Pullman and African-American manufacturing employees, see Susan E. Hirsch, *After the Strike: A Century of Labor Struggle at Pullman* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

^{xvi} Reiff, “Roseland,” 722. For a local perspective on the postwar history of the greater Roseland community, see such community newspapers as the *Calumet Index*, the *Beverly Review*, and the *South End Citizen*, all collected at the Chicago Historical Society.

^{xvii} Dominic A. Pacyga, “South Side,” *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 771-3, 773, and David Bensman and Mark R. Wilson, “Iron and Steel,” *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 425-7. William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 29-30. All of this is also part of a larger national – even international – story. Between thirty-two and thirty-eight million jobs disappeared during the 1970s and 80s as the result of private disinvestment or relocation of US

businesses, often to overseas locations. Many of these losses came in the manufacturing sector. In 1979, 21 million people were employed in manufacturing. By 2001, manufacturing employment had fallen to 16.5 million. And those that kept their jobs faced diminishing wages. Between 1973 and 1995, the average real (inflation-adjusted) wage of production and non-supervisory employees fell by 10 percent. For more on the national and global effects of deindustrialization, see Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), and Barry Bluestone, "Foreword," in *Beyond the Ruins*, vii-xiii.

^{xviii} Richard L. Cole, Delbert A. Taebel, and Rodney V. Hissong, "America's Cities and the 1980s: The Legacy of the Reagan Years," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 12 (1990): 345-360, and Michael Leo Owens, "Doing Something in Jesus' Name: Black Churches and Community Development Corporations," in *New Day Begun: African American Churches and Civic Culture in Post-Civil Rights America*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 215-247, 218.

^{xix} Bob Smietana, "MegaShepherd," *Christianity Today*, February 2004, [Hwww.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/002/1.28.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/002/1.28.html)H, and Manya A. Brachear, "City mega-church ready for its debut." Salem's website, [Hwww.sbcoc.org](http://www.sbcoc.org)H, also has a great deal of information on the church and its history.

^{xx} Carolyn M. Brown, "Salem Baptist Church of Chicago has made investing part of its gospel of economic empowerment," *Black Enterprise*, June 2002, www.blackenterprise.com/Archiveopen.asp?source=/archive2002/06/0602-24.htm.

^{xxi} Bob Smietana, "MegaShepherd."

^{xxii} June Manning Thomas and Reynard N. Blake, Jr., "Faith-based Community Development and African-American Neighborhoods," in *Revitalizing Urban Neighborhoods*, W. Dennis Keating, Norman Krumholz, and Philip Star, eds., (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996): 131-143.

^{xxiii} Arthur Pearson, interview by the author, January 9, 2006; Tom Shepherd, interview by the author, January 9, 2006.

^{xxiv} Michael Shymanski, interview by the author, December 19, 2005. The plan to turn Pullman into a tourist destination is beyond the scope of this essay. However, it should be noted that, after a number of false starts and disasters (a fire swept through a vacant clock tower and construction shops in 1998), the plan to erect a museum in Pullman appears to be back on track. In late 2005, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency announced that they had nearly completed the stabilization of all of the buildings that make up the Historic Site complex – including the much-beloved Clock Tower. Mike Wagenbach, "Stabilization of Pullman Historic Site Nears Completion," *Pullman Flyer*, December 2005, 1.