



THE POWER OF MUSIC: CREATING NEW BOUNDARIES IN A PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I examine how youth in a black, storefront church find spaces to maneuver and exert power in their small churches. In their fundamental Pentecostal church, youth are relegated to areas of music and worship. Youth in this study use musical spaces to take control of their churches and to defy spatial rules and norms. Music is especially important for young women who are denied traditional positions of leadership because of their sex. This article is part of a larger project in which I spent over two years as a participant observer in two storefront churches in Trenton, NJ. Through qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and participation, I attempted to understand the unique practice of Pentecostals by young people and examine how it contrasts with the practice of previous generations.

KEYWORDS

Storefront church. Religious youth. Pentecostal youth. Gospel music. Black spiritual songs.

This article investigates how young people at Rock of Love Community Church (RLCC) use music as a way to experience freedom and agency in a number of ways. I will first explain how space is crucial to worship and music in Pentecostal churches by describing the physical space of the church. I will then describe the role that music plays in both churches

and how it has become a physical and metaphysical space for youth to establish salient identities as black Pentecostal youth. I end by showing that how through music, youth use music as a way to defy the spatial rules that are placed onto them.

This project is part of a qualitative study that examines the experience of being a Pentecostal youth in two storefront churches in Trenton, New Jersey. As a scholar of children, I believe that the spiritual and religious identity formation of young people is a critical part of their lives. Their experiences are not important only in how they relate to adults. Youth spirituality in itself is a fascinating and complicated set of processes that are worthy of being studied.

The social structure of the church is organized into two groups, adult members and young people. The definition of “young people” is fluid. Being classified as a young person is a combination of age, marital status, living situation, and position in the church. The young people are governed by a board called the Armor Bearers Young People Union (ABYPU). This arm of the church is centered on organizing church services and social events that are specifically geared for members of the church who are 35 years and under.

The eleven youth who were interviewed in this study live drastically different lives. They range in age from six to thirty-four. Some live in poverty-stricken urban Trenton, while others have moved to more affluent suburbs. They come in a variety of complexions, socio-economic groups, and backgrounds. Yet one thing unites them. Each week they make the trek to small storefront churches in order to practice their faith, connect with God, and become part of a community with other Christians. At the heart of this project is not only what drives those young people to be practicing Pentecostals, but what are some of the effects that being a young Pentecostal has on their relations with one another, adults in the church, and people outside of the church.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This project is partly rooted in the theories of Michel de Certeau (1984). In one of his seminal works, *The practice of*

every day life, Certeau (1984) suggests looking at the smaller, everyday choices that an individual makes, rather than focusing on isolated, larger events. From a distance, it may appear as if the youths' actions are all accommodating to a faith that suppresses their individuality. That shortsighted view ignores all the acts of agency and subversion that youth are engaged in. Like pedestrians making their own rules on the city streets of NYC, Pentecostal youth are making their own rules in the pews and pulpits of storefront Pentecostal churches. In one sense, the youth in this study are actors navigating the streets, nooks, and crannies of their world and finding spaces to follow, invert, and break rules. At other times, youth actively reinforce the notion of structured, orderly churches where individuals behave "appropriately." More often than not, youth move back and forth between the two perspectives, making their experiences complex, fluid, and dynamic.

1.1 ROCK OF LOVE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Understanding the space of the church is crucial to understanding the role of music in the church. RLCC is located on a small side street that is considered one of the worst streets in Trenton, New Jersey. When one walks up to the entrance, he must walk through a narrow parking lot. It is so narrow that cars cannot double park. The lot only fits about five cars. The door, which is on the side of the church, faces a nightclub. It is an old run, down club that is known throughout Trenton for being place where shootings and other crimes happen. To the right we see the actual church building. The church shares the structure with a barber shop. In front of the shop, there are guys selling purses, clothes, and friend-fish sandwiches. On a weekday, cars cannot even get in the parking lot because of the vendors. After one navigates through the parking lot, there is a red door with a cross on it. Once inside the door, an individual can go one of two ways, down to the left or up the stairs. Down to the left, we find Pastor Kinderson's office. Elder Kinderson moved out of the city about 15 years ago with his

wife and children to a nearby suburb. Most of his family members are still living in the city. There is also a space with folding tables and chairs. It seats about twenty-five people and is used as a social space. Going up the stairs will take one into the middle of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is an oddly shaped rectangular room that narrows towards the back of the church. At the front of the church there is a pulpit. Behind of the pulpit, a wall of mirrors left over from the days when the church was actually a gym. The effect is that the mirrors make the church feel a lot bigger and more spacious than the room actually is. Because there are only ten or fifteen regular attending members at the church, the space in the pews is adequate to fit the entire congregation. In the back of church, there is a raised part of the church which is where the men's bathroom and the video recording equipment are located. Each service is recorded and provided to members for a \$ 5 donation.

The carpet and pillars of the walls to the church are purple. The members took a painstaking amount of time when they first moved into the space in 2011, to make it their own. They believed the building to be a blessing from God and a fulfillment of a dream that Elder Kinderson had years ago. He had a dream "*where someone just handed me the keys to a church*". The current building that RLCC inhabits was given to them by a congregation that had outgrown the church and moved on. Because Elder Kinderson did not have to look and search for the church RLCC is now in, he considers the acquisition of the space to be God fulfilling a promise that He made to the congregation. Physically it is theirs because they pay the rent and spiritually it is theirs because God showed through his fulfillment of dreams and prayers for a church, that this space was especially meant for the members of the church.

1.2 THE PULPIT SPACE

The pulpit plays a pivotal role in the Pentecostal church and also a crucial part in this article. The pulpit illustrates the roles and expectations of ordained men, women, children, and un-ordained men in the Pentecostal church. By allowing certain individuals to sit on and use the pulpit and having oth-

ers forbidden to even walk on it, Pentecostals reaffirm who has a position of power and privilege in the church. Physically, the men who sit on the pulpit are higher than the rest of the congregants in the church. The pulpit plays an ideological role as well though. It reinforces the notion that there is space that is off-limits to women and youth. At RLCC, the sight of a youth or woman sitting in a pulpit chair is radical and rarely seen.

RLCC has a large podium on the pulpit. That large, mostly immobile structure is where Elder Kinderson and other ordained men preach and speak from. Obscured directly behind the podium there is the chair where Elder Kinderson sits. This arrangement reinforces the configuration of power and leadership in the church. The heightened level of the podium signifies a special place of honor for the men on the pulpit. At the center of the podium there is the pastor of each church. He has the space of centrality and honor in the church.

On the floor in front of the pulpit podium we find a smaller, mobile stand. That smaller stand is used frequently for members who are not ordained ministers. For example, church announcements are read by women at RLCC at the stand rather than the pulpit. It is not only women who use the stand, but men who are not ordained. Typically Sunday school is taught by an ordained man, so they often teach from the podium on the pulpit. Men who are not ordained have lead prayers, made announcements, and presented in front of the church, but always at the stand.

Through the use of music, rules of space are bended and broken by young people, especially young women. The remainder of this article will discuss the specific way that music is defined, used, and manipulated by youth at RLCC.

2. THE SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF MUSIC

Music, choirs, and worship are intertwined at RLCC. Choirs can either be a traditional group of singers who come together to learn songs, or a smaller group of individuals who come together and label themselves as a praise and worship

team. While the definition of worship is not exclusive to music, worship most often includes music. When members refer to a worship service, they are referring to a type of service where there will be singing, music, and choirs. When referring to worship, it is implied that there will be music involved. At RLCC, youth congregate around the area of music. While there are adults who help out in these areas, youth are overwhelmingly present in the production, performance, and regulation of music. Many are able to be in charge with little to no oversight from adults.

Music is part of a large formal structure that operates in the Pentecostal church. On one level, music acts as a large framework for the benefit of youth. Adults and church leadership have relegated youth to the area of music (REED, 2003). In its intended use, music is a place for youth to act as members in training and gaining a deeper understanding of Pentecostalism while at the same time being encouraged to avoid the secular world. Minister Johnston from RLCC has remarked on more than six occasions that *“We got to give these young people something to do that’ll keep them in the church”*. Simultaneously, youth gain power through leadership roles that adults intended for youth (GOODSTEIN, 2006). Youth are able to make up their own rules that operate within and outside of the official space of music.

It is no surprise that music has a special role at RLCC. The congregation is comprised entirely of working class African Americans. Music has been a fundamental part of the black church throughout its history in America. Louis-Charles Harvey argues that: *“The history of Black Gospel Music is intricately intertwined with the experience of black people in this country”* (19 Harvey). Black gospel music provides black church members with a connection to American slavery. Gospel music also provides a way for black Christians to make sense of the history of oppression that they have endured in America.

For many blacks in America, a history of oppression has had real life consequences. Conversations about racial oppression and discrimination are common place at RLCC. Elder Kinderson refers to the tenacity of black Americans and their resiliency in the face of racism. He was raised in the 1960s and 1970s, so the legacy of segregation and discrimination reso-

nates with him. Pentecostalism and gospel music provide a way for many of the church members to process and overcome the challenges of being black in a poor, high crime, high poverty neighborhood like Trenton. Every youth and adult interviewed in this project spoke to the power of music in their church. Gospel music offers support and guidance to Pentecostals on a spiritual level, but also on an emotional and psychological level. Gospel music has the ability to help black Christians focus on the love of God, rather than the inequality and oppression faced on a daily basis (Harvey).

Robert Darden (2004) argues that black Christians have used music as a way to fight the evils in life that they have encountered. Darden's work shows an intertwining of secular and religious worldviews that I also discovered while interviewing the Pentecostals in this study. Darden (2004, p. 6) poignantly points out that "to fight the supernatural, you must employ the supernatural". For Pentecostals, every action that they make is part of a cosmic battle between good and bad. There is nothing neutral in the world in the Pentecostal framework. Something that brings one closer to God is a blessing and anything that takes a person further from God is a curse. In a faith where everything is black or white, gospel music has the potential to not only bring Pentecostals closer to God, but it helps to heal the frustration and heartache of living in a world of injustice and inequality.

Many scholars cite the Pentecostal church as the birthplace of the black gospel song genre. Harvey marks the creation of the first black Pentecostal church in 1895 as the location of where the first black spiritual songs were created. He describes those songs as one of the staples of the black church both back in the 1800s, as well as influencing the type of music that is currently performed in black churches (HARVEY).

The music performed at RLCC is best described as urban, contemporary gospel. Gospel music has grown exponentially since its appearance on the American music scene. Sales for Christian music now top classical jazz and new age music (GMA INDUSTRY OVERVIEW 2008, 2008). However, urban contemporary gospel is marked by its differences from the other subgenres of gospel music. Urban contemporary music traces its roots to the 1970s (DARDEN, 2004). Urban contem-

porary gospel music shares the same themes and topics as other gospel music (the message of Christ, perseverance, overcoming struggles), but uses modern music forms. There are often musical similarities to pop and R&B music styles at RLCC (BEAM, 1991). Most of the popular artists in the urban contemporary genre are black while most of the popular artists in the contemporary gospel music scene are white artists.

Urban contemporary gospel music is the type of music that is heard at RLCC's worship services. Other types of music performed by white Christian artists are rarely performed and members are unfamiliar with those types of songs. Thus, music is more than just a part of the service. Through music, both youth and adults in the church construct a collective identity as black Pentecostals. John Beam (1991) argues that while there is some integration across urban contemporary and contemporary gospel, most artists fall across those racial lines.

Both youth and adults at RLCC recognize that music as an extension of the church, acting as a mechanism for black Americans to fight against inequality and discrimination. Fitzgerald and Spohn (2005) argue that churches have been a gathering space for blacks to congregate and understand their world. The youth at RLCC are also engaged in a subtle fight against inequality at their church. Through music, youth fight the marginalized and limited role and function that they have in their churches.

3. CLAIMING NEW SPACES WITH MUSIC

Performing music at their church allows young people to step into positions of leadership and control. The Praise and Worship team at RLCC has infrequent rehearsals. Usually, a member of the group will decide that they need to start practicing in order to learn new songs. The group will meet for a few weeks, learn a song, and then stop meeting. Rehearsals provide a place for youth to come together and socialize. In line with the dogma of Pentecostalism, the praise and worship part of the Sunday morning service is open to all. Any mem-

ber who has a song or wants to talk about an encounter that demonstrates God's love is encouraged to stand up and share. Members of the congregation encourage that individual with verbal affirmation, hand clapping, shouting, and other forms of worship. While there are occasional testimonies during praise and worship, the majority of it is spent with youth singing worship songs.

The Praise and Worship team of youth at RLCC complain about Shirley. Shirley is the grandmother of Danielle and David and an older member of the church who enjoys singing slower paced, older songs. Most of the young people prefer faster, more exuberant praise and worship service. Xavier, a twenty-four year old youth mentioned in his interview that older church members are not as excited as young people about worship. He said:

I believe it's a lot different when we [young people] talk about praise. As a young people, we have more of exuberance. At church[sic], it's only a couple of us young people and there's more older saints. And sometimes what we... how we would express ourselves is not how the older ones would express themselves in dealing with worship and praise. We're more exuberant if we want to hop around, we hop around. If we want to run all over the place. If we want to fall out. We will do that as young people. But, when we look to the elderly, they express their way to God in a different way. It may be silence. It may just be meditation.

Xavier's quote highlights that not only are youth changing the way that Pentecostals worship, but they see themselves as examples of how Pentecostals should worship. The Pentecostal faith has historically been a place where women, minorities and other marginalized groups in America have been able to claim power and voice because Pentecostals have historically included more working class and poor members than other denominations (ROBINS, 2010). In that context, it is not a surprise that youth, an extremely marginalized group in American society, are able to be empowered with responsibility through Pentecostalism.

David, a thirty-four year old young person, is a musician and organizer for the Praise and Worship team at RLCC.

David is very concerned about the possible interference from older members like Shirley, his grandmother. David is willing to do whatever it takes in order to ensure that the Praise and Worship team can perform without interruption in their style. Sometimes that means selecting songs that older members do not know and not giving members a chance to suggest their own songs. David is concerned about the pauses and lapses that occur during the worship part of Sunday morning service. It is at these moments that older members like Shirley are given room to add to the worship part of the service. David leads the other youth in protecting the space of music as a youth-centered space with tactics that will eliminate the intrusion of adults like Shirley.

Often when Shirley starts to sing, she is the only person in the congregation who knows the words and the melodies to the songs that she chooses. During a Saturday afternoon rehearsal, the youth lament the intrusion of Shirley in their praise and worship routine.

David: We need to learn new songs. That way Shirley can't take over

Danielle: She always sings those slow songs

Kimberly: (laughing) Yeah

David: We gotta start practicing songs and just sing them. That way she can't sing and take over!

Kimberly: Yeah, 'cause she be messing up the whole flow with those slow songs out of nowhere

MW: Yeah, I never know the words

Danielle: You don't know the words to none of the songs though

MW: Fair enough

David: We just gotta be on point and practice songs and just sing them. Then she won't be able to jump in. If we know what we doing and just keep singing she can't do nothing.

Through that exchange, it is evident that youth feel an ownership of the songs that are sung on a Sunday Morning. Youth are protective over their Sunday morning music space in ways that seem contradictory to how Pentecostalism has been practiced in generations before. One of the staples of Pentecostal worship is that everyone can be involved and can be led by the Spirit of God to play an active role. However,

youth at RLCC are redefining Pentecostal worship. The youth at RLCC are putting limitations on who can participate in the praise and worship part of service. By doing this, they limit the power of adults like Shirley and changing how Pentecostalism is practiced.

Music and worship have opened up doors to new physical spaces for youth at RLCC. Through music rehearsals they are given ownership over the church and allowed to reinterpret spatial politics of Pentecostalism. All of the young men in the choir have a key to all of the church, even to Pastor Kinderson's office. Scholars who have studied contemporary Pentecostal youth and their musical practices argue that gospel music gives Pentecostals the power to redefine Pentecostalism by taking over musical worship at their churches (PARSITAU, 2008). Parsitau (2008, p. 61) notes that "there exists a very active youth wing and numerous occasions for the young where they can be creative and entertained". When youth need to gather for rehearsals, they do not need permission from adults. Youth are free to meet whenever they want for however long they want. Adults give young people a respect of space during these meetings or rehearsals. Adults either wait in the back of the church or upstairs if the youth are meeting downstairs. During their meetings and rehearsals, young people can take control of the sanctuary and use it for their own purpose.

One way that space gets reinterpreted is in the sanctuary. Typically, during the praise and worship part of the service, the young people walk up towards the front of the church. Most youth sit in the back of the church. The adult and older members gravitate towards the front of the sanctuary. Youth are discouraged from sitting in the back. Elder Kinderson's wife, Lee, has tried to get youth to sit in the front of the church. Typically the break between Sunday school and morning worship is when congregants go to the bathroom, move to new seats, or get up to stretch. On at least five occasions during this break Lee has stated: "You know what Mother Thomas [researcher's grandmother] used to say. Sinners sit in the back 'cause they're afraid of the fire from the altar." This example of youth choosing to sit somewhere that is frowned upon, even jokingly, is an example of their resistance to the spatial rules at church.

When the young people go to lead praise and worship, they walk onto the pulpit briefly to grab microphones and then come back onto the floor facing the congregation. This is an important observation because only ordained men are allowed on the pulpit. Women are not allowed to be ordained in this type of Pentecostalism and men who are not ordained find no reason to go onto the pulpit. RLCC encourages the separation of ordained men by using two different podiums for when a member needs to make a presentation or an announcement. Pastor Kenderson preaches his sermons from the pulpit podium. At RLCC, it is clear to insiders that women are not allowed on the pulpit. Occasionally, there may be a man that is not ordained who is on to pulpit in order to pass on a message or grab some offering envelope or something like that. These trips to the pulpit are quick and terminal.

The spatial politics of gender play out in interesting ways at RLCC. During the summer of 2012, youth and adults from RLCC attended the funeral of an older, well-known church member at another church. At her funeral, the pulpit was significantly higher than the floor. There was the typical larger podium for ordained ministers and the regular smaller stand for everyone else. During the funeral, many members spoke about the departed. Women and un-ordained men knew to use the smaller stand. However, one of the departed's nieces came from a denomination of Pentecostalism where women were ordained, and she was a minister. Xavier was given the role of helping older women up to the stand and walking them down, as well as attending to the needs of ordained men in the pulpit. When the ordained niece came to offer words, she grabbed the microphone from the smaller stand and attempted to walk up to the larger pulpit podium. What ensued were several awkward minutes of her attempting to go to the podium and Xavier guiding her back down to the stand on the floor. She would walk up three steps and Xavier would meet her and gesture towards the stand on the floor. She would then go down and try to get around him on the other side. Xavier would meet her and gesture to the stand again. They played this cat-and-mouse game for several minutes before the woman relented and used the stand on the floor. However, while at the stand on the floor, she stated ex-

plicity that she was a minister. Through her introduction, the woman was offering an explanation as to why she had spent the past few minutes trying to use the podium.

The attempts of a female minister to come onto the pulpit made many in the congregation nervous. However, youth during their practices take control of the pulpit at RLCC. Kimberly and Danielle, the two females in the praise and worship team practice singing and arranging music while on the pulpit. They are aged twenty-eight and eighteen respectively. This makes sense because the musicians and their instruments are all located on the pulpit. Both young women take advantage of the space provided to them lead in the church. Because the spiritual war of good versus evil doesn't hinge on age, Pentecostal youth in churches like RLCC are exposed to similar leadership opportunities and training as adults are (GARLAND; FORTOSIS, 1991). Danielle, while rehearsing, will sometimes stand on the pulpit at the podium casually. On the surface level, it simply appears that a young woman is singing on a church altar. Yet, for the members of RLCC, it has significant meaning. The imagery is startling because in no other circumstance have I ever seen a young woman stand at the podium on the altar in my seventeen years at the church. I do not think that Danielle or Kimberly is waging an attack against the spatial politics of gender in the church. Nor do I think that their behavior is a reaction to the limits on placement and mobility that either young woman is constricted by in their church. At the same time, I think that the episode clearly displays that youth are able to defy the spatial rules placed on them. In the normal Sunday morning, the youth have possession of the front of the church floor only during praise and worship. Ordained men have possession of the pulpit throughout the entire service. Yet at the rehearsals youth can lay claims to areas of the church that they are typically denied access to, if only for a few minutes.

The power of music in both churches provides young women with new roles. Women outnumber men as church members. Yet the leadership in the churches is entirely male because of the prohibition on women being ordained pastors and/or leading churches. Women have been presidents of organizations like Sunday Schools and Young People's depart-

ments where they have authority and traditional power over their peers, including males. That fact is misleading though. The leaders of specific auxiliaries are under the rule and guidance of pastors and regional leaders. All of these leaders are men.

Music provides a tactic to the strategy of traditional church hierarchy in two important ways for women. The first is that music provides a way for young women to find some room for leadership. Young Pentecostal women are limited by the intersectionality of their identities as youth and as women. Because they are women, a number of positions as ordained ministers and church pastors are closed off to them. Additionally, their youth provides another roadblock to obtaining a position. Even men younger than thirty-five years old find themselves cut off from leadership positions on many of the national levels. Music provides a way for young women (because youth are encouraged to join musical organizations and women outnumber men) to assume a role of leadership in their churches.

Also, because musical worship holds such a prominent place at RLCC, its control is important and useful to the youth RLCC. Someone like Danielle wields an amazing amount of power. She singlehandedly directs the flow of worship on every Sunday, youth services, and many of the services during the week. The worship at RLCC is one of the most central parts of the service. This is because both Pentecostal churches define themselves partly through the way that they worship. Members at both churches discuss how their vibrant worship is what sets them apart from other Protestant denominations, as well as even other Evangelical denominations. About a month after the rehearsal that I have described, Elder Kinderson was on the pulpit speaking about the power of worship. He stated that “*worship in the church is vital. Once you worship God, the spirit continues to be in the sanctuary*”. In this Pentecostal context, leading worship carries significant weight.

Because the musical worship is led by women, young women have the potential to assume one of the most powerful unofficial positions in the hierarchy of the church. None of those women can become ordained. In spite of limita-

tions, young women are exercising agency and control through the “tactic” of musical worship. Danielle dictates how long the praise and worship part of the service lasts. She singlehandedly determines what songs will be sung and how many will be sung. Her authority is reinforced every Sunday by Minister Johnston. The two demonstrate it through their exchange in which each one takes control over a portion of the service.

Each Sunday, Minister Johnston guides the congregation through prayer requests, prayer, and morning service. Minister Johnston assumes control of the space of leadership from the beginning of the service. His physical position standing at the big podium on the pulpit further reaffirms the control over the service that he has. He stands at the front of the church for all of the parts of the service that he leads. It is only when he is temporarily giving up space (and thus power because the two are interconnected) that he leaves his central position standing at the front of the church. It is at this point where Danielle is able to assume control.

When Minister Johnston “turns over” the service to Danielle, he does it in a formal way that illustrates both strategies and tactics that allow youth, but especially Danielle, to assume a physical and metaphysical space of control over a part of the service. Johnston announces to the congregants that “let’s have the praise and worship team comes lead us in worship”. All in the church understand the time for praise and worship is relegated specifically for youth. In that role, Danielle and the other youth are able to walk into the specific role that is outlined for them.

There are also much more subtle displays of how Danielle assumes power during the Sunday morning service. These subtle ways exemplify the tactics that Certeau refers to in his work. Certeau (1984) describes “tactics” as the tools that individuals use inside of the larger strategies. Strategies are the ways that systems are designed to work and tactics are how individuals move within, outside, above, and below systems in order to exert some sort of control over their lives. Employing tactics is often subversive and passive. Tactics do not necessarily have to be a conscious, full out attack against the structure. When Minister Johnston introduces the praise

leaders, Danielle is the first of the young people to get up. She leads the procession of youth to the front of the room. Her initiative and first place in the line, demonstrate her dominance and control over the praise leader team. During the period where youth are in control of the service, Danielle is in control of the youth.

Danielle demonstrates tactics of leadership in other ways as well. When the young praise leaders stand in front of the congregation, they look to Danielle. While all of the youth know the words and melodies to the songs that Danielle will sing, very rarely does one of them suggest a song. Danielle starts the songs and sings the lead solo parts on most of the call and response songs. All eyes, adult and youth, look for her to guide them in the worship part of the service. While the congregants claim that God is the focus of their worship, Danielle acts the human focus point during the service. With only a quick introduction and a walk to the front of the church, Danielle takes over the helm of control in the church on a regular base every Sunday.

In order to confirm her claim of power on a Sunday, Danielle intentionally and specifically returns the power to Minister Johnston. Every week, Danielle states some variation of the phrase “We’re going to turn the service back into the hands of Minister Johnston”. Her phrase is embedded with meaning and symbolism. With it, Danielle also claims control of the service. There is no way that she could return the power and control back to Minister Johnston, unless she had it in the first place. As a member of the praise team, I can confirm that her use of the word “we’re” is purely ceremonial. None of other young people claim control or leadership over the service. Danielle’s statement speaks to her use of tactics in order to claim ownership of power in two poignant ways. Firstly, she is the individual with power, so she is the only one who can give it away. Secondly, no one else can give power away, because Danielle is the only young person who can stop the praise and worship part of the service. Danielle gives the power over when she has made the decision that there have been enough songs, praises, or testimonies given.

Danielle and other youth’s power are within limits. She does not have free reign over the service is held within bounds

by older members like Elder Kinderson and Minister Johnston. Scholars of Pentecostal youth like Esilaba and Starcher (2009) have noted that Christianity does indeed provide youth with power and leadership roles within the context of their churches. However, rarely does that power translate to spaces outside of protected boundaries. Danielle and other youth do not get a large say in the rest of church matters. Their power is confined to music and worship.

The microphone plays a large part in the display of power in the church. The microphone, like the podium, signifies a representation of power in the Pentecostal church. Whatever individual has the microphone during a service is the one who is in control of service. When the youth take over the worship part of the service, they all file up to the front of the church and individually grab a microphone. Minister Johnston then places his microphone in the stand. After praise and worship is done, Danielle once again moves first and leads the worship team in returning their microphones.

Music acts on multiple levels at RLCC First and foremost, music acts as an integral part of worship. One of the reasons that youth at RLCC are in a position to exercise power is because of the Evangelical nature of Pentecostalism. In qualitative studies of Evangelical youth, researchers found that youth are able to serve positions in Evangelical churches that they would not be able to in more dogmatic, hierarchy-centered faiths (HOGE et al., 1982). Like many other black churches, these black Pentecostals place an emphasis on music and expressive praise and worship. The music that youth and praise and worship teams perform at both churches is urban, contemporary gospel. Through music, youth learn to put their bodies under control in order to grow spiritually. Music acts as a waiting place for many young men on their way to higher, ordained positions. Lastly, music is one way for youth to claim traditional positions of power. For women, music can be a tool in gaining power. Through music, several of the young women in this study were able to exert their authority over the service. Youth in general were given the space and opportunity to explore the religious salient identities and take on leadership roles in their churches.

O PODER DA MÚSICA: CRIANDO NOVAS FRONTEIRAS EM UMA IGREJA PENTECOSTAL

RESUMO

Neste artigo, examino o modo como jovens que pertencem a uma igreja de negros que funciona no espaço de uma loja comercial encontram oportunidade para fazer manobras e exercer o poder em suas pequenas igrejas. Em igrejas pentecostais fundamentalistas, a juventude é relegada à área de louvor e adoração. Neste estudo, verifica-se que jovens usam a oportunidade musical que têm para controlar suas igrejas e desafiar regras e normas de seu ambiente. A música é especialmente importante no caso de mulheres jovens para as quais são negadas posições tradicionais de liderança por causa de seu gênero. Este artigo é parte de um projeto amplo em que passei dois anos observando duas igrejas que funcionam em uma loja comercial em Trenton, Nova Jersey. Por meio de métodos qualitativos, tais como entrevistas, grupos de foco, observações e participação de atividades, tentei compreender essa prática singular de jovens pentecostais e examinar como isso pode ser contrastado com a prática de gerações anteriores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Igreja como loja comercial. Juventude religiosa. Juventude pentecostal. Música gospel. Cânticos espirituais negros.

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