

Byron Marchant

June 9, 2019

President Russell M. Nelson
47 East South Temple
Salt Lake City UT 84150

Dear President Nelson,

In the Summer of 1973 I became the instructor of the ward deacons and, simultaneously, Troop 58 Scoutmaster for Liberty Ward, Salt Lake Liberty Stake, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City's Central City (for the benefit of the same group of 12 and 13 year old boys). Soon, two young African American boys from the neighborhood, Charlie Jones and Bert Thomas, had come to me and asked to join the few deacons as troop members. Subsequently, Troop 58 had grown in size to more than a dozen, about half deacons and half non LDS Church members, including Charlie and Bert.

When the new instructional literature came out of the office of the Presiding Bishopric of the LDS Church that Fall, the entire program had been fundamentally changed; the new program was called "Correlation" and correlation meant that the deacon (normally the oldest 13 year old boy), who served in the position of quorum president, was also designated to be responsible as troop senior patrol leader; this new policy, thus, excluded all non LDS boys from the opportunity for leadership training in Scouting. This policy of exclusion was particularly offensive to African American boys, since in America at the time, for example, United States Senator Edward William Brooke III of Massachusetts (elected in 1966) was the first and only ever popularly elected African American United States Senator until he chose not to run again in 1978.

During the period of time when the correlation instruction materials were first distributed, after both Charlie and Bert had joined Troop 58, the young quorum president, as "kids will be kids," read through the instructions for fulfilling the duties of his office and, as he later admitted, he confronted (taunted) one of these two African American Troop 58 members at school, letting him know that he would not qualify to become Troop 58 Senior Patrol Leader because this position was not available to him, ever, since African Americans could not become deacons, nor president of a quorum of deacons.

Some time later, during a Saturday in the Spring of 1974, the young but growing Troop 58 membership went on a planned hike about 40 or 50 miles west of Liberty Ward (near Tooele and Grantsville UT). Although I did not participate in this activity except for its planning, due to having become ill the night before (there were two experienced adult scouters who did); but reports back were disastrous. Apparently, according to reports, the troop members became divided (between LDS Deacon Scouts and non LDS Minority Scouts) and some kind of potentially dangerous rock throwing fight developed. Upon their arrival back in Salt Lake City and my learning about the incident, a meeting was immediately organized which included myself, the senior patrol leader/president of the deacon's quorum, Bert Thomas and Robin

Johnson, one of the two adults on the hike and leader of the eleven year old boys (Blazers) in the ward Scouting program.

It was Bert who had been confronted by the senior patrol leader/president of the quorum of deacons at school about the ineligibility of African American Scouts becoming senior patrol leader in an LDS sponsored troop, so that subject was discussed in this meeting. Other topics were of great interest too, all race related. Nothing was resolved at this meeting, as the young quorum president had learned enough about the history of LDS race relations policy to believe he was justified in his actions at school related to white supremacy beliefs, while Bert entirely disapproved of them.

A little information about Bert and his home environment should be helpful here. As best as I can tell, he was a member of a family led by a strong mother. One of his brothers was a newspaper reporter and another older brother, Terry Williams, became a member of the Utah House of Representatives in the early 1980s; subsequently he was elected to the Utah State Senate, serving there from 1983 to 1986, the first African American to serve in the Utah State Senate. The following is an August 1974 newspaper article that discussed the outgrowth of the disappointing hike:

Scouts, NAACP Support Writ

The Salt Lake chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Boy Scouts Monday agreed that a temporary U.S. District Court for Utah order halting alleged racial discrimination by the scouts be extended indefinitely.

Chief Judge Willis W. Ritter signed the order for extension that will remain in effect until there is a trial and decision in the case.

The Salt Lake chapter of the NAACP and two 13-year-old boys allege racial discrimination by the Boy Scout's National Council, Great Salt Lake Council and Troop 58 of the Great Salt Lake Council in a civil suit filed with the court.

Addresses Court

On August 2 Judge Ritter extended the temporary order he had issued when the suit was filed and set a hearing in the case for Monday.

However, Edward Clyde, attorney representing the defendant Boy Scouts, told the court Monday that the Boy Scouts were willing to have the temporary restraining order in effect throughout the case.

"The Boy Scouts of America have always had a non discrimination policy," Mr. Clyde added. Michael L. O'Keefe, attorney for the NAACP and the boys, said he had no objection, but wanted more specific language dealing with alleged practices by the scouts than is in the temporary order.

Hope for Accord

Mr. Clyde said he hoped there could be a mutual agreement worked out so there would not have to be a trial. No trial date has been set.

The extended order agreed upon by both the NAACP and the scouts restrains the scouts and its sponsors, agents and employees from:

— "Approving budgets, making funds available and approving programs designed to perpetuate, maintain or support a Boy Scout program operated on a racially discriminatory basis.

— “Maintaining any policy, practice or custom of withholding, denying, attempting to withhold or deny and deprive or otherwise interfere with the rights of the plaintiffs to admission and full use of the offices, services, facilities accommodations and advantages of the Boy Scouts in Utah.

Any Distinction

— “Making any other distinction in the operation of the Boy Scouts program in the State of Utah which distinction may directly or indirectly discriminate on the basis of race or color.

— “Selecting individuals for Boy Scout leadership positions (below the adult Scout Master) within those troops comprising the Great Salt Lake Council in a racially discriminatory manner.”

The suit said that two boys, Charles E.P. Jones and Bert J. Thomas, are black and that the defendants allegedly required that advancement to certain leadership positions in the scouts be limited to scouts who have attained the office of deacon’s quorum president in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This requirement, the action contends, does not allow blacks to be appointed to such leadership positions because blacks are denied the LDS church priesthood (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, Tuesday, August 13, 1974, p. 15).

This lawsuit was settled about three months later (November 1974) after the parties agreed that the LDS church would allow that African American boys could qualify to become senior patrol leader in LDS Scout troops if they were better qualified than the young president of the quorum of deacons.

The case was the result of a series of covert phone calls I had made to Mr. Don Cope, a gentleman I did not know but who was employed by the State of Utah as its black ombudsman (an official appointed to investigate individuals’ complaints against maladministration, especially that of public authorities). After the hike, and coming to realize that there was little chance anything of value would result via either LDS authorities or anyone else, I fortunately decided to follow the described route. The reason I selected to pursue a secret mode was due to the fact I was employed by the LDS church and believed that doing the informing openly may result in the loss of my employment.

After the legal action was filed in Utah Federal Court (Salt Lake City office), the bishop of our ward, Frank J. Poulsen, one of my bosses as ward custodian, received a phone call from the Presiding Bishop, Victor L. Brown, asking for a meeting at the Liberty/Liberty Park Ward, to which I (as Scoutmaster) was invited (ordered) to attend.

Bishop Brown expressed the belief, as thought by himself and other church leaders, that the legal action by Charlie, Bert and the local NAACP, was the most significant challenge to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since the 1890s polygamy days. Following the meeting I closed the warehouse building and returned home.

I had been married to Gladys Smith since January 1970; our first daughter, Daphne, was born in December 1971, so she was now (when the case was filed in 1974) a little over two years old. Gladys, of course, wanted to know about the meeting and after discussing it we decided that the best thing to do was to write a letter to the church’s president, Spencer W. Kimball. Completing the writing of this letter that evening and the next morning, I made a phone call to the headquarters of the church at 47 East South Temple and asked to talk with President Kimball. The call was transferred, of course, to his secretary, D. Arthur Haycock, not President Kimball.

After explaining to Arthur Haycock the purpose of the call, to arrange to personally deliver the letter to President Kimball, he said he would make some inquiries and call back. This was still early in the morning and I was not yet dressed. Before long the phone rang and it was Arthur Haycock asking how long it would take me to bring the letter to the Church Administration Building. I explained that I would take care of my personal hygiene and might be able to arrive soon, but not too soon. I was surprised that they wanted me to arrive in such a hurry, but thinking back on it, their interest makes perfect sense. Before leaving the house, Arthur Haycock called again, asking me to please hurry.

Upon my arrival, I was introduced to Arthur Haycock. He asked if I had the letter and wanted to know if I would give it to him so he could deliver it to President Kimball. Taken aback, I thought about it quickly and decided that I needed to deliver it myself. The letter was in my hand but I instinctually put it behind my back, not knowing what would happen to it if I handed it over. Thus began a long series of give and take over the issue of balancing all the factors involved in securing justice for Charlie and Bert, in light of the various other factors—including the high likelihood that there may be considerable reaction in my own family. After waiting for a short time in a waiting room on the main floor of the Church Administration Building, I was taken into the personal office of President Kimball. We talked for several minutes and soon I handed him the letter, to which he said that he would take it with us into an adjacent room where his two counselors were waiting. After introductions, he asked me if I would read it to them all, which I, of course, did.

This letter, written during the preceding twenty four hours, was basically a short position paper, an attempt to justify why we (Gladys and I wrote it together) had agreed I should communicate with Don Cope in support of Charlie and Bert in an effort to do what we could to prevent any more problems like the rock throwing fight during the troop's hike earlier in the year. President Kimball was reserved and non judgmental while his two counselors, N. Eldon Tanner and Marion G. Romney, were full of shaming advice, seemingly disinterested in the boys. As far as I was concerned this whole situation was nearly as damaging for the deacons in the troop as it was for Charlie and Bert. After all, failing to learn these important social skills during their teen years could end up being a serious detriment to all of them in their later years. During the month before our January 1970 marriage, on December 15, 1969, as I would learn in 1977, a First Presidency statement signed by N. Eldon Tanner (before he was first counselor) became the official LDS position regarding blacks and the priesthood denial to them. Now I will jump ahead to just what I would learn in August of that year (1977). This 1969 statement, currently found online at: <http://www.blacklds.org/1969-first-presidency-statement> is here in its entirety, although only one paragraph (in **bold**) is essential for the present discussion:

1969 First Presidency Statement

December 15, 1969

To General Authorities, Regional Representatives of the Twelve, Stake Presidents, Mission Presidents, and Bishops.

Dear Brethren:

In view of confusion that has arisen, it was decided at a meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve to restate the position of the Church with regard to the Negro both in society and in the Church.

First, may we say that we know something of the sufferings of those who are discriminated against in a denial of their civil rights and Constitutional privileges. Our early history as a church is a tragic story of

persecution and oppression. Our people repeatedly were denied the protection of the law. They were driven and plundered, robbed and murdered by mobs, who in many instances were aided and abetted by those sworn to uphold the law. We as a people have experienced the bitter fruits of civil discrimination and mob violence.

We believe that the Constitution of the United States was divinely inspired, that it was produced by “wise men” whom God raised up for this “very purpose,” and that the principles embodied in the Constitution are so fundamental and important that, if possible, they should be extended “for the rights and protection” of all mankind.

In revelations received by the first prophet of the Church in this dispensation, Joseph Smith (1805-1844), the Lord made it clear that it is “not right that any man should be in bondage one to another.” These words were spoken prior to the Civil War. From these and other revelations have sprung the Church’s deep and historic concern with man’s free agency and our commitment to the sacred principles of the Constitution.

It follows, therefore, that we believe the Negro, as well as those of other races, should have his full Constitutional privileges as a member of society, and we hope that members of the Church everywhere will do their part as citizens to see that these rights are held inviolate. Each citizen must have equal opportunities and protection under the law with reference to civil rights.

However, matters of faith, conscience, and theology are not within the purview of the civil law. The first amendment to the Constitution specifically provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

The position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affecting those of the Negro race who choose to join the Church falls wholly within the category of religion. It has no bearing upon matters of civil rights. In no case or degree does it deny to the Negro his full privileges as a citizen of the nation.

This position has no relevancy whatever to those who do not wish to join the Church. Those individuals, we suppose, do not believe in the divine origin and nature of the church, nor that we have the priesthood of God. Therefore, if they feel we have no priesthood, they should have no concern with any aspect of our theology on priesthood so long as that theology does not deny any man his Constitutional privileges.

A word of explanation concerning the position of the Church.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints owes its origin, its existence, and its hope for the future to the principle of continuous revelation. “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.”

From the beginning of this dispensation, Joseph Smith and all succeeding presidents of the Church have taught that Negroes, while spirit children of a common Father, and the progeny of our earthly parents Adam and Eve, were not yet to receive the priesthood, for reasons which we believe are known to God, but which He has not made fully known to man [bold mine].

Our living prophet, President David O. McKay, has said, “The seeming discrimination by the Church toward the Negro is not something which originated with man; but goes back into the beginning with God. . .

“Revelation assures us that this plan antedates man’s mortal existence, extending back to man’s pre-existent state.”

President McKay has also said, “Sometime in God’s eternal plan, the Negro will be given the right to hold the priesthood.”

Until God reveals His will in this matter, to him whom we sustain as a prophet, we are bound by that same will. Priesthood, when it is conferred on any man comes as a blessing from God, not of men.

We feel nothing but love, compassion, and the deepest appreciation for the rich talents, endowments, and the earnest strivings of our Negro brothers and sisters. We are eager to share with men of all races the blessings of the Gospel. We have no racially-segregated congregations.

Were we the leaders of an enterprise created by ourselves and operated only according to our own earthly wisdom, it would be a simple thing to act according to popular will. But we believe that this work is directed by God and that the conferring of the priesthood must await His revelation. To do otherwise would be to deny the very premise on which the Church is established.

We recognize that those who do not accept the principle of modern revelation may oppose our point of view. We repeat that such would not wish for membership in the Church, and therefore the question of priesthood should hold no interest for them. Without prejudice they should grant us the privilege afforded

under the Constitution to exercise our chosen form of religion just as we must grant all others a similar privilege. They must recognize that the question of bestowing or withholding priesthood in the Church is a matter of religion and not a matter of Constitutional right.

We extend the hand of friendship to men everywhere and the hand of fellowship to all who wish to join the Church and partake of the many rewarding opportunities to be found therein.

We join with those throughout the world who pray that all of the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ may in due time of the Lord become available to men of faith everywhere. Until that time comes we must trust in God, in His wisdom and in His tender mercy.

Meanwhile we must strive harder to emulate His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose new commandment it was that we should love one another. In developing that love and concern for one another, while awaiting revelations yet to come, let us hope that with respect to these religious differences, we may gain reinforcement for understanding and appreciation for such differences. They challenge our common similarities, as children of one Father, to enlarge the out-reachings of our divine souls.

Faithfully your brethren,

The First Presidency

By Hugh B. Brown
N. Eldon Tanner

For more than four years, at least beginning in 1974, Charlie Jones along with Bert Thomas were mistreated by not only leading and more run of the mill priesthood members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but also NAACP lawyers (why should these young boys have been required to be “more qualified” (a phrase used by Charlie’s mother, Charlotte, when she told me at the district voting location, the Lutheran Church meeting house on the corner of Herbert Avenue and Fifth East Street, in November 1974 after the case had been settled) than any other Troop 58 Scout in order to become a senior patrol leader? Neither Charlie nor Bert attended any more meetings after the case was filed in 1974. But as they say, “hope springs eternal.” Another phrase commonly used in similar circumstances, “knowledge is power,” also eventually became a factor.

A Special Note, President Nelson

In 1977 I was falsely charged with apostasy and excommunicated in October from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The conditions surrounding that event were basically that in 1969 the First Presidency of your church made the false claim that Joseph Smith, Jr., was responsible for the denial of the priesthood of your church from members of African descent: “...From the beginning of this dispensation, Joseph Smith and all succeeding presidents of the Church have taught that Negroes, while spirit children of a common Father, and the progeny of our earthly parents Adam and Eve, were not yet to receive the priesthood, for reasons which we believe are known to God, but which He has not made fully known to man...”:

<http://www.blacklds.org/1969-first-presidency-statement>

Of course, this statement was believed to be true in 1977 by many but, none the less, it was not true in 1969 or 1977, just as it is not true today.

In 2013, thirty six years (2013-1977) after I had made the correct information public, the leaders of your church placed the following information (applicable portions here only, with footnoted references also deleted) on the Internet, thereby confirming the information I had made known to the public prior to their excommunication of me:

Race and the Priesthood

2013 Internet

In theology and practice, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints embraces the universal human family. Latter-day Saint scripture and teachings affirm that God loves all of His children and makes salvation available to all. God created the many diverse races and ethnicities and esteems them all equally. As the Book of Mormon puts it, “all are alike unto God”...Despite this modern reality, for much of its history—from the mid-1800s until 1978—the Church did not ordain men of black African descent to its priesthood or allow black men or women to participate in temple endowment or sealing ordinances.

The Church was established in 1830, during an era of great racial division in the United States. At the time, many people of African descent lived in slavery, and racial distinctions and prejudice were not just common but customary among white Americans. Those realities, though unfamiliar and disturbing today, influenced all aspects of people’s lives, including their religion. Many Christian churches of that era, for instance, were segregated along racial lines. From the beginnings of the Church, people of every race and ethnicity could be baptized and received as members. Toward the end of his life, Church founder Joseph Smith openly opposed slavery. There has never been a Churchwide policy of segregated congregations...a few black men were ordained to the priesthood [between 1830 and the 1850s]. One of these men, Elijah Abel, also participated in temple ceremonies in Kirtland, Ohio, and was later baptized as proxy for deceased relatives in Nauvoo, Illinois. There is no reliable evidence that any black men were denied the priesthood during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. In a private Church council three years after Joseph Smith’s death [1847], Brigham Young praised Q. Walker Lewis, a black man who had been ordained to the priesthood, saying, “We have one of the best Elders, an African”...President Brigham Young publicly announced [in 1852] that men of black African descent could no longer be ordained to the priesthood...Following the death of Brigham Young, subsequent Church presidents restricted blacks from receiving the temple endowment or being married in the temple. Over time, Church leaders and members advanced many theories to explain the priesthood and temple restrictions. None of these explanations is accepted today as the official doctrine of the Church.

The Church in an American Racial Culture

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was restored amidst a highly contentious racial culture in which whites were afforded great privilege. In 1790, the U.S. Congress limited citizenship to “free white person[s]”...issues of race [over the next half century] divided the country—while slave labor was legal in the more agrarian South, it was eventually banned in the more urbanized North. Even so, racial discrimination was widespread in the North as well as the South, and many states implemented laws banning interracial marriage...the U.S. Supreme Court declared [in 1857] that blacks possessed “no rights which the white man was bound to respect” [The Dred Scott Case...]. A generation after the Civil War (1861–65) led to the end of slavery in the United States, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “separate but equal” facilities for blacks and whites were constitutional, a decision that legalized a host of public color barriers until the Court reversed itself in 1954...Not until 1967 did the [US Supreme] Court strike down laws forbidding interracial marriage.

In 1850, the U.S. Congress created Utah Territory, and the U.S. president appointed Brigham Young to the position of territorial governor. Southerners who had converted to the Church and migrated to Utah with their slaves raised the question of slavery’s legal status in the territory. In two speeches delivered before the Utah territorial legislature in January and February 1852, Brigham Young announced a policy restricting men of black African descent from priesthood ordination. At the same time, President Young said that at some future day, black Church members would “have [all] the privilege and more” enjoyed by other members....

The justifications for this restriction echoed the widespread ideas about racial inferiority that had been used to argue for the legalization of black “servitude” in the Territory of Utah...which had been promulgated [according to one view] in the United States from at least the 1730s, blacks descended from the same lineage as the biblical Cain, who slew his brother Abel....

Removing the Restriction

Even after 1852, at least two black Mormons continued to hold the priesthood. When one of these men, Elijah Abel, petitioned to receive his temple endowment in 1879, his request was denied. Jane Manning

James, a faithful black member who crossed the plains and lived in Salt Lake City until her death in 1908, similarly asked to enter the temple; she was allowed to perform baptisms for the dead for her ancestors but was not allowed to participate in other ordinances...The curse of Cain was often put forward as [priesthood and temple restriction] justification...Around the turn of the century, another explanation gained currency: blacks were said to have been less than fully valiant in the premarital battle against Lucifer and, as a consequence, were restricted from priesthood and temple blessings....

By the late 1940s and 1950s, racial integration was becoming more common in American life. Church President David O. McKay emphasized that the restriction extended only to men of black African descent. The Church had always allowed Pacific Islanders to hold the priesthood, and President McKay clarified that black Fijians and Australian Aborigines could also be ordained to the priesthood and instituted missionary work among them. In South Africa, President McKay reversed a prior policy that required prospective priesthood holders to trace their lineage out of Africa...given the long history of withholding the priesthood from men of black African descent, Church leaders believed that a revelation from God was needed to alter the policy, and they made ongoing efforts to understand what should be done. After praying for guidance, President McKay did not feel impressed to lift the ban...As the Church grew worldwide, its overarching mission to “go ye therefore, and teach all nations”...seemed increasingly incompatible with the priesthood and temple restrictions. The Book of Mormon declared that the gospel message of salvation should go forth to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people”....

Brazil in particular presented many challenges. Unlike the United States and South Africa where legal and de facto racism led to deeply segregated societies, Brazil prided itself on its open, integrated, and mixed racial heritage. In 1975, the Church announced that a temple would be built in São Paulo, Brazil. As the temple construction proceeded, Church authorities encountered faithful black and mixed-ancestry Mormons who had contributed financially and in other ways to the building of the São Paulo temple, a sanctuary they realized they would not be allowed to enter once it was completed. Their sacrifices, as well as the conversions of thousands of Nigerians and Ghanaians in the 1960s and early 1970s, moved Church leaders...leaders pondered promises made by prophets such as Brigham Young that black members would one day receive priesthood and temple blessings. In June 1978, after “spending many hours in the Upper Room of the [Salt Lake] Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance,” Church President Spencer W. Kimball, his counselors in the First Presidency, and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles received a revelation. “He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come,” the First Presidency announced on June 8 [9]. The First Presidency stated that they were “aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us” that “all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood”...The revelation rescinded the [Brigham Young...] restriction on priesthood ordination. It also extended the blessings of the temple to all worthy Latter-day Saints, men and women. The First Presidency statement regarding the revelation was canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants as Official Declaration 2.

This “revelation on the priesthood,” as it is commonly known in the Church, was a landmark revelation and a historic event. Those who were present at the time described it in reverent terms. Gordon B. Hinckley, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, remembered it this way: “There was a hallowed and sanctified atmosphere in the room. For me, it felt as if a conduit opened between the heavenly throne and the kneeling, pleading prophet of God who was joined by his Brethren...Every man in that circle, by the power of the Holy Ghost, knew the same thing...Not one of us who was present on that occasion was ever quite the same after that. Nor has the Church been quite the same”...worldwide [reaction] was overwhelmingly positive among Church members of all races. Many Latter-day Saints wept for joy at the news. Some reported feeling a collective weight lifted from their shoulders. The Church began priesthood ordinations for men of African descent immediately, and black men and women entered temples throughout the world. Soon after the revelation, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, an apostle, spoke of new “light and knowledge” that had erased previously “limited understanding”....

The Church Today

Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else. Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form...Since that day in 1978, the Church has looked to the future, as membership among Africans, African Americans and others of African descent

has continued to grow rapidly. While Church records for individual members do not indicate an individual's race or ethnicity, the number of Church members of African descent is now in the hundreds of thousands.

The Church proclaims that redemption through Jesus Christ is available to the entire human family on the conditions God has prescribed. It affirms that God is “no respecter of persons”...emphatically [declaring] that anyone who is righteous—regardless of race—is favored of Him. The teachings of the Church in relation to God's children are epitomized by a verse in the second book of Nephi: “[The Lord] denieth none that cometh unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female;...all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” [the Internet original includes 26 footnotes]...The Church acknowledges the contribution of [church] scholars to the historical content presented in this article...used with permission...Originally published December 2013 [<https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>] and [<http://www.blacklds.org/the-church-and-race-all-are-alike-unto-god/race-and-the-priesthood>].

My own August 1977 research included the original book of “Kirtland elders' certificates, 1836-1838,” formerly found on the Internet at this URL address: <https://catalog.lds.org/assets/d4a1c1df-65f9-4e82-93fc-d12c125c1e41/0/82> and also available at various other URL locations such as this: <https://mormonhistoryguy.com/2015/03/25/was-elijah-ables-ordained-by-joseph-smith-a-response-to-w-paul-reeve/> which handwritten document reads:

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To whom it may concern

This certifies that Elijah Able has been received into the church of the Latter-day Saints, organized on the sixth of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred & thirty, & has been ordained an Elder according to the rules & regulations of said church, & is duly authorized to preach the gospel agreeably to the authority of that office. From the satisfactory evidence which we have of his good moral character, & his zeal for the cause of righteousness, & diligent desire to persuade men to forsake evil & embrace truth. We confidently recommend him to all candid & upright people as a worthy member of society. We therefore in the name, & by the authority of this church grant unto this, our worthy brother in the Lord, this letter of commendation as a proof of our fellowship, & esteem: Praying for his success & prosperity in our Redeemer's Cause. Given by the direction of a conference of the Elders of said church. Assembled in Kirtland, Geauga County, Ohio, the third day of March, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred thirty six.

Joseph Smith Jr. Chairman.

F. G. Williams Clerk.

Kirtland, Ohio, March 31, 1836.

Elijah Able, thus having been to Joseph Smith, Jr., in 1836, a known person of color (African American, Negro), one of the two First Presidency signers of the above false 1969 statement, Elder N. Eldon Tanner, was notified along with others by me, after my extensive advertising of opposition to this December 15, 1969, falsehood, with marginal success, when I voted during the Saturday 1977 Afternoon Conference session in the Salt Lake Tabernacle to not sustain Elder Tanner. That vote resulted in a meeting, requested from the pulpit, immediately following that Saturday Afternoon session with Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley and Harold Boyer, an attorney working at the time for Kirton, McConkie, *et al* (the law firm commonly under the employ of the LDS church at the time). I believed at the time, and now, that I was doing a favor for the LDS Church; but Apostle Hinckley apparently didn't agree with that assessment. What I explained to Apostle Hinckley and Attorney Boyer, as I had to many others during the period between August and October that year (and since), was that the original book of “Kirtland elders' certificates showed that the black Elder Elijah Able's certificate was actually signed by Joseph Smith, Jr. (“Joseph Smith Jr. Chairman”). And again, as shown, that certificate can be seen online:

https://mormonhistoryguy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CR-100-401_75sElijah-Ables-Priesthood-Certificate.jpg

Since my October 1977 excommunication (a few days following the Saturday October 1977 Afternoon Conference session and meeting in the Salt Lake Tabernacle with Apostle Hinckley and Attorney Boyer) by Salt Lake Liberty Stake President Narvel J. Scherzinger during that year, I have experienced and continue to experience considerable abuses from some LDS Church members and many so-called church leaders throughout these many years, for simply correcting the record regarding the alleged bigoted racial attitudes laid upon the character and reputation of Joseph Smith, Jr., as erroneously expressed in 1969 by your church's First Presidency.

So here I am, again, making a new and additional request, this time to you, President Nelson, that you might put an end to what I consider to be completely unjustified activities of some of the LDS Church's members including some of the highest leaders, actions based in promoting this wrongful excommunication. Can not you and your fellow priesthood leaders overturn what is to me and many others, such an obvious mistake, in order to get on with the business at hand of correcting and compensating for the damages incurred over these many years?

Sincerely,
Byron Marchant

PS: Because this condemnation may be a matter of interest to thousands, maybe many millions, of people, both members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and others; and because today I have no way to guarantee the delivery of this message to you, President Nelson, this letter is, therefore, being delivered to the public in general through social media, with the hope that you will respond to me personally regarding the specifics, that my 1977 excommunication was unjustly carried out at the time and is considered unjust today (because the December 15, 1969, charge against Joseph Smith, Jr., of being in any way connected to the 1977 priesthood denial to African Americans, was false on its face, information that, for some reason, was ignored by Latter-day Saint priesthood leaders at the time, immediately prior to and during the October 1977 excommunication proceeding).

PPS: And here is some historical information that needs to be made part of the historical record:

In June 1978, my lawyer (Brian M. Barnard) initiated a lawful court order (subpoena, summons, writ) for Spencer W. Kimball to appear on June 7, 1978, to testify in a case of alleged trespassing on Temple Square in April 1978 (Salt Lake City v Byron Marchant). President Kimball failed to show and my lawyer issued a lawsuit against him (Spencer W. Kimball, owner of the Temple Square property) on June 7, 1978, for his failure to appear as ordered. The lawsuit included a penalty of \$100. The public announcement, granting the Mormon priesthood to worthy black men, first appeared two days later, June 9, 1978. The lawsuit against President Kimball was almost immediately dropped, following the announcement, at my request (following my lawyer's suggestion) by my lawyer.

The trespassing lawsuit, after being earlier tried and resulting in a hung jury, was ultimately dismissed "in the interest of justice" in December 1978.