The purpose of this research project, which is my dissertation topic, is to examine the origin and socio-cultural influences upon the design and construction of early African American church houses built between 1800 to 1920.

The story of African American religious and cultural life would not be complete without examining the role of the church buildings in the daily life of the congregants. The study of these influences on the design and construction of early African American churches is essential in this examination. The following are a list of objectives which help guide this study:

- To identify and document the origins, evolution, and reason for existence of African American church buildings.
- To identify and document the regional and vernacular influences on the design of African American church buildings.
- To identify cultural religious practices and their influence upon the design of these church houses.
- To document if any African American spiritual material culture exists within the building design.
- To identify the presence and influence of an African American architect upon building design.
Learning lessons will include the following:

- The determination that the presence of vernacular and regional culture influenced the design and construction of African American church buildings.
- To determine the influence of an African American or Anglo architect in the design of predominately black churches.
- To determine if there is an African American cultural aesthetic that exist in the design of African American church buildings.
The advancement of diversity and inclusion is achieved by the introduction of the topic to architectural history discourse. The study of Anglo architectural history, both from Europe and in the United States, is required within the context of a history curriculum which exist in most architecture schools, including architecture schools located at historically black colleges and universities. There is, however, very little teaching or research about these African American church buildings. These church buildings are examples of material culture for the African American community, much like the meetinghouse was to Puritans of New England, neoclassical Anglican churches of Virginia and Maryland, and mission style architecture for parishioners of the American southwest. The introduction and inclusion of the African American church building adds to the diverse examples of 19th and 20th century religious architecture which reflects the spiritual and cultural diversity of the people of the United States.