

AIN'T I A PREACHER?:
BLACK WOMEN'S PREACHING RHETORIC

By

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ABSTRACT

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“Any attempt to understand American religious history, the black Church, or American women’s history without an adequate grasp of the groundbreaking work of these black preaching women will be incomplete.” (Collier-Thomas 8) Building on the call-to-action by historian, Bettye Collier-Thomas in the above quote, my project examines sermonic rhetoric of three leading contemporary preacher-scholars – Teresa Fry Brown, Vashti McKenzie and Eboni Marshall Turman – to contribute to narratives of Black rhetorical scholarship that suggests that Black preaching has served as a catalyst in the cultivation of Black rhetoric; all while underrepresenting Black women preachers within this cultivation. My objective is to identify recurring components of Fry Brown, McKenzie and Marshall Turman’s preaching rhetoric in order (1) to name Black women preaching tenets and (2) build a Black woman’s preaching method. I accomplish this by using an interdisciplinary approach, synthesizing perspectives from Women, Black, Rhetorical, and Religious Studies. In doing this, I can better categorize, name and scaffold Black women’s preaching rhetoric.

I outline how Black preaching has been taken up within the fields of Rhetoric and Homiletics overtime; illustrating its contributions and importance to the field. After establishing terms and relevance of Black preaching to both disciplines, I position my work to showcase the gap in literature that does not represent preaching methods

constructed solely by Black women. While the method is descriptive of Black women's preaching rhetoric it is prescriptive in providing a method for all preachers to utilize.

I succeed in constructing a Black woman's preaching method by conducting primary research, investigating methods of Black women's preaching. I analyze six sermons; two sermons each of Fry Brown, McKenzie and Marshall Turman. My analysis shows that their preaching offered four fundamental tenets that include (1) *addressing gender* through abstaining from attributing male gender pronouns to God and humanity, utilizing gender neutral Bibles, incorporating LGBT2QQIAAP concerns within Black and womanist agendas for justice, and including women and children into sermonic narratives (2) *providing complementary sources to the Bible* that include Black literarians, activists, and personal lived narratives (3) *inserting womanist interpretations* by focusing on the liberation of women characters in the Bible while also aligning oppression in the Bible with that of Black women in the U.S. and (4) *scaffolding the sermon* to include prayers, contextualized obstacles, titles, and promotion of ethics. Ultimately, my research is important because it provides a better understanding for identity formation, gender relations and active resistance towards patriarchal normativizing.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother.
Thank you for always being there.

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INTRODUCTION: THE CULTIVATION OF BLACK PREACHING RHETORIC

This project began while I was an undergraduate student conducting research in the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Program. It was an intriguing moment in time as Barack Obama was running for the United States Presidential office. While there was much controversy surrounding Barack Obama one issue that drew me was the critique of his Christianity and the church in which he was affiliated. After finding out that he was in fact a Christian (though defending against Islamic relationships is another issue that should be picked up) the particular theology in which he espoused was under question; so much so that he felt lead to disassociate himself with his pastor. Barack Obama and his family attended Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois pastored by the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright. Jeremiah Wright became the focus for media scrutiny toward Barack Obama. The media decided to scrutinize Wright's preaching content, especially a sermon in which he declared "God Damn America" as a result of how America treated Native Americans, African and Japanese. Wright declared to say "God Bless America" was antithetical to what God stood for in terms of how to treat people. Wright's rhetoric resonated with me in a way that lead me to question the media's motive. Therefore I began to research Jeremiah Wright's sermons yielding a summer project in the program entitled, "Let the Church Say Amen: Black Liberation Theology Articulated through African American Vernacular Tradition" whereby I studied Jeremiah Wright's sermons as artifacts produced within a tradition of Black preaching while using Black English. This project led me to studying Black language.

While studying Black language, I was introduced to Geneva Smitherman's work, *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America*. It was in this book that she mentions that if one wants to study the cultivation of Black language, they need to study the Black church; as it was the Black church that was responsible for nurturing Black language. I believe it was for the simple fact that "For many black people the church is the only institution they belong to which is decidedly and exclusively theirs.

Statement of the Problem

I then attended Divinity school to further this quest for understanding the relationship between Black language and Black preaching. While at divinity school I was granted the opportunity to enroll in an African American Homiletics course that would teach me about varying approaches and methods to Black preaching. As a requirement of the course, we were to preach one sermon and write another. It was in this course this course that I began to observe the role of women as preachers. Because I was expected to preach, I had to figure out what that might look like for me as a Black woman who did not profess to be a preacher. There were methods that we had explored that were that of male preachers. More specifically they were the methods of Samuel Dewitt Proctor and Henry Mitchell. I found myself writing in the margins of all the homiletic theory books offered, "what do Black women bring to this?" This was the impetus of my inquiry that propelled me into this work.

Black Preaching Rhetoric Cultivation

Examining Homiletic and Rhetorical theorists aid in understanding the cultivation of Black preaching. Rather than exploring the work of popular preachers

and their processes, this section will examine theorists to understand the nuanced ways Black preaching has been thought about and taught. Homiletician, L. Susan Bond's *Contemporary African American Preaching: Diversity in Theory and Style* communicates differences within homiletic theory on the subject of Black preaching in order to demystify a monolithic reading of Black preaching. In this like manner, Rhetorician Keith Gilyard's Introduction in *African American Rhetoric(s): Interdisciplinary Perspectives* highlights rhetorical contributions of scholars on Black preaching. Both of these works provide a blue print for understanding theoretical approaches to the cultivation of what we know as Black preaching. I use their works as guidelines in exploring theories that have come to name Black preaching in the disciplines of Homiletics and Rhetoric.

Homiletics

"Homiletic theory generally deals with theological and methodological issues in preaching and the connection between theology and method" (Bond 5). Bond's book allows me the opportunity to integrate and discuss in depth the works of Black homiletic theorists, providing an understanding of Black preaching through the discipline of Homiletics. Before Bond parses out differences among homileticians, she is sure to name homiletics as a process of wrestling with the relationship of theology and method in the above quote. She structures the book by introducing address eight fundamental tenets of homiletics: (1) *nature of gospel*, (2) *purpose of preaching*, (3) *role of scriptures*, (4) *testaments*, (5) *purpose of faith communities*, (6) *relationship between preaching and liturgy* and (7) *African American*, (8) *Language* and (9) *Rhetorical studies* (Bond 5-33). All of these tenets are interrelated and make a considerable impact on the manner in which

the homiletician approaches preaching. To better situate how these homileticians' work correlates with my work, I will address the preaching methods of particular preachers.

Samuel Dewitt Proctor was a progenitor Black Homiletician, teaching at Rutgers University, Vanderbilt University Divinity School, United Theological Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary. He was also a notable pastor at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Provident, Rhode Island succeeding Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (Bonds 35). Proctor published several books while holding both positions, including *The Young Negro in America*, *Sermons from the Black Pulpit*, *Preaching about Crises in the Community*, *My Moral Odyssey*, *How Shall They Hear?*, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet* and *We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor's Vocation*. As stated before, Proctor was one of the required methods for my African American Homiletics course. He was highly regarded as a preacher who combined a social justice and uplift within his sermons, so much so that there is a conference dedicated to progressive Black preachers and pastors in his name; the Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference. This conference was established in 2003, by Frederick D. Haynes III, Iva Caruthers and Jeremiah Wright President Obama's pastor that first peaked my interest in this subject matter).

Proctor's understanding of the (*nature of*) *gospel* is that God gifted humanity with Jesus Christ; valuing human life. This concept of the gospel manifests itself in arguing for dignity and worth of all people irrespective of status, noting that Jesus "put the worth of person above the requirements of the law" (Proctor 35). Proctor rationalizes that human life was so important to God that God found it necessary to send Jesus as a

sacrifice in order to preserve humanity. Therefore, within Proctor's teachings and preachings, he makes mention that all humans are recipients of God's grace and therefore should be respected in society.

While Proctor believes the Bible is authoritative and foundational for preaching, he recognizes that God predates the Bible and that the Bible must never trump God's authority (Proctor 35-37; Bond 37-38). He does not believe that the Bible is a literal account and doesn't put too much trust into it, as he believes putting too much trust in the Bible is a problem of human pride (Proctor 35; Bond 37).

Proctor's preaching method borrows from both Puritan plain style and Hegelian patterns (Bond 45-46). He maps out the proper procedures for a preaching method. Bond suggests that, "While most pastors will not want to use the plain style... all pastors should be familiar with it" (Bond 47). Many seminaries ensure that homiletic students are familiar with Proctor's style of preaching.

Puritan plain style is "given to propositional statements and an explication/application sermon form, regardless of the form of the text. Puritans adopted the plain style as an explicit alternative to the ornate preaching of their contemporaries. Plain-style preaching tends to circumbent ambiguity and subjectivity, opting for an objective "common sense" approach to interpretation and understanding" (Bond 45).

The way in which this method is implemented is through Hegel's approach of "thesis-antithesis-synthesis" for problem solving. The ideal situation that is sought after is characterized as the "thesis". The situation as it really is, is thought of as the

antithesis; usually less than ideal. The solution is the synthesis, which is derived from taking into account the thesis and the antithesis (Proctor 118; Bond 46). The synthesis should be an answer to the “relevant question” which identifies the hurdle to the thesis. Proctor provides varying examples of “thesis-antithesis-relevant question-synthesis” (Proctor 125). While simplistic, Proctor’s preaching method has served the church for years as it has proven a practical and direct method.

Gardner Taylor is relished as one of the greatest preachers of the 20th century. He pastored Beulah Baptist Church in Ohio (1941-1943), Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Baton Rouge (1943-1947) and lastly Brooklyn’s Concord Baptist Church of Christ in 1948 for 43 years. He lectured homiletics at Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Harvard Divinity School, and Union Theological Seminary. He’s published sermons in homiletical journals, two sermon collections *The Scarlet Thread* and *Chariots Aflame* as well as the Lyman Beecher Lectures, *How Shall They Preach*. According to Bond, “He is a theological moderate, but a political progressive, and probably could be fairly characterized as somewhat more of an activist than Proctor” (Bond 50).

Bond captures Taylor’s homiletical method,

Taylor’s homiletical strategy is to articulate our alienation and to name it theologically. His sermons frequently begin with that cool introduction, forging a kind of psychological common ground wherein the listeners all identify with some common human experience. We are uncertain, afraid, uneasy, apprehensive, anxious. Taylor then moves on to draw out the implications of our situation and to speculate about solutions or desires for resolution. At some

point in the sermon, Taylor will usually paint a portrait of God's own dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs and God's desire for reconciliation. The sermon moves from estrangement to reconciliation, reunion, and restoration (Bond 62).

This appears similar to Proctor's method in the ending of restoration appears to mimic synthesis. Though this is an observation of Bonds, this is not what Taylor particular espouses as a Taylor method of preacher. Taylor only proposes general philosophical guidelines about the nature of the preacher, human experience and "necessity for the preacher to be sensitive and poetic" (Bond 61). He believes that the preacher should control the logic and flow of the sermon (Taylor 138-141).

Henry Herbert Mitchell, notable preacher and homiletician, provided the second preaching method that we were to use in my African American Homiletics course. Mitchell's method was to tend to the behavioral purpose of the audience. The preacher must ask themselves what they wish for the audience to *do* after the sermon was preached. Mitchell privileges African American contextual considerations over Biblical textual considerations (Mitchell 9). "Mitchel requires that every sermon en with celebrtio, moving toward a crescendo of emotional expression. He refers to this overall homiletic structure as the logic of emotions" (Bond 111). Mitchell believes that the sermon should adhere to the cognitive, emotive and intuitive.

Henry Mitchell is without a doubt the premier African American academic homiletician of the twentieth century. He has read more deeply and integrated more work from other disciplines than any homiletician I our modest

survey...no one in the African American homiletic guild has integrated a more diverse variety of scholarship that Henry Mitchell. Invariably, when contemporary African American preachers and theology students make claims about the African American pulpit, they do so informed by the work of Henry Mitchell (LaRue 10).

It goes without saying that Mitchell's impact on Black preaching is invaluable. His concept of celebration and fixation on the emotive response of the audience has been taught around seminaries across the country.

Bonds set out to showcase that there is not one Black preaching method. There are varying methods and approaches to Black preaching. She sets out to dispel thoughts that Black preaching is monolithic. Each preacher/scholar that has left a legacy of what they consider to be Black preaching, differs if even slightly. What can be noted is that interaction with social and political orders should be taking place in Black preaching. Black preaching has been cultivated to carry out a particular relationship to social order and theological claims. Though Bonds addresses contributions from Black women and womanists at the end of the book she does not list any methods of preaching by Black women. My work will address and attempt to showcase what a Black woman's preaching method might look like.

Rhetoric

Rhetorician Keith Gilyard's "Introduction: Aspects of African American Rhetoric as a Field," attempts to provide a "historical sketch of a particular body of rhetorical scholarship," foregoes discussions of linguistics and interpersonal rhetorical offerings

by African descended people to focus on pulpit oratory (Gilyard 1). He explains that this decision is sacrificial, but follows the directive of historian, Carter G. Woodson,

“...Black orators did not get much practice with speeches of the judicial type, or the deliberative when *deliberative* is narrowly defined as being before legislative bodies. But by Woodson’s reckoning, Blacks excelled at the epideictic, or the occasional speech and in the pulpit” (Gilyard 2).

Gilyard acknowledges that Woodson’s historian disciplinary perspective moves him to chronicle speeches, but doesn’t afford technical or structural analysis of the speeches in *The Mind of the Negro* and the *Journal of Negro History*. Woodson still serves as a guide for Gilyard’s essay,

“Religious oratory, as Woodson affirms, has been central to the African American rhetorical tradition from the outset and was the primary channel by which millions of Blacks came to comprehend and speculate about the social world of which they were part. Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Henry Highland Garnet, and Francis Grimke, for example, were all preachers. Therefore, the study of Black pulpit oratory as well as scholarly treatment of the Black church in general are necessary components of research in African American public discourse” (Gilyard 4).

Gilyard builds a case for foregrounding his introduction essay of the *African American Rhetoric(s)* anthology with Black pulpit oratory. His essay, like Bond’s work, will allow me the structure to provide an understanding of how the field of Rhetoric has taken up Black preaching overtime. In Gilyard’s “historical sketch” he begins in the early 20th

century, goes across disciplines and extrapolates varying rhetorical offerings. I will use his historical structure while indicating the contributions to better understanding Black preaching within the discipline.

While Gilyard acknowledges that W. E. B DuBois (*Souls of Black Folk* and *The Negro Church*), E. M. Brawley (*The Negro Baptist Pulpit*) and James Weldon Johnson (*God's Trombones*) published works on the Black preacher in the late 19th and early 20th century, he believes William Pipes' *Say Amen, Brother! Old-Time Negro Preaching: A Study in American Frustration* provided the most thorough treatment of the Black sermon. Pipes selected eight preachers in Macon County, Georgia to categorize aspects of Black preaching. As a professor of American Thought and Language, it is no surprise that his findings follow trajectories of classical rhetoric in that it articulated means of invention, persuasion, style and delivery (Pipes 5-72).

Invention

A. Purposes

To persuade the sinner to "take up the new life" according to the Bible, the real world of God.

To impress the audience, so that there will be an out burst (escape) of emotion in shouting and frenzy.

To give religious instruction, according to the Bible.

B. Subject Matter

The Bible is the source of all ideas, information, and truths: God is good; "the more we suffer in this world, the greater will be our reward after death"; morality, social obligations, and religious fidelity are to be emphasized; there are evidences of fear and superstition.

C. Modes of Persuasion

Personal Appeal: the minister is uneducated but is "called" by god; his word is the word of God; the preacher is usually an impressive person, has a dramatic bearing and a melodious voice.

Emotional Appeal: by means of rhythm, sensationalism, rhetorical figures, imagery, suggestion, etc., the minister puts the audience into a mood to accept his ideas; this is the greatest appeal.

Logical Argument: not as important as emotional appeal; the best argument is that “it’s true because the Bible said so.”

Disposition

There is no logical organization because there is little preparation. The emotions determine everything.

Style

Familiar, concrete, narrative, ungrammatical language; Biblical; humor; deals with *things* rather than with *ideas*.

Delivery

Awkward, spectacular, dramatic, bombastic; musical voice; rhythmical and emotional; enthusiastic; sincere (Pipes 72) (Gilyard 4-5)

This is the first of what we see in terms of Black preaching methods from a rhetorician.

While Pipes’ work is informative to thinking about Black preaching, he makes broad generalizations, accepting Black religious practices as “primitive” (Woodridge 397) (Gilyard 5).

Speech expert, Lowell Moseberry’s *An Historical Study of Negro Oratory in the United State to 1915* provides a broader spectrum of rhetorical methods as he desired to “discover areas in the eloquence of the Negro that seemed to deviate from standard oratorical practice” (Moseberry iv). Moseberry suggests that the departure of Black rhetoric is what he calls “jubilee rhetoric”.

A stylistic device of the Negro orators that, perhaps, was contrived as much for its appeal to the emotions as for its rhetorical value was an antithetical refrain that strongly resembles the “jubilee” tones of the Negro spirituals. This “jubilee” consists of a series of ideas containing a major undertone of tragedy, alternating

with a contrasting jubilant response. The pathetic appeal of the “jubilee” builds in emotional intensity until it explodes climactically in an exultant “shout” of challenge (Moseberry 147-150; Gilyard 6).

Moseberry is suggesting that jubilee rhetoric is a counterbalance between tragic rhetoric. Therefore there is always optimism that balances out the tragedy of Black life within Black rhetoric. Though he doesn’t offer much in terms of method aside from the rhythmic balancing of tragic undertones and jubilee back and forth as if in song. Therefore there is a common narrative that the Black rhetor is wrestling with the sacred and secular of the world; of tragic realities and optimistic eschatons.

Gilyard then introduces Arthur Smith (Molefi Asante), Geneva Smitherman and Ronald Jackson as all having contributed to how we conceptualize African American rhetoric and the role that Black preaching plays. He does so by developing a point of departure from dominant discourses and modes of analysis. Until this point, analyses of Black preaching consisted of Euro American identifying markers of Black rhetoric. Gilyard credits Smith’s *The Voice of Black Rhetoric and Language, Communication, and Rhetoric in Black America* as the most in-depth analyses of Black rhetoric. Although Smith identifies Black secular nationalist rhetoric the themes lifted from his work, is applicable in that it speaks of liberation and charts the subjectivity of audiences. He makes mention that Black adults are more receptive to religious rhetoric and more specifically women and uneducated Blacks are more receptive to religious oratory. This is helpful to the Black orator in better understanding the palatable message. Smith outlines four tenets for what he calls “agitational” rhetors: “(1) all Blacks face a common

enemy, (2) there is a conspiracy to violate Black manhood, (3) there is pervasive American hypocrisy, and (4) Black unity is requisite for Black liberation” (Smith 67; Gilyard 11). It is within Smith’s work that African influences become more of a prominent component to Black rhetorical theory. He posits *Nommo* as counter Western rhetorical theory,

The public discourse convinces not through attention to logical substance but through the power to fascinate. Yet this does not preclude the materials of composition or the arrangement and structure of those materials; it simply expresses a belief that when images are arranged according to their power and chosen because of their power, the speaker’s ability to convince is greater than if he attempted to employ syllogisms. The syllogism is a Western concept; *Nommo* is an African concept....Perhaps that is drawing the choices too clearly, inasmuch as few neo-Aristotelians would argue for a dichotomy of emotion and logic.

However, it is necessary to state the polar positions to illustrate the emphasis of that traditional African speaker (Smith 371-372).

Here Smith offers African rhetorical theory as an alternative to thinking through how one analyzes the Black rhetors. This is helpful in thinking through Black preaching rhetorically because now rhetoricians begin to depart from Western categorizations for processing Black preaching. Prior to this departure, Black preaching was analyzed through lenses of classical rhetoric like that of Pipes.

Gilyard then introduces Geneva Smitherman, though a linguist he positions her as most responsible for making popular “Black Modes of Discourse,” which he believes

are invaluable for understanding Black rhetorics. Smitherman's *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* offers modes of language that she says are cultivated in the Black church by the Black preacher:

(1) call-response, a series of spontaneous interactions between speaker and listener; (2) signification, the art of humorous put downs, usually through verbal indirection; (3) tonal semantics, the conveying of meaning in Black discourse through specifically ethnic kinds of voice rhythms and vocal inflections; and (4) narrative sequencing, the habitual use of stories to explain and/or persuade (Smitherman 5-28; Gilyard 14-15).

Smitherman also coined the term African American Vernacular English (AAVE) that included signification, personalization, tonal semantics and sermonic tone. She built on this notion that discourse of Black people was unique and needed to be explained with language specific to Black people. While there were some women she analyzed in her work, like that of Anita Hill, who she claims did not garner the support of the Black community, more notably Black women, because she did not employ AAVE.

Smitherman proves helpful to my work as she states that Black women seeking to develop effective voices as part of the freed struggle need a "head and heart rhetoric" to provide leadership for African Americans and the nation (Smitherman 265). More importantly, Smitherman names characteristics of Black language. It was her rhetorical tenets that I used in my undergraduate work of analyzing Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright.

Though she posits Black preachers as cultivators of Black discourse, she generally refers to these preachers as men as she provides examples.

As a recapturing of Black rhetoric and its influence on how Black preaching is understood, it offers language for how Black preaching has been understood within Western (persuasion, purpose, and logic) and Black (nommo, signification, tonal semantics, call-response, reconciliation and jubilee) rhetorical categories. While the discipline lauds Black preaching as a cultivator of Black rhetoric, they misrepresent Black preaching, by not analyzing Black women as Black preachers. Gilyard acknowledges that Shirley Wilson Logan's *With Pen ad Voice: a Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African-American Women* and "We are Coming": *The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* as well as Jacqueline Jones Royster's *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change among African American Women* but fails to mention any of their offerings to Black rhetorical studies.

Black Women's Contributions

African American women have been preaching justice for centuries. They have preached on street corners, in prisons, by sickbeds, in schools, in small groups, in women's Bible studies, in churches, in homes, and any place they could say a word of God (Fry Brown 57).

Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown speaks to the reality of what is taking place in Black churches. In *God Don't Like Ugly*, she paints a clearer picture of the church by providing contributions of Black women. "Fry Brown acknowledges that African American men may dominate the pulpit, but claims they by no means dominate the spiritual direction of communities" (Fry Brown 135). Fry Brown's contribution allows me an entry point

to my work as well as an insertion to the disciplines of Homiletics and Rhetoric. She makes it known that Black women have been preaching for some time now.

Both Shirley Logan and Jacqueline Royster analyze speeches of Black women rhetors. Logan showcases how Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Frances, Ellen Watkins Harper, Anna Julia Haywood Cooper, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Barrier Williams, and Victoria Earle Matthews wrestle with suffrage of Black men, white violence, and Christian hypocrisy. They used their platforms through rhetoric to influence social issues of their times. Royster focuses on essays of Stewart, Cooper and Wells to argue for a feminist lens in rhetorical studies. Both prove helpful in understanding a tradition of Black women who have used rhetoric as a means for centering their intersecting particularities.

Bond ends her book with a chapter on “African American Women and Womanists”. Each of the five men (Samuel D. Proctor, James Massey, Gardner Taylor, James Alexander Forbes Jr. and Henry Mitchell) she analyzed were awarded their own chapters, however the four women (Ella Mitchell, Leontine T. C. Kelly, Katie Cannon, and Teresa Fry Brown) were crammed into the ending of the book as if they were an aside.

Chapter Organization

The chapter outline is as follows: Chapter one, “*Makin’ It Plain: Womanist Rhetorical Theory*” defines terms utilized throughout my research. This chapter aids the reader in better understanding how this work is a cultural rhetorics project. This chapter also serves as a methods chapter best explaining the necessity of centralizing

Black women's narratives. This Womanist ethics methods defines key terms for my study and serves as a lens for how I carry out the project.

Chapter two, *"Think Like a Black Woman: Contextualized Womanist Hermeneutics"* is an analytical chapter that speaks to the ways the preachers implement tenets of womanist ethics as a lens to interpret Biblical text. It focuses on Black women as protagonists and sources of liberation and knowledge.

Chapter three, *"By What Authority?: Decision Making within Sacred and Cultural Texts"* illustrates complementary sources used by the preachers. It shows how they interweave Black women's experiences, literature and scholarship with Biblical text to scaffold their sermons. This chapter first defines cultural and sacred texts and then discusses how they are used together for a shared message.

Chapter four, *"Scaffolding the Sermon: Building a Method"* outlines rhetorical tools these preachers utilize in constructing their sermons. This section outlines the strategies that are used and can be used in preaching a womanist sermon. This section describes the usage of salutations, prayer, obstacles, audience and ethics.

Chapter five, *"Ain't I a Preacher?: Black Women's Preaching Rhetoric"* serves as an implication chapter. This chapter names Black women's preaching rhetoric and explains the makes meaning process. It also provides the implication of Black women's preaching rhetoric.

CHAPTER ONE
MAKIN IT PLAIN:
WOMANIST RHETORICAL THEORY

Some years ago I was physically assaulted by a man I did not know as I walked down the corridor of a hotel in New York City, on my way to a meeting of Presbyterian women of color. Back in those days I often wore my clergy collar when attending ecclesiastical gatherings. Ah, Distinctly I remember that on this particular morning, I caught the number-one IT train from 116th street and Broadway down to 42nd street, shuttled over to Grand Central Station, moving fast as I could, putting one foot in front of the other, and I arrived at the appointed meeting place on time. To be sure I was caught off guard, completely taken aback when a white man in a hotel service worker's uniform walked toward me. The man looked at my clergy collar, and in one fell swoop, grabbed me by the shoulders and slammed me into the wall, screaming, "How dare you defy Jesus Christ?" I was startled, shocked, discombobulated, but I did not say one mumbling word about the body slam incident that happened in the hallway when I entered the meeting room of the women of color (Cannon 19).

In recalling a violent altercation, Katie Cannon, the first African American woman ordained in the Presbyterian Church, reflects on the interlocking particularities of Black women that subjected her to this treatment. While sharing this situation Cannon also recounted the recalling of this story to public media. Those persons covering the story refuted her truth because they could no longer locate the hotel whereby Cannon exclaimed the altercation took place. They alluded that Cannon's truth was false. Thusly, Cannon was left to imagine her truth as doubtful by the public. The journalist had not done their due diligence in investigating the history of

the hotel in that location. It was much easier to discredit the truth of a Black woman. Cannon held to her truth, though it wasn't received as such. She went on to ensure that she privileged the truths of Black women's stories. This situation shows us that despite the invalidating of our truths, Black women's stories are necessary as they help to articulate realities of -- Black woman de-valuing, ecclesial violence, and resilience.

My story does not mimic Cannon's. My story is one of learned behavior and enlightenment. What I knew about Black women and their positions in society in the church had gone unquestioned until I arrived at divinity school. The women I looked up to in the church were nonetheless influential, but they did not hold authoritative positions in the church -- pastor/preacher. Like Cannon's assaulter, I was told and believed that the role of pastor was for men and men only. Upon arriving to divinity school with a passion to study Black language and its cultivation in the church, I was met with other women who, like Cannon, felt called by God to hold this role of preacher/pastor. I did not welcome that calling. Perhaps they were unclear. After several months of prayer, communing with women who were preachers, and studying under Dr. Stacey Floyd-Thomas, a student of Katie Cannon's at Temple University, I began to adjust my thinking towards a theological and social ethic that included women as authoritative persons in the church. I learned more about Biblical hermeneutics that had practical social consequences; women were not to preach because that was the literal interpretation of Biblical passages to keep women in a particular place. However, in the Black church it was never uncommon for women to pray, lead in singing, cook, or pay money to the church in order to sustain it spiritually and financially. Reconciling

social ramifications for theological stances, helped to enlighten my way of thinking about women preaching. Since my enlightenment, I thought it important to learn more from perspectives of Black women.

Research Purpose

My purpose for studying Black women's preaching rhetoric is to explore how Black women make-meaning within their sermons. My study develops from studies that explore Black women's preaching through theological, ecclesial, rhetorical, and homiletical perspectives (Collier Thomas 1997; Fry Brown 2003; Cannon 1998; Allen 2005). All of which were integral to understanding my research that centers Black women's stories and sermons. In this chapter, I explain my theoretical framework for this project that guided me through my methods, findings and analysis. This chapter is multi-functional: (1) explaining my theoretical framework – womanist rhetorical theory (2) outlining my research design which includes my research question, role as a researcher, preachers of this project, methods, data collection and findings.

Theoretical Framework

The centering of Black women's lives, stories, and knowledges through the intersections of race, gender and class within the academy was taken seriously May 29, 1851 at a Women's Right Convention in Akron, Ohio when, Isabella Braumfree, better known as Sojourner Truth, radically inserted her narrative--without invitation to do so--of "Ain't I a Woman?". Within this speech, Truth operated out of frustration that her reality as a woman was not being considered. She unveiled the hypocrisy of the conference that spoke of equality while not acknowledging the realities of Black women

(Truth 1). She inserted theologically the uselessness of men in the creation of the Christian messiah, while also imparting that courtesies, like the lying out of jackets over mud puddles, were not afforded to her as a Black woman. It is within this spirit of disruption, critical engagement, and centering Black women's narrative, that Black feminist and womanism have centered the lives and stories of Black women within academic discourses.

I developed my study through the theoretical framework of womanist rhetorical theory (WRT); an interdisciplinary theory designed to center Black women's words and consciousness; valuing their decisions without comparison, departure narratives or apologias (Collins 7-11). WRT coalesces Black feminism and womanism, theology, rhetoric, and homiletics. It operates within the discipline of cultural rhetorics, which claims cultures to be inherently rhetorical and rhetoric to be inherently cultural (Powell 1). Womanist rhetorical theory "goes beyond womanist theory and beyond womanist theology to get at the root of the cultural meaning (Taylor iv)." WRT showcases how Black women have utilized rhetoric as a means to privilege their subjectivity in resisting oppressive rhetoric. WRT serves as a theoretical framework for my research questions, methods, data collection, findings, and analysis.

Black Feminist Studies' Approach

My work centers Black women's sermons as the foci of analysis. Black feminists and Womanists alike have taken this stance of privileging Black women's stories as valid sources of knowledge production within the academy. Patricia Hill Collins, in her work *Black Feminist Thought* declared that her work was to situate Black women as

central persons of analysis that does not privilege being palatable to dominant groups. For she suggests that too often Black women are called to do the work of locating similarities and/or differences among dominant groups. Collins calls on White feminists and African American men to do that work (or persons interested in these topics). Like Collins, my work is not offering a comparative model to White women and Black male preachers, homileticians, or rhetoricians. My objective is to center Black women's sermons in order to gain an understanding of what they might offer for "ways of meaning-making" and "knowing". By centering the sermons of Black women, it may encourage others to conduct comparative and similarity work in the future.

Black feminism provides rationale for unapologetically privileging and centering Black women's lives. It provides language for the ever-present critique that in studying the lives of Black women, there must be a comparative or departure model presented. Such critiques suggests that Black women's lives are only important in relation to dominant narratives presented by White women and men and Black men.

Black Feminist/Womanist Theological, Homiletical and Ethics' Approach

Cultivated within theological institutions, womanist¹ theology and theological ethics, centers Black women and their stories as important agents of (1) coming to know

¹ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi
Womanist 1. From *womanish*. (Opp. Of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "you trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. *Serious*. 2. *Also*: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black? Ans.: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower

God, (2) assessing their relationship to God, and (3) understanding of the relationship between belief and practices. Jacqueline Grant, a progenitor of womanist theology, exposes power in leadership roles by aligning with an, "ontology of marginality" and centering Black women's lives (Grant 25). Grant believed feminists were doing well in challenging dominant patriarchal themes within theology, but did not agree with gender being universal, so she challenged White feminists to incorporate race into their discourse, thus taking on an "ontology" or "being" of intersections of marginality rather than gender binaries. Grant's work proves helpful in analyzing theological claims found within sermons that center Black women's ontology.

Along this same fervor, Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon, a progenitor of womanist theological ethics and homiletics, declares the importance to analyze sermonic texts in terms of their socio-ecclesial positions and theological interests, paying special attention to their gender dimension (Cannon 23). Cannon early on offers paradigmatic tools for analyzing Black preaching within this statement. She wishes to critique rhetoric in what is known as Black preaching to "elucidate and delegitimize patriarchal teachings" in Black preaching (Cannon 56). In other words, it is critical that sermons be interrogated along gender lines to recognize, situate and correct patriarchal ideologies. Cannon has proven to be instrumental in Black woman's homiletic rhetoric because she began by critiquing the "logos" or language of Black preaching by providing modes of analysis

represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time." 3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*. 4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.

that include the following: (1) sexist derogatory images of women, (2) the impact of negative images on the identity of women, (3) the social impact of negative female images, (4) too few positive female images, (5) the praxis of resistance, and (6) the impact of a womanist hermeneutic. Therefore, Cannon is quite specific in the tenets she investigates on behalf of patriarchy. She does not critique logos (the spoken word) from the trajectory of delivery and style, rather on content and experiential construction/interpretation. Cannon believes in the development of homilies in that there is the utility of experience with interpretation of Biblical stories. It is Cannon's concern that derogatory, patriarchal and unjust experiences are being preached and accepted within the Black church. This stance has been extremely helpful in building methodology for those who desire to create criteria for a womanist homiletic approach. One of Cannon's major concerns in Black preaching is Biblical interpretation; which notable for my work provides insight to engage how Black women have interpreted Biblical passages.

Traci West, in a similar way as Cannon, employs Black feminist thought within her conception of Christian ethics. She foregrounds Black women's situations to privilege lessons that can be learned. In other words, she illustrates scenarios specific to Black women that communicate larger intersecting realities--like that of women being subjected to work programs in response for welfare needs. She situates the situation and illustrates particular lessons that can be learned about social ethics while also searching for solutions across disciplines and faith ethics. Her book, *Disrupting Christian Ethics* builds a methodology to create communal dialogue; as she imparts that

“conversation” across moral communities is a core element to address Black women’s situations. Therefore, while building this method to address what’s “wrong” in Christian ethics, she utilizes an interdisciplinary approach borrowing from fields of African American Studies, women studies, theories of whiteness in Sociology, and subfields within religious studies like that of liturgy and Biblical studies. West asks the question of how interdisciplinary studies can contribute to answering questions of public social ethics. It is important to note that as West is calling for “conversation” amongst moral communities, she is actively putting communities - by way of disciplines - in conversation to address interlocking systems of oppression. In this like manner, I am an interdisciplinary scholar putting into “conversation” contributions of disciplines--African American Studies, Cultural Rhetoric Studies, and Women Studies to best understand offerings of Black women’s preaching. I have already outlined how scholars in women studies, Black studies and Christian social ethics help me in better understanding the privileging of Black women’s stories.

Black Feminist Rhetoric Studies

Feminist rhetoricians have long privileged and analyzed speeches of Black women rhetors like Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Frances, Ellen Watkins Harper, Anna Julia Haywood Cooper, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Barrier Williams, and Victoria Earle Matthews; concluding that while wrestling with suffrage of Black men, white violence, and Christian hypocrisy, Black women use their rhetorical platforms to influence social issues of their times (Logan 1999; Royster 2000 & 2012).

Furthering this feminist rhetorical work is the work of Gwendolyn Pough in *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Culture and the Public Sphere*, whereby she examines the work of Black women hip hop artists as they have situated themselves in a space not designed with them in mind and have courageed a way to wreck or dismantle male dominant rhetoric. It is under this premise that I incorporate Black feminist rhetoric – to examine the sermons of Black women in a space not designed with them in mind. Much of the scholarship focuses on misogyny of Black male pastors when the rhetoric of Black women is being underrepresented.

Black Feminist Rhetoric(s) serves my study in privileging Black women’s narratives and explaining their meanings. Like, Pough, I am investigating spaces that have historically been allocated for Black men. In the same manner that she seeks “to complicate understandings of hip hop as a male space by including and identifying the women who were always involved with the culture and offering hip-hop feminist critiques of the music and the culture” I seek to do the same with women, however on a contemporary level (Pough 24).

Research Design

I organized this study to both unearth rhetorical strategies that were taking place within Black women’s preaching as well as to build a Black women’s preaching method. As indicated in the introduction chapter, there has not been a recorded method for Black women’s preaching to date. Therefore, my research design seeks to make the appropriate steps to get at tangible take-aways for Black women’s preaching rhetoric.

Research Question

In order to best carry-out my research, I ask the following question to guide my research:

- How are Black women making-meaning within their sermons?

Researcher Role

I am a Black woman and member of the Apostolic denomination of the Christian church. I began attending church in the seventh grade and religiously attended only Apostolic churches until I attended divinity school at the age of 23. Since the age of 23 I have been attending Baptist churches. I believe this to be an important factor because it shapes how I came to know about preaching. Growing up in the Apostolic church, the preachers did not write their sermons in manuscript form. It was not until attending divinity school that I had observed such a thing. Attending homiletics courses was the first time that I had encountered this practice and I was firmly against it as I believed that it restricted God's ability to be flexible within the sermonic moment.

While attending Baptist churches, my Apostolic doctrinal beliefs of oneness (no belief in trinity) and speaking in tongues, had not alter, however, my ecclesial structures had shifted. Baptist churches that I had attended tended to hold shorter services and preach on a three point system. I began to like this structure. While I like whooping and being in the congregation, I tend to attend services that I know get out on time.

This is helpful in knowing more about how I approached the preaching moment as a theologically trained student. I was taught the Proctor and Mitchell method of preaching and I tend to use Proctor's method. I was always wrestling with how I might

do something different, but because I do not profess or want to be a preacher I used what was given. Proctor's method is straight to the point and does not require as much time to be preached. If I were introduced to a womanist method of preaching during my African American Homiletics

I had never had a woman pastor and had only heard Black women preach at conferences, varying engagements, Divinity school chapel, video streaming services and fellowship at other churches of friends. My first full sermon that I heard preached by a woman was Juanity Bynum's *No More Sheets* in 1999 at T.D. Jakes' Woman Thou Art Loosed Annual Conference whereby she speaks to women about preparing themselves domestically for a husband and being sexually. I had heard collectively more than 50-70 sermons preached by women both who professed to be womanists/Black feminists and others who did not.

It is with this mindset that I come to this work both trained in theology and rhetoric. I wanted to keep in mind my own theological and homiletic beliefs while trying to make sense of the sermons. I tried not to read other methods and theories into these sermons, which proved difficult because not only had I attended divinity school and taken homiletics course, so did the preachers that I examined. Therefore, it was my role to reconcile my role as a researcher trying to unearth rhetorical discourse and not imparting previous works and methods into the preachers' works.

Meet the Preachers

In coming to this project, sermons have been collected by Bettye Collier Thomas, Jualyne Dodson, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and Shirley Logan to either suggests themes

of Black women's preaching, rhetoric of Black women's speeches, or highlight notable women who have held authoritative leader roles in the Black church. There also have been several works on Black men's preaching and how people selected those men based on prominence in the Black community or leading homiletic theorists. Donna Allen wrote her dissertation *Toward a Womanist Homiletic: Katie Cannon, Alice Walker and Emancipatory Proclamation* whereby she analyzed the sermons of Rev. Prathia Hall through a womanist lens. I knew that I wanted to look at Black women who were cognizant of their subjectivity as Black women; women who were both prominent within Black religious communities and the academia. I wanted to examine more than one preacher. I selected three preachers and two sermons each to make the project manageable throughout my time in graduate school. This was also the thinking that led me not to interview the preachers. While I wanted to interview them, it would cause for more steps to the research process, and time was a critical factor.

I knew of these three women based on their contributions to the fields of womanism, homiletics, and theology. I had come across their work in divinity school, witnessed them preaching at social justice conferences, and present at national conferences. I had considered other notable preachers and scholars like that of Renita Weems, Claudette Copeland, Jasmine Schularck, Gina Stewart...however it was a matter of accessibility and time. I needed access to public sermons and I wanted to access them rather quickly. I was able to obtain two sermons each from the three women chosen as well as their scholarship.

Reverends Vashti McKenzie, Teresa Fry Brown and Eboni Marshall Turman all identify as womanist preachers and scholars, and deliberately apply womanist methodology within their preaching praxis. It is necessary that these preachers have a level of understanding and commitment to womanism while I am defining Black women's preaching rhetoric. According to Emilie Townes, *Womanist Ethicist*, one "is not free to name others as womanist if this is not a term they claim for themselves" (Townes 144). Consequently, as womanist preachers, their exegetical (critical interpretation of text, usually Biblical) and eisegetical (the process of interpreting text in so much that presuppositions are exposed) approaches to Biblical text, use of gender in relation to humans and the divine, and sermon scaffolding, provide ideal subjects for analysis in locating definitive and prescriptive rhetoric of Black women preachers. By selecting three prominent scholar preachers not only do I have their sermons, but I have their scholarship that supports their choices in the sermonic moment. It is for these reasons that I have selected these three preachers.

Vashti McKenzie

Vashti McKenzie, the youngest of three children, was born and raised in Baltimore Maryland. She was born to Edward Smith and Ida Murphy Smith Peters May 28, 1947 (Hine 30) ("*The History Maker*," 2007). Her mother Ida, was the daughter of Vashti Turley Murphy who was one of the 22 founding members of the international sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Incorporated, that is committed to the upliftment of the Black community. Vashti McKenzie was named after her grandmother and joined the very sorority that her grandmother assisted in establishing and currently serves as the

national Chaplain of the organization (Hine 30) (“The History Maker,” 2007) (“Delta Sigma Theta” 2016).

Her family was very active within the community. Her father taught and coached the high school track team, of which Vashti was the city-wide winner in high jump (Hine 30). She was one of six Blacks who attended Eastern High School (“The History Maker,” 2007). Her mother worked for the *Baltimore Afro-American*, as a reporter. Her Grandfather Carl J. Murphy, owned an African American newspaper syndication in which Vashti McKenzie once worked as a reporter, writing a column “The McKenzie Report” (Hine 30).

Vashti attended Morgan State University in Baltimore majoring in History, however quit her junior year in order to marry Stanley McKenzie, a professional basketball player with the Baltimore Bullets. When Stanley’s profession took them to Phoenix, Vashti McKenzie worked as a reporter for the *Arizona Republic* newspaper (Hine 30) (“The History Maker,” 2007).

Upon returning to Baltimore, Vashti re-joined Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1976, her family’s original church. Vashti worked for two gospel radio station, WEBB and WYCB, and hosted a television show called *Evening Magazine*, before becoming a program director and later Corporate Vice President of Programming for WJZ-TV Mortenson Broadcasting Company in Baltimore. Vashti returned to college, completing a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism from the University of Maryland in College Park, MD in 1978 (Hine 30) (“The History Maker,” 2007).

It was also 1978 when she adhered to the vocation of a Christian minister and register to the School of Theology at Howard University obtaining a Master's in Divinity. She was made a deacon in 1981 while commuting as pastor between Bethel A.M.E. in Cecil County and Ebenezer A.M.E church (Hine 30). Vashti was ordained by the A.M.E. Church in 1984 after which she pastored Oak Street A.M.E. Church (Saunders 1) ("The History Maker," 2007). After obtaining her Master's degree in 1985, she entered the doctoral program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH. After graduation she was appointed to small African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches in her hometown of Baltimore, MD. In 1990 she was assigned to Payne Memorial AME Church, a larger and more historically significant AME church.

She pastored Payne Memorial AME Church for 10 years, which built a popular reputation for both McKenzie and the church. She was often considered inspirational and an innovative church-based community outreach programs. Under her leadership, membership grew from approximately 300 to over 1700 (Hine 30) (Saunders 1).

She was able to acquire several buildings and properties in order to push her social gospel and community building initiatives, raising the value of the church's buildings from \$1.6 million to \$5.6 million which included a 30,000 square foot office building and a five-story apartment complex (Hine 30). Emphasizing social uplift and empowerment, the church's programs included job training and placement for 600 former welfare recipients, a food pantry for the needy, a boy scout ministry, rites of passage for both girls and boys and a seven-to-nine week summer camp program for

over one hundred children. The church also managed a public school for the Baltimore Public School System (“The History Maker,” 2007).

In 1997 a poll of national leaders selected McKenzie for *Ebony* magazine’s “Honor Roll of Great African American Preachers” (Hine 30). Newly elected bishops are assigned to Africa if there are no other available district in the US and are required to serve abroad for four years (Saunders 1). In 2000, McKenzie served as chief pastor of the 18th Episcopal District in Southeast Africa which includes Lesotho Botswana, Mozambique and Swaziland and address issues including the AIDS crisis, economic development, church membership and educational advancement (Saunders 1) (Floyd-Thomas 42) (Dickerson 14). McKenzie was elected as the 117th Bishop of the A.M.E. Church at their General Council, the first woman to become an A.M.E. Bishop in the denominations 213 year history. In 2005, McKenzie made history again as the first woman to become the titular head of the A.M.E. Church as she became presiding prelate of the 13th Episcopal District in Tennessee and Kentucky (Saunders 1).

McKenzie is a member of the Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference, a progressive collective of African American faith leaders that take on social justice issues within the Black community. She is a lifetime member of the NAACP. And Vashti has received honorary doctorates from Howard University, Wilberforce University, Central State University in Ohio, Morgan State University, Bethune-Cookman University and Goucher College (“The History Maker,” 2007) (“Newsroom,” 2010). She has authored four books that address positionalities of women. *Not without a Struggle* (1996) and *Strength in the Struggle* (2000) address professional and leadership maturation for

women. *Journey to the Well* aids women seek directions for personal growth and transformation following the Biblical Samaritan woman as an example. *Swapping Housewives* addresses relationships by illustrating scenarios of Leah, Rachel and Jacob.

Within her book, *Not without a Struggle*, McKenzie outlines “ten commandments for African American Clergywomen” and “ten womanist commandment for for clergy”.

They include the following:

Ten Commandments for African American Clergywomen

1. Thou shall be prepared.
2. Thou shall be a team player.
3. Thou shall network.
4. Thou shall be accountable.
5. Thou shall empower others.
6. Thou shall use sound management principles and techniques.
7. Thou shall be committed to the servant leadership style of management, exemplified by Jesus Christ.
8. Thou shall pursue continuing education and personal development in order to provide quality leadership.
9. Thou shall develop, pursue, and establish a Bible-centered ethics and ethos in all areas of ministry.
10. Thou shall be accessible to Christ and to those you are called to serve (McKenzie 23)

Ten Womanist Commandments for Clergy

1. Thou shall not compromise your femininity for the sake of the pulpit.
2. Thou shall not be intimidated by those who question your call and your right to be a woman and a minister.
3. Thou shall be wise in establishing personal relationships within the congregation.
4. Thou shall not be a superwoman.
5. Thou shall be a sister to your sister in the ministry.
6. Thou shall have African American men as brothers.
7. Be assertive, fair, and firm.
8. Thou shall not oppress others.

9. Thou shall be a role model.
10. Thou shall not take thyself too seriously. (McKenzie 25)

McKenzie has been recorded as saying that “the stained glass-ceiling” had been shattered and that she stands “on the shoulders of the unordained women who served without appointment or affirmation. I don’t stand here alone” (Floyd-Thomas 42) (Saunders 1). McKenzie personifies commitment to the church, preaching, and womanism by way of her actions in pioneering women’s leadership roles and doing work that liberates Black communities across the diaspora while privileging the positionality of Black women.

Teresa Fry Brown

Teresa Fry Brown holds positions in both the academy and the church. She is an Itinerant (elected at the annual conference) Elder, Historiographer and Executive Director of Research and Scholarship for the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She serves as the Associate Minister and Minister for Worship and Arts at New Bethel A.M.E. Church, Lithonia, GA. She is also a Full Professor of Homiletics at the Candler School of Theology and Director of Black Church Studies at Emory University in Atlanta, GA; the first Black woman to ever hold this title at Candler.

Fry Brown is a native of Independence, Missouri. Born to William and (the late) Naomi Fry, she is the second oldest of seven children. She married Frank David Brown who passed away in March of 2016. Fry Brown is also the mother of Veronica Nadyne Tinsley (“Women of Faith” 2014).

Fry Brown obtained a Bachelor's of Science (1973) and a Master's of Science (1975) in Speech Pathology and Audiology from the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Missouri. She worked as a Speech Pathologist for years before returning to school. She obtained a Master's of Divinity from Iliff School of Theology in 1988. She then went on to earn a Doctorate of Philosophy in Religious and Theological Studies from the Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver with an emphasis in Religion and Social Transformation ("Women of Faith," 2014).

Dr. Fry Brown's books include *Delivering the Sermon: Voice, Body and Animation in Proclamation*, Fortress Press (2008); *Can A Sister Get a Little Help?: Advice and Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry*, Pilgrim Press (2008); *God Don't Like Ugly: African American Women Handing on Spiritual Values* Abingdon Press (2000); *Weary Throats and New Song: Black Women Proclaiming God's Word* Abingdon Press (2003) and *The 2006 African American History Devotional*, Abingdon Press (2006). All of which contribute to the fields of Religion, Theology and Homiletics and intersect on race and gender. In addition, she has published several articles and essays. Fry Brown utilizes her background as a speech pathologist, homiletician, and preacher to engage voice, embodiment, gender, race and power within the preaching moment.

"African American women have been preaching justice for centuries. They have preached on street corners, in prisons, by sickbeds, in schools, in small groups, in women's Bible studies, in churches, in homes, and any place they could say a word for God" (Brown, 57) (Bond, 115). Susan L. Bond selects these words from Teresa Fry Brown to foreground a shift in her (Bond's) book *Contemporary African American*

Preaching: Diversity in Theory and Style that introduces male-domination in the discipline of homiletics. Brown becomes critical as she has committed herself to inserting Black women's role as preacher into homiletic narratives.

Teresa Fry Brown holds professional memberships in the American Academy of Religion, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, Society for the Study of Black Religion and the Academy of Homiletics.

Fry Brown is lauded as one of the best voices in homiletics. In 2014 she was named the Bandy Chair of Homiletics at Emory, which is the highest honor in Homiletics. The Bandy Chair is for active members of both the church and the community who also have a healthy publishing resume. Fry Brown is the first Black and first woman to receive this honor. She is often called on to teach about preaching in seminars, webinars, conferences and institutes. In 2015, Teresa Fry Brown was the honoree of the Black Religious Scholar's Group (BRSG) annual receptions. The BRSG creates "dialogue and collaboration among scholars, churches and community activist organizations" in order to cultivate "transformative debates and promote social justice" ("BRSG Consultation," 2015).

Fry Brown engages the concept of womanism in her scholarship and preaching. Her work as well as her sermons serve as tools for critical engagement in better understanding rhetoric of Black women's preaching.

Eboni Marshall Turman

Eboni Marshall Turman was an assistant research professor and director of the Office of Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School; the only theological ethicist on

the faculty (“Saving Lives. Changing Minds. Transforming Hearts,” 2015). Marshall Turman is an ordained minister in the National Baptist Convention USA Inc. She is the former Assistant Minister of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City and has taught at the Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, North Carolina, and the Union Theological Seminary in New York City (“Journal of Blacks in Higher Education,” 2013). She was the youngest woman to be name Assistant Minister of the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church (“Saving Lives. Changing Minds. Transforming Hearts,” 2015). In 2016, she along two other African Americans were hired at Yale Divinity School for the upcoming fall semester.

Marshall Turman obtained a Bachelor’s of Art degree in Philosophy from Fordham University. She earned a Master’s of Divinity, a Master’s of Philosophy and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Social Ethics and African American Religion from Union Theological Seminary in New York (Columbia University Graduate School of Religion).

Brooklyn native, Eboni Marshall Turman was named *Ebony* Magazine’s Young Faith Leaders in the Black Community and was on the Network Journal’s 40 Under 40 List. She is married to husband Rossie E. Turman III, Esq. The New York Times covered their wedding in 2011.

Marshall Turman is notable for her book, *Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church and the Council of Chalcedon* (2013). Within this work she dismantles ethics of Black women inferiority within the Black church. She does this by building on the notions that (1) the Black church as an institution was cultivated as a

response to violence on Black bodies, (2) Black women’s bodies are continually searching for liberation and (3) the Chalcedonian concept of the body is a moral dilemma. She explores theologically and ethically how Black women are oppressed within liberation ethics of the Black church.

Along with her book are a number of articles and positions that put in tandem her passion to uplift Black women and Black communities and the foresight to name the injustices. She serves as the executive board of the Biennial Consultation of African and African Diasporan Women in Religion and Theology. Her work and sermons incorporates womanism as a major foci and method for analysis.

Data Collection

In order to carry out my research project I collected six sermons from a public website – YouTube. I searched for two sermons from each preacher on the public site. I obtained sermons within the past seven years in order to remain current with McKenzie’s 2008 sermon as the oldest (I could not find others at the time).

Table 1: Data Set: Preachers and Sermons

Preacher	Sermon Title	Location Preached	Date Preached
Teresa Fry Brown	Just Keep Moving	Union Baptist Church Hempstead, NY	October 20, 2013
	Immeasurable Possibilities	Duke Divinity School Durham, NC	January 17, 2010 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
Vashti McKenzie	Don’t Let Your Wounds Get in the Way	Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago, IL	March 2008 (Easter Sunday)
	Each Round Goes Higher	Duke Divinity School Durham, NC	January 19, 2014 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

Table 1 (cont'd)

Ebony Marshall Turman	Hagar's Tears	Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC	June 22, 2014
	I Will Survive	Morehouse College Atlanta, GA	March 2014

Above is a table that showcases the three preachers used in my study as well as their sermons, location they preached it and upon what date they preached the sermon. This table helps the reader to better understand the data set of materials that I was working from. It showcases the locations that cross a grand scope of regions as well as a time frame lasting from 2008 to 2014—a contemporary data set.

It took approximately four weeks to transcribe all six sermons as each sermon varied while no sermon was shorter than 20 minutes of video footage. When transcribing I used Express Scribe software system. It allowed me the ability to listen to the sermons at a slower rate and type in the same system. I could slow it down, pause, stop and save information all in this software system. It would allow me to

After transcribing the sermons, read and listened to the sermons repeatedly; more than 15 (either listening or reading; sometimes a combination of the two) times each in order to see if there were any liked happenings taking shape.

Discourse Analysis

In order to make sense of the sermons I employ a discourse analysis (DA). Discourse analysis is a method used in language, cultural and rhetorical studies. Within the method of DA I am following Stuart Hall's definition of discourse that suggests "the concept of discourse is not about whether things exist but about where

meaning comes from” (Hall 45). Therefore, it is not enough to suggest what these women are doing with language, but rather it is to communicate what that then means; as Hall also mentions that discourse “is about the production of knowledge through language” (Hall 44).

While there are varying approaches to how one implements discourse analysis, my approach operates under the auspices of trying to unearth meaning derived from language. Therefore, I analyze portions of language in order to delineate the whole message.

Findings

Within my research, I found that these women were operating through the trajectory of many Black women rhetors before them in being activists; advocating for spiritual and social liberation for Black women, men and children. My findings are substantiated by three particular tenets: *context*, *cultural texts* and *textuality*. Context speaks to the context of Black women as interlocking realities – gender and race. Cultural texts include archives derived from Black culture and women’s culture. And textuality is the written word, which will encompass the structure of the written sermon.

The context is broken into two parts. Part I speaks to the choices to use particular Bible translation and what this might mean. Part II addresses decisions to use particular gendered pronouns. Table 2 below showcases the particular Bibles used by each preacher. It also displays the language the Bibles use in relation to gender. This

table will help in better understanding how these preachers make decisions about gender and Bible selection.

Table 2: Bible Translations of Preachers

Preachers	Bible Version	Gender Stance
Teresa Fry Brown	The Common English Bible (2011)	Gender neutral pronouns for God and humanity
Vashti McKenzie	The King James Version (1611)	God is referred to with male pronouns
Eboni Marshall Turman	The New Revised Standard Version (1989)	Gender neutral terms for humanity

The context of the Bible has direct correlation to how these preachers refer to humanity and God throughout their sermons. Both Fry Brown and Marshall Turman, used Bibles that did not attribute gender to humanity. This also coincided with not attributing gender to God. I counted the number of times God was used by each preacher whereby God was not referred to with gendered pronoun (Fry Brown - 117; Marshall Turman - 70). This data showcases how they utilized their context in relation to Bible translations and gendered pronouns.

Cultural texts speaks to how they interpret the Bible and which complementary materials that use in order to carry out their message. In order to develop this finding more, I lean on womanist hermeneutics to better understand how these preachers are making meaning of Biblical material. In terms of complementary materials, I charted all of the varying sources and people added to Biblical source material in order to see what complementary materials were being used; as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Cultural Texts used by Preachers

Teresa Fry Brown		Vashti McKenzie		Ebony Marshall Turman	
<i>Just Keep Moving</i>	<i>Immeasurable Possibilities</i>	<i>Every Round Goes Higher</i>	<i>Don't Let Your Wounds Get in the Way</i>	<i>Hagar's Tears</i>	<i>I Will Survive</i>
Mary Mary Weezy and George Randy Crawford Gospel writer of youth Mothers and fathers (quote) Albert Camu (French philosopher) Aunt	James Baldwin J. Edgar Hoover Johns Evers, Medgar Jackie Robinson Fannie Lou Hamer Larouso Ghandi Prathia Hall SNCC MLK Jr. Herself	MLK Jr. Nietschze Winston Churchill Cicero Alexander Sojour-Neitson Handom Robinson C.S Lewis Nina Simone (strange fruit) Jim Crow Serena Williams Venus Williams Althea Gibson Alex Rodriguez Jack Robinson Luther Vandross Usher Kanye West Paul Robeson August Wilson	John Milton MLK Jr. Gandhi Middle passage Jim Crow Madea's Family Reunion Florid Swanson Wilson	Langston Hughes Deloris S. Williams Zora Neale Hurston Negro spiritual/hymn	Deloris Williams Gloria Gaynor Donna Summer Black womanist theologians Maafa David Walker's appel Ida B. Well's Red record Nat Turner Douglas Randall Pinn Emmit Till Trayvon Martin Jordan Davis Medgar Evers Renisha McBride Jim Crow Fannie Lou Hamer Ella Baker Malcolm X

Table 3 (cont'd)

		James Weldon Johnson Lena Horne Nikki Giovonni Phyllis Wheatly Kobe Bryant Bill Russell Oprah Ida B. Wells Hiram Revels			Black History Month Christopher Moore James Weldon Johnson Her grandmother Harriet Tubman Broad Wilmore Benjamin Mays Peter Perrish Deloris Williams Keri Day
--	--	--	--	--	--

After charting the names of all persons and works used, I created categories to make sense of the data. Table 4, therefore, showcases themes that helped to make sense of the particular texts used in the sermons. While some of the texts may seem to have overlapped I made the decision to categorize them as seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Numerical and Themed Breakdown of Cultural Texts used by Preachers

	Teresa Fry Brown	Vashti McKenzie	Eboni Marshall Turman
Black Activists/Community Organizers	8	7	16
Black Preachers	2	2	8
Black Popular Icons	4	7	4
Philosophers (non Black)	0	8	0

I then categorized for textuality, which includes the following identifying markers:

- Salutations or greeting
- Prayer
- Title
- Obstacles
- Audience
- Womanism
- Ethical Remedy

All of these tenets are attributes used by the women within their sermons. It becomes the written product and method for Black women's preaching. Aside from the Salutation and Prayer, which may or may not be written, the other portions of their sermons are written. While textuality does not concern the spoke word, Salutation and Prayer are included to the preacher that set out to replicate a Black woman's sermon. I was able to find these seven tenets after reading and cross referencing the sermons. Based on the six sermons, these were the recurring tenets that manifests themselves within the construction of the sermon that speaks specifically to building a preaching method.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined my methodological approaches to Black women's preaching rhetoric. I have illustrated how I utilized discourse analysis to understand the relationship between language and meaning making in the sermons. I showcased my findings through the tenets of *context*, *cultural texts* and *textualiy* – which will be the units that the following three chapters will address.

CHAPTER TWO
THINK LIKE A BLACK WOMAN:
CONTEXTUALIZED WOMANIST HERMENEUTICS

This chapter highlights the act of interpreting Biblical material through the lens of Black women's subjectivity. McKenzie, Fry Brown and Marshall Turman center the lives and experiences of Black women and position them as an analytical tool for interpreting the Bible. Womanist-ethicist Katie Cannon, declared that the work of womanist homiletics was to critique sermons at the level of patriarchal and sexist Biblical interpretations (Cannon 27). Vashti McKenzie, Teresa Fry Brown and Eboni Marshall Turman, take Cannon's call for action a step further not by simply critiquing, but inserting womanist hermeneutics within their preaching by interpreting Biblical characters and/or stories through the lens of Black women's experiences. Each preacher has a specific approach to integrating Black women's experiences within their depictions of Bible references. Each of these approaches incorporates a tenet of womanist ethics (see chapter one) declared by womanist ethicist Stacey Floyd-Thomas; *critical engagement, radical subjectivity, and/or traditional communalism*. Thusly, these preachers center the lives of Black women within their process of interpreting Biblical sacred text in order to broaden the scope of liberation to promote inclusivity for all of humanity. Marshall Turman does so by positioning God on the side of the oppressed. McKenzie accomplishing this by introducing interlocking "wounds" of Black women to relate to a "wounded" audience. And lastly Fry Brown broadens the scope of liberation to promote inclusivity by incorporating women and children into Biblical narratives.

Womanist Ethics

I highlight instances whereby these womanist preachers utilize their roles as womanists to rhetorically contextualize womanist ethics of *radical subjectivity, critically engagement and traditional communalism*, with Biblical material in order to convey messages of liberation to their audiences. I illustrate this by first outlining womanist ethics of radical subjectivity, critical engagement, and traditional communalism. Stacey Floyd-Thomas in her book, *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* builds upon the work of Alice Walker's four-part definition of womanism by taking up womanist ethicist Katie Cannon's charge to utilize womanism as a "critical, methodological framework for challenging inherited traditions for their collusion with androcentric patriarchy as well as a catalyst in overcoming oppressive situations through revolutionary acts of rebellion." (Floyd-Thomas 3) In doing so, Floyd-Thomas developed four ethics that correlate to Walker's four part womanist definition. My work will encompass three of these tenets: *radical subjectivity, critical engagement, and traditional communalism*. I have integrated these ethical tenets into my own research in order to highlight specific womanist rhetoric within Black women's preaching.

According to Floyd-Thomas, "Radical subjectivity, discusses the formation of Black women's radical subjectivity in light of racist-sexist-classist oppression that they face and the ways in which they have subverted forced identities and hegemonic truth claims." (Floyd-Thomas 8) In other words, womanism reclaims being radical as a subjective identity of Black women and imparts value to it rather than devaluation. Radical subjectivity allows for us to recognize epistemological privileges

of Black women that have before been demonized. Radical in this sense refers to advocating for and/or extreme allegiance to a politics directly influencing Black women. According to Floyd-Thomas, radical subjectivity is,

1. A process that emerges as Black females in the nascent phase of their identity development come to understand agency as the ability to defy a forced naivete in an effort to influence the choices made in one's life and how conscientization incites resistance against marginality.

This first part definition references the process of radical subjectivity in girlhood. It speaks to the formation of ethics developed during beginning relationships to the world and how one is to internalize themselves and act. It also includes an emphatic resistance to the world's views on how young Black girls are supposed to act.

2. An assertion of the real-lived experiences of one's rites of passage into *becoming* a Blackwoman, *being* "womanish"; the audacious act of naming and claiming voice, space, and knowledge.

This second part definition speaks to occupying and taking up space through acts that usually are said to be "too grown," "fast" or outside of age expected activities. This is where young Black girls engage in activities that allow them to name the world around them. This takes place in songs that accompany hand claps and jump rope, but include a plethora of acts of naming and claiming space.

3. A form of identity politics that is not a tangible, static identity that measures and gauges the extent to which one is or is not what others had planned or hoped for one to be (Floyd-Thomas 16).

Lastly, being radically subjective disrupts politics that are oppressive to Black women. Those politics outlined by Patricia Hill Collins, that control images, suppress voting, exclude them from public office, foster patterns of disenfranchisement in educational institutions...(Collins 7).

All-in-all, radical subjectivity is defined as acts by Black women that take into account their particularities and emphatically counters politics implemented to oppress them. Negotiating identity and action is important within the ethical principle of radical subjectivity. It is this radical subjectivity that engages critically with the world.

According to Floyd-Thomas,

“critical engagement...highlight[s] the necessity for womanist thought to remain on the cutting edge of approaches to and discourses on religion and society. Realizing the role that womanism plays in tandem with other feminist, liberationist, and anti-racist scholarly movements and social institutions, the authors mandate that womanism continues to be a fruitful resource for engaging major questions in a variety of disciplines and social contexts that take seriously the interaction of religion and society” (Floyd-Thomas 10).

Thusly, womanism should not operate in a microcosm of its own. It must live and breathe through the intersections of itself and exist to foster relationships with other working bodies of knowledge and disciplines. I have displayed how these terms manifests within the actions of interpreting Biblical passages with a womanist lens to create womanist rhetoric within the sermon.

Traditional communalism, as described by Dr. Stacey Floyd-Thomas is,

the affirmation of the loving connections and relational bonds formed by Black women – including familial, maternal, platonic, religious, sexual, and spiritual. Black women’s ability to create, re-member, nurture, protect, sustain, and liberate communities which are marked and measured not by those outside of one’s own community but by the acts of inclusivity, mutuality, reciprocity, and self-care practiced within it. (Floyd 78)

The following paragraphs showcase how these ethics manifests rhetorically within the preachers’ sermons. These ethics serve as lenses to getting at Black women’s rhetorical offerings through womanist mores.

Hagar is a Black Woman

Marshall Turman implements radical subjectivity and critical engagement within her sermons in two various ways; (1) interpreting the Bible centering Black women’s subjectivity in a manner that liberates them and others and (2) exposing dominant interpretations that are oppressive to Black women. In her first sermon, Marshall Turman disrupts politics taking place within dominant narratives of Abraham’s faithfulness to God. She does so by humanizing Hagar and suggesting that God listens and provides to Hagar.

Marshall Turman’s sermon, “Hagar’s Tears”, takes place at Duke Divinity School’s Chapel. She primarily focuses on chapter 21 of the book of Genesis whereby Abraham is deemed by God to father many nations however, his wife Sarah presents her (Sarah’s) servant Hagar, to have sex with Abraham and birth children due to her (Sarah) disbelief that she (Sarah) would be able to at her old age. Hagar births a son,

Ishmael. Sarah then births a child later, Isaac, and instructs Abraham to excommunicate Hagar and Ishmael. Hagar cries due to this distress, thusly the title of the sermon is manifested, “Hagar’s Tears” (Marshall Turman, “Hagar’s Tears”)

Marshall Turman interjects modes of inquiry like that of ethicist Katie Cannon, when she applies an womanist “interpretation of suspicion” -- a visceral feeling of inequity--that God’s chosen people can and are wrong in matters of social justice (Cannon 43). Marshall Turman declares,

...and the fact of the matter this morning sisters and brothers that sometimes even God’s people are wrong – dead wrong; especially when it comes to matters of racial justice. Especially when it comes to matters of gender justice. Especially when it come to matters of economic justice and the intersections thereof.”

(Marshall Turman, “Hagar’s Tears”)

The “God’s people” that Marshall Turman is referring to are Sarah and Abraham. She is suggesting that their relationship with and treatment of Hagar, Sarah’s servant, is one exclusive of injustices.

Marshall Turman’s provides a womanist rendition of the this pericope that is radically subjective and critically engaging. Marshall Turman declares that Hagar is ontologically Black in her context of being a woman, poor, slave and a surrogate to Sarah and Abraham. She borrows the terminology of surrogacy from womanist theologian, Deloris Williams’ work in *Sister in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Williams suggests that the relationship between Hagar and Sarah can tell us a lot about the relationship between White women and Black women. She goes on to say

that Black women were once subjects to White women and Black women's offspring were forced to work, in the same manner that Hagar was subjected to Sarah and Hagar's offspring, Ishmael was forced to work. Marshall Turman knows this work as she cites Williams by acknowledging "Womanist theologian Deloris S. Williams would call her a Sister in the Wilderness" (Marshall Turman, 2014). According to Marshall Turman and Williams, Hagar is a Black woman in that her social context is a poor, Egyptian slave woman. Marshall Turmans says this of Hagar and Ishmael,

The text tells us and is confirmed by our understanding of slavocracy that as a slave woman, Hagar was caught in the intersection of social biases, namely gender bias and racial ethnic bias, Hagar, like Sarah was subject to Abraham because she was a woman. But at the same time she is subjected to Abraham and Sarah because of her racial, ethnic and economic designation as an Egyptian slave woman. She is poor. Yes. Hagar is poor and Hagar is Black. Yes. And Hagar is unlettered and it is based on this social location as slave woman. A-a- and Ishmael's social location as a descended of a slave (Marshall Turman, "Hagar's Tears").

Marshall Turman is descriptively explicit about the intersections of Hagar's realities. Hagar's identity is associated with being Sarah's slave and Abraham's concubine. Prior to God's declaration that Abraham would father many nations there was no mention of Hagar. She enters as Sarah's disbelief enters. Her sole purpose is to serve Sarah. Sarah gives her (Hagar) to her (Sarah's) husband (Abraham) because of her (Sarah) disbelief. Now Hagar's *being* transitions from Egyptian slave to sex slave. She is to

reproduce for to fulfill God's declaration to Abraham. Therefore, Marshall Turman analyzes Hagar's subjectivities by critically engaging with her location in society by preaching, "...So not only has Hagar been cast out based on her social location as an African slave woman who had been coerced into surrogacy by Sarah's scheming ways at the hands of the man of God..." (Marshall Turman, "Hagar's Tears") Hagar is subjected to the acts because of her position in society.

Marshall Turman also operates in radical subjectivity by illustrating the subjectivity of Abraham, "Abraham was a slaver" that centers the oppression of Black women (Marshall Turman, 2014). Hagar serves as a surrogate for Abraham and Sarah's royalty. Hagar is then cast away after no longer needed. Sarah's ego and jealousy causes her to tell Abraham to get rid of both her and the son now that she has bore, Ishmael. Nevertheless God acknowledges Hagar's tears, according to Marshall.

An entire narrative is derived from situating Hagar within the interpretive location of the Black woman. Before, the normative gaze, as according to Marshall Turman, leaves Hagar on the periphery in order to shed light on the faith of Abraham and possibly Sarah, however by centering Hagar, those who may have been in Hagar's situation before of feeling used, abused, mistreated, oppressed and villainized may gain a liberative message through the usage of womanist hermeneutics in Genesis 21. It establishes the intersections of Black women in society however positions God as one who hears and addresses these concerns as well. By doing this Eboni Marshall is able to make both a social and theological critique rhetorically within her sermon.

Marshall Turman implements critical engagement as she utilizes womanism to interact with the disciplines of theology, homiletics, and rhetoric. She utilizes womanist hermeneutics by theoretically situating Deloris Williams' work to locate God's relationship with those who are often marginalized in society, and in this case, marginalized within dominant interpretations of the Bible that manifests its way into the preached sermon. She preaches, "...the text says that God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. God showed her...God showed her where the water was." Therefore, Marshall Turman coalesces a conversation that critically engages four disciplines through womanism to illustrate that God is with those even if society is not.

Marshall Turman's objective was to disrupt dominant theological principles in order to insert a liberation narrative for those pushed to the margins of society. She opened her sermon with, "Now a patriarchal and misogynistic gaze typically reads Genesis 21 as the story of Abraham and his faith, but today we find in this text the story of Hagar, a African slave woman" (Marshall Turman, "Hagar's Tears"), Eboni acknowledges that there have been dominant interpretations of Genesis 21 that privileges the faith of Abraham, who is, according to Marshall Turman, "a slaver". Therefore, we can tell early on that Marshall Turman believes that another interpretation is necessary. And in this move, she decides to focus on a woman—Hagar, whom she identifies as an "African slave woman". By identifying Hagar as an African slave woman, Hagar transitions from an extra in the story of Abraham's faith to the

protagonist in the story of God listening to those oppressed in society through critical engagement and radical subjectivity.

In summation, Marshall Turman, preaches about oppressive relationships faced by a Black woman in the Bible to shed light on oppressive relationships faced by Black women in America. By doing this she provides a broader scope for liberation; one not only inclusive of Black women, but that also centers Black women's liberation and is inclusive of others. By shifting the dominant narrative of Abraham as an obedient servant of God to a slave master, implicating him and Sarah in the oppression of Hagar, a Black woman, and privileging Hagar's Black woman subjectivity, suggesting that God hears her sorrows, Marshall Turman is able to impart that God is on the side of the oppressed. She says,

there are women and men and children right here in Durham who, like Hagar and Ishmael, because of social indicators, because they are poor, because they are colored, because they are women or sexual minorities, have been cast out by our isms, by our phobias, and they are crying Hagar's tears because they don't know if they will make it (Marshall Turman, "Hagar's Tears").

All in all, Marshall Turman outlines oppressive relationships as well as liberative acts of God on the side of Black women in order to suggest liberation is for all people and not just those who society has privileged.

The Wounds of Jesus and Black Women

Vashti McKenzie uses the womanist tenet of critical engagement, centralizes Black women's perspectives, when giving her sermon on the wounds of Jesus. "Don't

Let Your Wounds Get in the Way,” uses the Gospel of John, the 20th chapter, verse 19, as Biblical source material. Further along in her sermon she describes wounds taken on by many around the world, not just those inflicted on Jesus during his persecution. McKenzie’s reading of the Biblical passage is as follows:

On the evening of that day the first day of the week the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said to them peace be with you when he had said this he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again peace be with you. As the father has sent me eve so I am sending you. And when he had said this he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone they are forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness from anyone it is withheld. If you forgive the sins of anyone they are forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness from anyone it is withheld. This is the Word of the Lord you may be seated. Mmmmm. Mmmmmmm. Needy is the word of the Lord. Our text stand is verse 20 and when he had said this he showed them his hands and his side. And when he said this he showed them, his hands and his side (King James Version Bible, John 20:19), (McKenzie, “Don’t Let Your Wounds Get in the Way”).

This Biblical passage outlines Jesus and his followers’ interaction as they were able to identify Jesus by Jesus’ wounds. They understood that those wounds were specific to Jesus because they had all witnessed Jesus’ persecution firsthand. His followers knew that Jesus was nailed to a cross and having a spear pierced into his

side. Therefore, they knew this was indeed the same Jesus, despite their doubt, after he showed them his wounds. McKenzie made it a point to focus on the wounds of Jesus in terms of physicality, however she makes a rhetorical move in comparing the wounds of Jesus to the wounds of the congregation and those in society who have had their identities also defined by wounding experiences. McKenzie goes on to say,

The wounds may be visible to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Or they may be invisible because we carry them as scars on our hearts and minds and our sights. We may feel those who haven't been through what we've been through, that their lives are somehow better because they did not go through what we went through. They don't understand what we went through because there was no middle passage in their past. They didn't go through what we went through so there's no Jim Crow or Separate But Equal on their resume. There's no enslavement or forced genocide in their biography. There's no off switch there no wounded me. There's no camp spade in the background of their life. There's no racial profiling. There's no Northern Illinois University, there's no columbine, there's no Virginia Tech back there. There's no drive by. There's no home invasion where they live. There's no daily racism. Consistent sexism (McKenzie, "Don't Let Your Wounds Get in the Way").

Here she references subjective intersectionalities of Black womanhood through racism and sexism. It is important for McKenzie to engage realities of Black women throughout history and within particular contexts. It is all of these particular realities that culminate to the Black women's experiences. McKenzie then compartmentalizes

the situations in order to relate to specific issues experienced by the congregation. While the congregation may not be full of Black women, it is through Black women's interpretation that she is able to communicate varying realities of wounding or oppressions through the intersecting of Black women's oppression.

In doing so, McKenzie creates working relationships with those that experience *wounding* experiences. She critically engages realities of Black women--"middle passage," "consistent sexism," "daily racism," "racial profiling,"---to engage the audience with wounded experiences. It is important that she doesn't shy away from racial and gendered experiences and injustices to speak on behalf of how people are wounded in society. By doing so, she critically engages powers and politics that have enforced such ills. Therefore, we can see the womanist ethical tenet of critical engagement operated within McKenzie's sermon.

Inserting Women and Children

Teresa Fry Brown, preaches, "Just Keep Moving" at Union Baptist Church during for their church's anniversary. The premise of the sermon is to not remain stagnant, but to continue to move. She situates the sermon in the book of Deuteronomy whereby Moses is leading his people, the Israelites, through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Moses' people begin to murmur and become complacent in the wilderness. Fry Brown likens this experience to the evolution of a church congregation that may murmur against the direction the pastor would like to take the church. She suggests that the congregants not get complacent or speak of the good old days. She urges them to "Just Keep Moving".

Within this sermon Fry Brown enacts traditional communalism by Inserting women and children into biblical and sermonic narrative. She does this by including women and children for the purpose of identifying the whole of communities rather than just the men. Fry Brown ensures that she accounts for women and children within the sacred text even when they are not included. She says of Moses leading his people, “He has lead 600,000 plus women and children there are actually 3.5 million cause brothers married four people then I'm so glad we're past that” (Fry Brown, “Just Keep Moving”). While the calculation of people being led had been articulated in the Bible, Fry Brown ensures that she accounts for four wives for each of the men as well as children so that the audience has an accurate account of who was in the wilderness. By adding women and children, not only is the number increased significantly, the differing bodies making the journey is realized.

By including women and children into the narrative of Israelites seeking the promised land, Fry Brown allows the congregation to view themselves within the narrative. When moving to the stagnation of the congregation, women and children can now see themselves within the narrative of needing to move because God has a Promised future for them as well. By incorporating familial relationships, Fry Brown broadens the scope of liberation. The Israel God is not leading 600,000 men to the Promised Land, rather the Israel God is leading 3.5 million people to the Promised Land. In that like manner, it is not enough for the pastor of the church to prosper, but for all of the congregants to prosper, spiritually, socially, etc. Thusly, by incorporating

women and children into the narrative of men within the sermon, they (the women and children) can be included in the story of liberation.

Womanist Hermeneutics as Inclusive Rhetoric

Utilizing radical subjectivity, critically engagement and traditional communalism throughout interpretations of Hagar, wounds, and the insertion of women and children broadens the scope of liberation. Ultimately the context of Black women's lived experiences lends itself to a particular truth of Biblical rhetoric – on liberation and inclusivity. Each preacher positions Black women's subjectivity center to Biblical hermeneutics to build narratives of liberation for all despite their social reality.

In addition to utilizing womanists ethics within their rhetoric, they tend to complement their Biblical stories with stories that stem from their subjectivity as Black women. The following chapter will speak to how these preachers incorporate cultural texts with Biblical texts in order to convey a particular message to their audiences.

CHAPTER THREE
BY WHAT AUTHORITY?:
DECISION MAKING IN SACRED AND CULTURAL TEXTS

This chapter describes the intentional action of wrestling in decision making with source material – Biblical sacred text and complementary cultural texts--and the insertion of activists as an activist act. This chapter will be presented in two parts. Part I focuses on Biblical sacred text translations, investigating actions of inserting women and children into Biblical narratives within sermons produced by Eboni Marshall Turman, Teresa Fry Brown, and Vashti McKenzie. Part I has less to do with the language of the Bible and more to do with the decision making of the preachers on Biblical sacred materials and how the utility of said materials influence their sermons. These preachers' decision making with the Bible correlate mostly to how these womanist preachers understand and take up gender by abstaining from attributing a gender pronoun to God. While this is taking place, it is integral to understand that the rhetoric used functions to incorporate a message of inclusion and liberation for all.

Part II addresses decision making with cultural texts that complement Biblical sacred text. Complementary sources to Biblical text aid the preacher in conveying a message by incorporating voices that add to an overall message. When selecting sources, authority is given to those voices inserted. These preachers utilize a wide range of voices; however overwhelmingly cite womanist and feminist scholars, familial women, Black women literarians and activists that invoke inclusive language. This section will speak to the importance of complementary sources in creating liberative

rhetoric by Black activists. This portion also displays how the concept of *re-membering* takes place within literary and experiential cultural texts in order to create rhetoric of liberation.

Part I:

Genderless God

In the preaching moment, Fry Brown consciously includes all of humanity within her sermon, by not attributing a male pronoun to God. Within the two sermons preached by Teresa Fry Brown, she says the word God (referring to the Christian deity) a total of 117 times; 80 times in "Just Keep Moving" and 37 times in "Immeasurable Possibilities." In doing so, Fry Brown never attributes a gendered pronoun to God. She is strategic as to not do so even when the sentence structure grammatically calls for a pronoun. For example, below are two sentences from her sermon, "Just Keep Moving" whereby she is articulating certain characteristics about God.

"God breathed God's sustaining breath in humankind from dirt and spit the world has kept on moving and active and changing evolving according to God's plan" (Fry Brown, "Just Keep Moving").

"Quit beggin for stuff God already said that God would do" (Fry Brown, "Just Keep Moving").

In both quotes, Fry Brown repeats the subject without providing a gendered pronoun. The subject "God" is utilized three times without ever attributing a gendered pronoun indicating the resistance of ascribing a gendered pronoun to God. Utilizing "he," "she," or "they" would either gender God or pluralize God, which could contradict monotheistic views of Christianity. Fry Brown does not acknowledge the popular male

utilized pronoun for God nor does she utilize another gender distinction to refer to God. Therefore, by allowing God to stand in for the pronoun God, a theological declaration of who can or cannot be made in the image of God is established.

In the sermon, "Immeasurable Possibilities" Fry Brown says the following statements, "God always chooses unlikely places to reveal God's glorious action on our behalf." And "God sent God's only son..." Again, Fry Brown repeats the subject instead of situating a gendered or pluralistic pronoun.

In the like manner, Eboni Marshall Turman refuses to gender God as well. Within in her two sermons she says God a total of 70 (30 times in "I Will Survive" and 40 times in Hagar's Tears) times without ever attributing gendered pronouns to God. However, unlike Fry Brown, she utilizes other terminology like that of Ebenezer, Jehovah, Lord, and Creator, which signifies theological implications without reinscribing patriarchal idiosyncrasies. Marshall-Turman uses the following phrases within her sermon, "Hagar's Tears",

"God can take our worst and turn it into God's best"

"God showed her though God did not hear her"

Similar to Fry Brown, Marshall-Turman inputs "God" into the position of a pronoun, repeating the subject. In doing so, the subject is still made known without imparting a gendered pronoun.

Within "I Will Survive" Marshall-Turman says, "You can't really know how good God is, until you know how God has brought you through something." Again, she repeats the subject in the place reserved for a pronoun.

The genius of both of these preachers is that not only do they refrain from attributing a gendered pronoun to the Christian deity, they simultaneously (1) restate the subject to indicate who is referred to and (2) utilize God as a pronoun. Utilizing God as a pronoun offers an alternative for gender pronouns for God while not confusing the audience on the subject.

The most notable implication is that it provides space for God to transcend gender and for all of humanity to understand themselves in the “image of God”. By not relegating God to a particular gender, God supersedes human gender conformities.

God as Man

Bishop Vashti McKenzie refers to God with male pronouns throughout her sermons. Within, “Digging New Wells” Bishop McKenzie suggests that the congregation, “Remember the wonders *he* has done.” And “Remember *his* covenant forever”. In both instances McKenzie is referring to God when utilizing “male” pronouns “he” and “his”. In her sermon, “Don’t Let Your Wounds Get in the Way” she recites similar indications of God saying, “God’s not dead *he’s* yet alive. *He* has risen.” And “If you think about how good God is, then you would thank God for *his* goodness.” Both phrases refer to God with “male” gendered pronouns which may claim God is in fact male. This rendering of God as male may appear contradictory to womanist rhetoric of centering Black women’s subjectivity in decision making processes of sacred texts; however, McKenzie problematizes both theological and rhetorical understandings of the scope of womanist meaning making strategies. In

other words, “Can a womanist believe in a male God?” While McKenzie’s God is male, *he* is not patriarchal.

McKenzie works diligently to ensure that God operates in a love that seeks to “fight again for opportunities and funding and collective bargaining against residual racism, sexism, ageism, and classism” (McKenzie, “Digging New Wells”). While the image of God may seem restrictive McKenzie inserts womanist rhetoric that thanks God “for your love and your circle of sisterly love”. This sentiment situates God, though male, in a love, more specifically a sisterly love. Therefore, love experienced through a collective of women, embodies God. This rhetorical decision of the sacred, suggests that Bishop McKenzie recognizes the importance of privileging gender inclusive the-ontology.

Theo-rhetorical Decisions of Bible Versions

Another way that these preachers actively wrestle again patriarchal pervasion within sermonizing is by taking active stances and making critical decisions on the Biblical sacred texts they choose to use. Both Fry Brown and Marshall-Turman use gender-neutral Bibles as an ethical decision to preaching and they make mention of this to their audience by referencing the kind of Bible within their sermon. By doing so, they are informing the audience of their decision to choose a gender-neutral Bible. Vashti McKenzie uses the King James Version, Eboni Marshall-Turman uses the New Revised Standard Version and Teresa Fry Brown utilizes the Common English Bible. By choosing and sharing their Biblical decision they live in womanist ethics to centralize and privilege inclusivity.

The New Revised Standard Version

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) was one of the first gender-neutral Bibles, produced in 1989, published in 1990. The main issue that it sought to rectify was neutralizing male language referencing all humanity. Many seminaries, including the divinity school that I attended, utilized this text. The NRSV is a revised translation of the American Standard Version of the Bible. An agenda of this translation was to include gender-neutral language in reference to general people. Therefore, instead of using “man” to refer to all of humanity, “person” is used instead (New Revised Standard Version).

Marshall Turman introduces the biblical text Lamentations 3:16 in “I Will Survive” by saying, “It is a familiar passage of scripture taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the text.” It is important that she mentions this as a declaration of her Biblical principles and stance on a theology of gender inclusivity. By informing the audience about the version of the Bible she introduces them to feminist/womanist mores of gender inclusivity. Therefore, Marshall Turman believes that the version of the Bible is important to mention.

The Common English Bible

The Common English Bible was not a revision of another Bible like the NRSV. This Bible came about through the workings of several scholars across varying denominations. This Bible was created for a better readability as well as eliminating gender pronouns for both God and humanity in places that did not disrupt the “integrity” of the meaning of the message (The Common English Bible).

Fry Brown made mention that she utilized this Bible to her audience. She instructs, in “Just Keep Moving”, “So let us go to the word this morning of Deuteronomy the first chapter verse six, seven, and eight from the Common English Bible. Deuteronomy one, six through eight in the Common English Bible.” It is important that she makes the claim to her audience which version she is deriving her sacred text – one that includes gender inclusivity for both the divine and humanity.

The King James Version

The King James Version, for Blacks, serves as a genealogy capsule, coffee table staple, literary nurturer and dignity marker (Brown 1) (Banks). It culturally resonates with Black communities (Sanders). It once served as the only literary text available to Black people. Many memorized the text before learning to read, thusly, the attachment to this text is one of nostalgia and cultural resonance. Bishop Vashti McKenzie's uses and reveres the King James Version of the Bible. While this Bible utilizes male pronouns for both God and humanity, Bishop Vashti McKenzie still utilizes this version while ensuring there are corrective to stances regarding (1) locating the divine in Black women and (2) situating Black women's epistemology. I have illustrated this through her workings of God as male in the use of cultural texts in the following section. Bishop McKenzie's use of the KJV problematizes the necessity of womanist homiletic rhetoric to take place only when using particular sacred texts that have already taken up gender inclusivity. One can still preach womanist sermons while using a sacred texts that do not inherently de-gender God. However, it is the role of the preacher to take into account for this by creating narratives that directly situates this male God to be

concerned with and for gender oppression. It may call for more workings of complementary texts. However, if this version resonates mostly with Black communities, it would be more palatable with this audience. It builds a rapport with the audience. Therefore, the usage of the KJV Bible, may be to connect with the audience solely.

By claiming a sacred text that includes all of humanity as agents of God and participants of Godself, a reordering of world construction takes place that counters patriarchal rhetoric. Ultimately liberation takes place within the process of making God available to and for all – affirming their humanity. Rhetorics of a sexist God cannot prevail in this space.

Part II:

Cultural Texts Literature

Womanists look to literature as source material to recall the lives and experiences of Black women. In the case of Black womanist rhetors/preachers, literature serves as cultural texts that complement sacred texts in womanist homiletic rhetoric. Cannon eludes to this usage by stating,

The Black women's literary tradition provides a rich resource and a coherent commentary that brings into sharp focus the Black community's central values, which in turn freed Black folks from the often deadly grasp of parochial stereotypes. The observations, descriptions, and interpretations in Black literature are largely reflective of cultural experiences. (Cannon 62)

She suggests that Black women's literature is a space for speaking to realities of Black culture. And because of this truth, Cannon is also suggesting that Black women's literature should be privileged as an authoritative source for engaging cultural experiences.

Re-membering Across Space and Time

Integral to womanism is the concept of re-membering. This concept means the member or join together; usually histories and/or ideas. This membering or re-membering takes place in the efforts to create narratives of Black women that have often gone overlooked and/or misrepresented. Therefore, re-membering is an act of cultivating narratives of Black women's lives. Some re-member ideologies while other re-member concepts and histories of Black women's triumphs. This act can take place over space and time in order to achieve cohesion of ideas. My work showcases how womanist preachers re-member as a two-fold action in (1) re-calling histories and narratives that directly impact the lives of Black women and (2) adjoining these collective histories, theories and/or experiences to create a particular objective of their own.

Marshall Turman inserts cultural texts as complementary sources into her sermon to re-member cultural concepts across space and time. She uses such texts to describe her grand narrative of liberation; which includes spiritual, social and liberation for Black women. In, "I Will Survive" she incorporates 31 complementary sources to create a narrative of survival—all of which are texts by Black activists.

In, "Hagar's Tears" Marshall Turman references three cultural texts, two of which are written by Black women (Deloris Williams, Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes). Eboni Marshall Turman establishes a womanist theoretical framework both sermons by introducing Dr. Deloris Williams as a complementary cultural text. In "I Will Survive" Marshall Turman states, "...I do know that I am at Morehouse tonight, but in the spirit of womanist theologian, better yet, womanist matriarch Deloris S. Williams..." In "Hagar's Tears" she makes reference to normative interpretations of the book of Genesis chapter 21 by saying,

Now a patriarch and misogynistic gaze typically reads Genesis 21 as the story of Abraham and his faith, but today we find in this text the story of Hagar, an African woman. Womanist theologian Deloris S. Williams would call her a sister in the wilderness.

Within both sermons, Marshall Turman is invoking Deloris Williams, who in her work Marshall Turman is strategic to invoke Williams' presence within the spaces of Morehouse College (an all-male Historically Black College) and Duke Divinity School (a predominantly white institution). Cultural texts aid in providing theory to the sacred text.

In "I Will Survive," Marshall Turman then situates instances of racist murders upon Blacks across space and time, bookending the references with Black women. She says, "From four little girls in a Birmingham church, to a fallen King on a Memphis balcony. From Emmitt Till to Trayvon martin. From Jordan Davis Medgar Evers to Jordan Davis to Renisha McBride." In 1963, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, Addie

Mae Collins and Denise McNair were murdered and 22 people were injured, when Ku Klux Klan extremist group Cabaha placed a bomb under the stairs of 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama (“Four black Schoolgirls killed in Birmingham” 1). In this particular case, justice was either slow to manifest or did not take place at all; as not all of the terrorists were prosecuted. Fifteen years later, in the case of Renisha McBride, a 19 year-old Detroit resident, she lost her life after seeking help in Dearborn Heights, Michigan. Upon knocking on the door, Renisha was shot by the shotgun of the resident who claimed that he was protecting himself from a potential break-in (Semuels 1). At the time Marshall Turman preached, “I Will Survive” Renisha McBride’s killer had not yet been arraigned. Therefore, Marshall Turman is bridging Renisha McBride’s account that took place in Michigan in 2013 with that of the four little girls in Alabama in 1963. She also interjects the lives and deaths of Martin Luther King, Medgar Evers, Jordan Davis and Trayvon Martin, all who were subjected to murders in a system that does not privilege Black lives. Thusly, by member-ing these persons across space and time, Marshall Turman sheds light on a system that is not intended for the survival of Black lives.

Following up the narratives of injustice, Marshall Turman members activists with messages of indictment. She says “from David Walker’s Appeal to Ida B. Wells’ Red Record.” She re-members in order to cultivate a narrative of accountability. *David Walker’s Appeal* written in 1829 called on Blacks to hold White Americans accountable by investigating and indicting White America based on its ill treatment of Blacks. Sixty years later after the Emancipation Proclamation and during the Reconstruction Era, Ida

B. Wells began documenting the lynchings of Blacks in order to call attention to how white people were treating Blacks. She wanted justice. Therefore, Marshall Turman members these two cultural texts to invoke accountability.

Marshall Turman also introduces Gloria Gaynor as another cultural text within the title and as the ethical remedy (see chapter five). She says,

I'd like to speak with you very briefly this evening on the subject, "I Will Survive" I will survive. And I know that some of you have not engaged your theological minds in quite some time. There's a reason why the song says, "I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus" Some of us who have not engaged our theological minds in quite some time may have all conjured the lives of one Gloria Gai, perhaps Donna Summers and God blessed the disco. But I'm not talkin about the dance floor tonight although I do cut a mean dougie, I do wobble with it, the real harlem shake, I'm not talking about the dance floor tonight. No, this evening's subjective affirmation and prophetic proclamation encapsulating in the words "I Will Survive", words that have been uttered by Black women across the ages, beautiful Black queens of the disco and bold Black womanist theologians of the Ebony, I mean the Ivory Tower, this affirmation emerges from an experience I had a few years ago when I visited Africa, the mother continent, what had formerly called Gold coast what is now called Cape coast Ghana, by then I had the opportunity to visit the slaves dungeons of El Mina, and while the lament of the slave spirits were pressed into me by way of the Atlantic (Marshall Turman "I Will Survive").

By selecting this song title as the title of her sermon, she invokes the overall message of the song, which is strength in the midst of devastation. For the Gloria Gaynor song “I Will Survive” states, “as long as I know how to love I know I’ll stay alive”. The 1970’s hit was the first song in disco that did not contain background vocals; instead it was just Gloria Gaynor’s voice with the instruments. In the song, “I Will Survive” she declared that she would make it on her own while her autobiography of the same title, she spoke of remaining resilient through life’s circumstances. Gaynor’s father played the ukulele and guitar and sang professionally in nightclubs while her brother along with a friend sang in an all male gospel quartet. She was unable to sing with her brothers as she was too young. Gaynor, like Rev. Marshall Turman navigated sacred and secular spaces within her own life and within the song in order to find the source of liberation. According to Marshall Turman the title “I Will Survive” resonates with the womanist agenda of striving for and claiming survival. Gaynor claimed her life and love through liberation from a man and Rev. Marshall-Turman reclaims the title as a liberation message for the congregation.

She then mentions Donna Summer, another “queen of the disco” who was a singer, songwriter and painter. Summer’s first singing debut was within the church at the age of eight years old. Although she attended church seven days a week, she dropped religion in the 70s when her career took off. During that time she experimented with drugs and alcohol and even contemplated suicide. Both artists, Gaynor and Summers attempted to reconcile the secular and the sacred as Marshall Turman is doing within the introduction of her sermon.

“A mean”, or very good “dougie” is a dance that pays homage to rapper Doug E. Fresh who would alternate running his hands across his head while performing. The Wobble (V.I.C., 2008) comes in the tradition of line dances whereby steps are introduced during the song in order for dancers to perform collectively. The *real* Harlem Shake is in reference to a dance that people began imitating in 2012, that would begin as a tame introduction to moving the body in any direction to the beat of the music and then the music’s volume would rise as would the energy level of the dancers. This dance was labeled the Harlem shake although Marshall Turman references the “real” Harlem shake that was introduced by those in the Manhattan borough of New York (the state from which Marshall Turman hails) in 1981, more notably, Harlem. The dance incorporated the shoulders alternating forward to the beat or offbeat of the music. The dance became popular in the 90’s among Black youth and its name was taken and used for the “Harlem Shake” song followed by the dance in 2012.

Marshall Turman introduces music and dances that would normally be considered taboo within a church setting and acknowledges that not only is she familiar with the genres of dance and music, but that she is also a practitioner. Therefore by bringing the sacred and secular as cultural texts to complement sacred text. She moves from the disco era of the 70 and 80s and ends with the Wobble, Dougie and Harlem Shake of the 90s and 2000s. Seamlessly speaking on the these artists and dances, she not only suggests that she is immersed in the understanding of both sacred and secular spaces but she also understands the importance of bridging the generation gaps. She

goes from referencing sources from the 70s to the 21st century in order to resonate with the varying experiences of the congregation.

She invokes the secular acknowledging that not all of the congregates grew up in a church setting or knows gospel music, but perhaps they grew up in the disco or the era of the dancing era of the 2000s and are more aware of it. She acknowledges that this Morehouse audience may not even be churchgoers.

Though I have outlined nine cultural texts as complementary sources used by Eboni Marshall, there are 31 additional complementary sources indicated by her within this one sermon used alongside the Bible, holding the same authority in conveying a message of resilience and liberation.

Culturally Defining Moments

While Marshall Turman re-member cultural texts to build theory, illustrate Black genocide, display Black mandates for indictments as well as for ethics of liberation, Fry Brown re-members complementary cultural texts in order to define terms within a cultural context that aids in her theological ploy. Fry Brown re-members cultural texts by way of gospel music lyrics, experience, and Black sitcoms as complementary sources in order to convey a particular message to the audience.

In, "Just Keep Moving" Fry Brown seeks to define what it means to move. "To move means go pas to another place in a certain direction in a continuous motion." She then utilizes Mary Mary, Weezy and George, Randy Crawford, a gospel writer of her youth, and mothers and fathers to provide deeper understanding of what it means to move.

Walking as Mary Mary would say. Tell me what you see when I pass by. A shadow a cloud a line in the sky am I getting warmer, am I getting it right. All I can do is go one step at a time. To move means to change direction of residence or location like in 1976 characters Weezy and George were moving on up to the East side, to a deluxe apartment in the sky, we're moving on up to the east side a deluxe apartment, we finally got a piece of the pie. To move means to dislodge to displace from a fixed position, a craft to change action or thinking over a system over another like Randy Crawford who wrote everything must change, nothing stays the same. Everyone will change, nothing and no one goes unchanged. To move spiritually means to change one's reservation in eternity it's a progressive movement or enunciation of what was in favor of what is, to modify one's behavior to align with God's plan. Gospel writer of my youth once wrote, I move from my old house, I move from my old friends, I move from old way of life (Fry Brown, "Just Keep Moving").

She is adamant when introducing sources that she introduces women first and bookends cultural texts with women, just as Marshall Turman does. She first introduces gospel singing duo, Mary Mary. She references their hit single Walking that declares that they have somewhere to go and they will continue moving one step at a time until they reach their destination (Mary Mary, "walking"). Therefore moving is continual motion toward a goal.

Next she represents upward mobility by introducing Weezy and George Jefferson, again introducing Weezy, the woman first and then the husband, though the

show focused mainly on George Jefferson's life. Here Fry Brown members upward mobility from one social economic placement to one considered greater with a definition of moving that includes dislodging to "displace from a fixed position, a craft to change action or thinking over a system over another".

All of these sources combine to build a working definition and utility of "move" in order to build a case for the benefits of moving. This is helpful to Fry Brown in order to illustrate how she is using "move". It is not enough to simply say move. She deemed it necessary to substantiate "move" into cultural texts that would aid the reader in specific situations that refused being stagnant or content in complacency.

Prathia and King's Dream

Teresa Fry Brown preaches the sermon, "Immeasurable Possibilities" on Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Duke Divinity School. Her sermon situates the climate of April 3, 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his infamous "I Have a Dream" speech. She combines this speech with the first miracle of Jesus'. Fry Brown recounts the essence of King's dream and Jesus' ability to make wine from water events of *immeasurable possibilities*. Fry Brown then challenges the audience to experience their "limitless potential" because of the immeasurable possibilities available.

Fry Brown introduces Prathia Hall as an act of radical subjectivity. Fry Brown situates King's sermon by preaching,

We hear his poetic proclamation of freedom as he invokes the style of classical Black preachers partly newly researched and written--part conversation with

other ministers and a SNCC worker named Prathia Hall who spoke of having a dream--partly refiltered old sermons and speeches like the one he preached on April 10th in 1957 in St. Louis called "I Have a Dream". Part extemporaneous, part emotional and potential of the moment (Fry Brown, "Immeasurable Possibilities).

She introduces Prathia Hall as a woman minister who worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (a radical Black organization formed in 1960 to give Blacks a voice) while referencing that Hall spoke of having a dream. Though Fry Brown mentions that King had previously preached a sermon by the same title in 1957 she is strategic in introducing the interactions--by way of "conversations"--that he had with Hall. There was a commemorative service at Mount Olive Baptist Church in 1962 as a result of being burnt to the ground by the Ku Klux Klan. Martin Luther King Jr. was in attendance as well Hall. Hall was on the program to provide the congregation with a prayer, whereby she continuously restated "I have a dream" in a rhythmic cadence. It was there that James Bevel, a civil rights minister, who was also in attendance claimed that King received inspiration for his 1968 "I Have a Dream" speech. Fry Brown is referencing this interaction and calling it to being by radically imparting the subjectivity of a Black woman as having an influence on one of America's widely known speeches.

By situating Hall as a collaborator in Dr. King's speech, Fry Brown implements radical subjectivity to reclaim knowledge production and authority of the civil rights movements. King is usually single-handedly lauded for his mastery of the "I Have a

Dream” speech. Including Prathia Hall, suggests that Black women are not only producing knowledges that contribute to the liberation of Black people, but that they are an authoritative voice within the movements.

Aunt’s Authority

Fry Brown then moves to member and privilege the authority of French Philosopher Albert Camu and her aunt.

The French Philosopher Albert Camu said change is the struggle of death between the future and the past. The reason many of us don’t move and change and transform anything, anybody is because we scared to work up a sweat for God...you know when I was growing up, my aunt had this wonderful French provincial furniture that she had laid away but she was paying money on it you know, but it had plastic over it. Plastic over it. You know and in the summer time your behind would stick to the places. And what they didn’t understand is that plastic and the heat, there’s a chemical that’s released that starts destroying the fabric that’s underneath. That’s what we’re doing to our blessings. Some of us keep the plastic over our blessings because we want to show everybody when they come to visit (Fry Brown, “Just Keep Moving”).

Here she re-members these texts both as philosophers. From French philosopher to French provincial furniture – while Camu theorizes change as a catalyst from past to future progress, her aunt’s actions of preserving furniture moves her to conceptualize the stifling of blessings by not actively using them, but attempting to preserve them. Her source of knowledge equally stem from her experiences within the academy

and her family. By putting these sources next to each other and privileging their knowledge she suggests that Black women's knowledge has merit. Though her aunt's preservation of "furniture that she had laid away by she was paying money on it you know." She includes the ingenuity of a working class Black woman who had the wherewithal to preserve furniture that she was renting and paying money on so that it did not get ruined while she was still attempting ownership.

Fry Brown situates her aunt in the same stanza as Albert Camu, an Anarchist literarian who developed notions on the absurd and won a Nobel Prize in literature. She then links gospel singers and Black popular culture sitcoms. All of these texts are influential to building Fry Brown's importance of moving, changing and not remaining stagnant in one's position in life. While she does use the book of Deuteronomy within the Bible, suggesting "You've been at the mountain long enough," she utilizes other texts to build upon this notion of stagnation. She re-members these cultural texts in order to define a term that will ultimate serve as the liberative ethic of her sermon.

Generational Knowledge

In both sermons of Vashti McKenzie's she utilizes Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In "Every Round Goes Higher and Higher" she references King's 1967 speech by saying King called for global fellowship that was reminiscent of John's beloved community. The worldwide neighborhood of the beloved lifted the "who is my neighbor" concern...It was a call for unconditional love for all humankind. McKenzie utilizes King as a cultural text to compliment the Gospel of John within the

Bible. McKenzie is trying to develop a situation that indicates that this generation must build upon the efforts of those before. And she is building on the ethics of King as she says

in the context of racial segregation...economic segregation...one in 15 of our neighborhood is living in extreme poverty, defined as those whose income is 50% or less than the poverty level. The middle class is quickly dwindling. Children are raised in misery. Seniors are forced to make choices. Seniors didn't ever think they'd have to choose between medicine and meals. And 1% of our neighbors make just as much as the bottom 40% (McKenzie, "Every Round Goes Higher and Higher").

Here McKenzie references the climate of the economy and then uses King again to suggest that, "we cannot afford to worship the God of hate or down before the alter of retaliation". Therefore in a sermon that relies on a Biblical passage from Genesis about generations building upon prior generations' progress, McKenzie uses MLK Jr. as a foundational cultural text to progress the current generation to become active in building.

Winston Churchill says in the last line, the longer you look back the further you can look forward. Cicero says it this way, to be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to forever remain a child. Alexander Sojour Neilson reminds us if we don't know our own history, we will simply have to endure all the same curses and sacrifices and absurdities all over again. Handom Robins writes you cannot begin as if their was nothing before you. The Bible is fille with

the minutes of the previous meetings of the past generations...C.S. Lewis says to us, it is not remembered, but the forgotten past that enslaves us.

Vashti McKenzie is unique in the cultural texts that she provides are not solely derived from Black women's literature and/or activism like those of Fry Brown and Marshall Turman. Of the eight complementary texts used by McKenzie, five are white male leaders and philosophers. Though she strings together white men to create a narrative that serves as the thesis to remember, the events that she directs the congregation to remember are cultural significant to Black women's liberation. She asks, Have we forgotten the bridge that carried us over the rough waters of Jim Crow separate but equal or Apartheid? Have we forgotten the cast of characters that suffered and sacrificed when strange fruit hung on southern trees...Have we forgotten the zeal to go to the places where injustice roars the loudest...We may have to fight again for the right to vote.

The issues most pertinent to McKenzie are that prior generations are recognized. She is adamant about remembering the pillars of success generated by Black activists. Therefore, again Vashti McKenzie nuances what womanist homiletic rhetoric can be as she draws from dominant cultural texts; however she keeps Black liberation and social activism in the forefront in terms of importance to her sermons.

Cultural texts are critical components in the construction of their sermons. They serve as complementary texts to Biblical passages; building a narrative of liberation. When scaffolding the sermon, one must consider cultural texts to help in building the content of the sermon. These texts range from Black social activists, martyrs, family

members, actors, singers etc. The following chapter will elaborate more on the method of scaffolding or building a sermon with Black women's rhetoric at the center.

CHAPTER FOUR SCAFFOLDING THE SERMON: BUILDING A METHOD

The sermon has been a source of cultivating Black rhetoric for nearly three centuries in the United States (Richardson & Jackson 3). The *African American Rhetoric(s) Reader* highlights the brilliance of Black preaching rhetoric and the ingenuity of Black scholars who have analyzed said rhetoric (Richardson & Jackson 1-18). Rhetorician Keith Gilyard states,

Religious oratory, as Woodson affirms, has been central to the African American rhetorical tradition from the outset and was the primary channel by which millions of Blacks came to comprehend and speculate about the social world of which they were part. Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Henry Highland Garnet, and Francis Grimke, for example were all preachers. Therefore, the study of Black pulpit oratory as well as scholarly treatment of the Black church in general are necessary components of research in African American public discourse (Richardson & Jackson 4)

While Black preaching and the men named remain informative and useful to the field of Rhetoric(s), the *African American Rhetoric(s) Reader* does not include sermons by Black women preachers. Notable Black women preachers like Julia A. J. Foote, Harriet A. B Baker, Mary J. Small, Florence Spearing Randolph...and many more who preached during overlapping times as the men lauded by Gilyard, are not mentioned as contributors of Black pulpit oratory. As a result, Shirley Wilson Logan and Jacqueline Jones Royster call for Black women's rhetorical analysis (Richardson & Jackson 16).

Because of this under-representation and, I provide a primary source analysis of the preaching rhetoric of Vashti McKenzie, Teresa Fry Brown, and Eboni Marshall Turman's to add to this body of rhetorical scholarship that privileges preaching as central to African American Rhetoric. The methods within this analysis of Black women's preaching rhetoric are dual purpose as I am (1) descriptive in my findings and (2) prescriptive in my analysis. This allows for space to investigate the preachers' meaning-making strategies developed and used by these preachers while simultaneously identifying rhetorical and homiletic tenets. This is not a comparative analysis of Black women's preaching rhetoric to Black males or White women. Nor is my research an apologia of departure for Black women's preaching rhetoric. This is an analysis of Black women's preaching rhetoric that illustrates a method for structuring sermons.

Salutations and Thanks

Each preacher prefaces their sermon by giving thanks and salutations. Each gives thanks to God, clergy and other members of the audience for their willingness to allow them the opportunity for this preaching moment. These salutations/thanks precede every sermon. These women are not preaching at their home churches; they all have been invited. Therefore, there is a formality to thanking and giving salutations for the invitation to come preach; as if there is an honor in the welcome and transferring of authority to fellowship and preach at this religious institution. These greetings and thanks signify a sign of respect and serve as an introduction to be received by an audience.

Vashti McKenzie addresses Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago Illinois, Hallelujah, thank you Jesus. It's good to be back in the house once again my brothers and my sisters and to your Pastor, Pastor Moss I bless you. Thank you for allowing us to share this moment at Trinity. To my husband, partner in life in ministry supervisor, Stan Mckenzie stand up, I love you (Don't Let Your Wounds).

God is first given recognition of thanks and then precedes the pastor. McKenzie acknowledges the pastor's willingness to allow her the opportunity to share this preaching moment with him and the congregation. She then extends the thanks to the entire congregation for welcoming her into the place. Lastly, she gives acknowledgement to her husband.

At Duke Divinity School's Chapel, McKenzie says,

To the dean of the chapel, pastor, preachers, to faculty and staff and students. To broader community of Duke University. To my partner in life and minister, my husband supervisor Stan McKenzie, who share both the blessings and burdens of ministry. To my sisters in public service praise God for marvelous cadre of support and your circle of sisterly love (McKenzie).

Again it seems as McKenzie follows an order of acknowledgements as she acknowledges and thanks the dean of Duke University's chapel, the pastor and then others within the congregation followed by the acknowledgement of her husband. She goes a step further in this greeting by extending praise to the women through shared womanly love.

Eboni Marshall Turman provides a similar address to Morehouse College's Chapel,

I give honor to God who is always the head of my life, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end to our loved Dean Lawrence Carter of his leader of this great chapel. To Reverend Brooks for his leadership, his Assistant to Dean Carter in the workings of this ministry. To faculty, reverends, administrators who may be here. The chaplains for their support of work of Gospel. To this great singing body who have blessed our souls on this night. To all the students. To all the members of this gathering. To students here at Morehouse, Spelman and Clark Atlanta. To friends of the body of Christ, I greet you with the joy of Jesus always in the name of the Creator, in the name of the Christ and in the name of the Holy Ghost, good evening (Marshall-Turman, "I Will Survive").

Eboni Marshall-Turman gives honor to God first and then follows this acknowledgement of God to extend to the Dean, Assistant Dean, clergy persons, choir, students and congregants. There seems to be a hierarchy to the acknowledgements however they do not stop at those at the "top". Everyone is thanked for accepting her as the authoritative rhetor for the service. This is an important gesture as it signifies that there were others who have played a part in this moment including those who arranged the engagement as well as those who are in attendance.

Fry Brown gives thanks at Union Baptist Church,

First acknowledging that it is God's will and God's way that any of us are able to be here this morning to worship in spirit and truth. To Dr. Reverend Cedric

Vaughn that's a heavy name...I thank him for his kind invitation. To all clergy who are present to the deacon board, to the deaconess, to the trustees...Members and friends, God sons of soil salvation. God's daughters of dust and deliverance...(Fry Brown, "Just Keep Moving").

Like Marshall-Turman, there seems to be an order of authority when thanking. Those who hold higher authoritative roles are given thanks and salutations and then the reverend, followed by other clergy and congregation members.

Beginning with these words of gratitude rhetorically makes space for their reception by the audience. These words of gratitude serve as (1) humility, by acknowledging that they are taking up this space because of others and (2) respect, in acknowledging authority and audience, showcasing the need for them. By opening with these words, it suggests that the preacher understands the importance of community. By acknowledging everyone, it serves as a welcoming all persons to the subject matter and the person presenting said subject matter. There appears to always be an order of positioning respect for God first, then pastors and leaders and then to the congregations. Ultimately, prayers and salutations appear to have become a formulaic protocol and expected by the audience.

Beginning with Prayer

Each of the three preachers says a prayer in one or both of their sermons after thanking various members of the congregation. Prayer, in the Black Church experience has been integral to the worship experience, recognizing, "prayer as the strength of Black worship. It is worshipers' direct entry into conversation with God (Floyd-Thomas,

2007 p. 193)...” Each prayer within my study functions as a 1) theological stance 2) aggrandizement and/or a 3) declaration to themselves and the congregation that they are humble in receiving and giving this message from God.

Eboni Marshall Turman begins her prayer at Morehouse College’s Chapel, Here I raise mine Ebenezer. Hither by thy help I’m come. And I hope by thy good pleasure to safely arrive home. Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God and to rescue me from danger into the fold of his precious love. Hide though servant behind the cross of God, that thy people may not see the woman of God that they may see Jesus and decide to follow him. This is your servant’s prayer. In Jesus name, Amen (Sunday Service).

This prayer given by Eboni Marshall-Turman acknowledges her relationship with God. She does so by suggesting a personable God; as if she claims sole ownership of God. Next she acknowledges her eschatological beliefs on afterlife; to one day be adjoined with God in a hospitable way in the afterlife. Following this proclamation, she then moves to Jesus as a savior of her relationship with God. It appears that at one time her relationship with God was in jeopardy and Jesus assisted in reconciling her with God. Marshall-Turman then asks to be hidden by the “cross of God” which indicates the relationship amongst Jesus and God as one. Lastly, she communicates that she wishes that the audience venerates Jesus and not her.

At Duke Divinity’s Chapel, Marshall Turman prays an almost identical prayer,

Let us pray. Here I raise mine Ebenezer. Hither by thy help I'm come. And I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when stranger, wandering from the fold of God and to rescue me from danger to pose his precious love. Hide now your servant behind the cross. That in this preaching moment, someone might see Jesus and decide to follow him. Amen (Marshall-Turman, "Hagar's Tears").

Here, the prayer begins as an invitation to all to communicate communal prayer. Again there is an establishment of the relationship with God while adding an invitation for God's presence within the community. She then acknowledges that God's love saved her. After that she positions herself as a servant and asks to be hidden in order that the crucifixion be made visible; indicating that the venerating of the message of Jesus is far more important than the praising of herself. This prayer mimics her other practically word for word.

Primarily, Eboni Marshall-Turman is making theological claims within this introductory prayer. By signifying who God is and her relation to God, she rhetorically marks theological claims. Within these two prayers, God is a savior, energy-source, comforter and powerful. These claims about God offered within prayer confesses her understanding of God to God. Another critical move made by Eboni Turman is the personalization of God. By personalizing God, Marshall-Turman suggests to the audience the experiential closeness one can have with God; that God cares for the individual.

Vashti McKenzie prays a prayer of humility at Duke Divinity Chapel,

Our father and our God we thank you for this gracious moment that you have assembled all of us together that we may call upon your name together. Now God, I your servant, get out of the way that you may have your way with us today and this we ask in Jesus name and together the people of God said, Amen.

It's alright to say Amen again (McKenzie).

Like Marshall-Turman, there is an establishing of relationships. The prayer is communal and the relationship to God is parental. Interestingly, McKenzie uses a similar, if not identical humility phrase to shift attention to God and not herself. Lastly, she encourages the community to give affirmation to close the prayer.

At Trinity United Church of Christ, McKenzie prays a communal prayer,

Father in the name of Jesus we thank you for this glad morning where we come and celebrate the resurrection. Thank you for what you did for us. You beat sin. You beat death. You beat hell. And you rose with all power n your hands. Now come and teach us, talk to us, minister to us from your word and we give you the praise, honor and credit. In Jesus name we pray let everybody say

Amen. It's alright to say Amen one more time (Don't Let Your Wounds).

Within this "Easter Day" sermon, McKenzie establishes relationship with the community and God once more, while also laying claim to the events of the resurrection. Her closing, always ends with Jesus' name and the communal affirmation

of “amen.” By ending the prayer in the name of Jesus, McKenzie affirms Jesus as the Messiah.

Rhetorically, prayer serves as a tool that sets the standard for the sermon. These preachers showcase their theological stance, commitment to community, humility and relationship with God through the prayers that precede their sermons. The main objective is in believing that the sermon is transformative words from God for the people of God. Therefore it is mostly important that the preacher connects with God to speak God’s words in order that the people receive the message as a message from God as opposed to a message from the preacher.

Biblical Text

After praying and providing salutations/honors, the preachers introduce the Biblical text that foregrounds their sermon. In each case one book and chapter is usually selected while the number of verses may vary in number. It is notable that both Teresa Fry Brown and Eboni Marshall Turman utilize gender-neutral versions of the Bible. At times they also change gendered language for God and humanity.

For Marshall-Turman to make this decision and communicate this decision to the audience signifies the womanist ethical tenets of critical engagement and radical subjectivity by taking a stance against linguistic sexism pervading versions of the Bible due to English language biases that obscure original meanings of the text.

Though neither of the preachers used this particular periscope/passage of scripture, it is helpful in showcasing the differences that may impact one’s theology.

Therefore, I have inserted Table 5 to showcase the differences between the translations used. The highlights showcase the different ways terms for humanity and fornication has been translated. It showcases, too, how then those translations can be interpreted to a larger audience.

Table 5: Biblical Translations Compared

Mark 7:20-23		
Common English Bible	New Revised Standard Version	King James Version
<p>“Its what come out of a person that contaminates someone in God’s sight,” he said. “It’s from the inside, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: sexual sins, thefts, murders, adultery, greed, evil actions, deceit, unrestrained immorality, envy, verbal insults, arrogance, and foolishness. All these evil things come from the inside and make a person unfit to stand before God.”</p>	<p>“It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”</p>	<p>“What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”</p>

The Common English Bible (CEB) is clear to add God in the beginning and the end so that the reader understands that God is one judging and not humans. It leaves no room for humans to declare who is contaminated. The CEB also translates fornication to sexual sin which claims to be a better translation from the Greek word porneia which could include varying sexual sins, not simply fornication which has come to be

connoted solely with pre-marital sexual encounters; this translation allows for more interpretations.

Teresa Fry Brown also introduces the version of the Bible that she uses. “So let us go to the word this morning of Deuteronomy the first chapter verse six, seven and eight from the Common English Bible. Deuteronomy 1:6-8 in the Common English Bible.” The Common Bible differs from the New Revised Standard Version in that it is not a revision of an earlier version of the Bible. The language variation on readability varies significantly between these versions, and what may be subtle, however significant, is the extraction of masculine language for humanity. The version used by Brown in verse eight says the “land that I promised to give your ancestors” whereas the King James Version in that same verse states, “the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers.” This alteration broadens the ownership of who can access the Promised Land. It was the “ancestors” as opposed to just the “fathers,” which is more inclusive language.

Though Marshall-Turman suggests that she utilizes the NRSV Bible, she continued to insert her own revisions as she changes pronouns of “him” to God within her sermons even if the Bible suggests “him” in reference to God. This showcases the extra length Marshall Turman is willing to go to ensure gender neutrality in relation to God.

Introduces Title

The title of the sermon is critical to the message as it serves as a (1) theme of the sermon and (2) a provocative “take away” for the audience. The title must be

provocative and steeped within Biblical culture as well as the culture of the audience so that nostalgia is created. The title must also be concise for easy recalling.

And I know that some of you have not engaged your theological minds in quite some time. There's a reason why the song says, "I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus" Some of us who have not engaged our theological minds in quite some time may have all conjured the lives of one Gloria Gaynor; perhaps Donna Sommer and God bless the disco. But I'm not talk about the dance floor tonight...No this evening's subjective affirmation and prophetic proclamation encapsulating the words "I Will Survive," words that have been uttered by Black women across the ages... (Marshall-Turman)

The title, "I Will Survive" directs the audience to the theme of the sermon. The title comes from the culture of some of the audience members and Marshall-Turman uses this to her advantage. She knows that Gloria Gaynor had a hit song entitled "I Will Survive" and knew that the title of her sermon might trigger that song. For those in which it did not, she directed them to the song as a way of citing the knowledge production of Gaynor. Marshall-Turman affirms the disco genre while she acknowledges the contribution of Black women musicians. She then suggests that although these Black women put music to it, this is a phrase uttered by many Black women throughout history. Moreover, Marshall-Turman situates the title within Black women's history to make it memorable to the audience, while also allowing it to preface the theme of the sermon.

Fry Brown's, *Just Keep Moving* title serves as a directive to the congregation,

To move means go past to another place in a certain direction in a continuous motion. Walking as Mary Mary would say. Tell me what you see when I pass by. A shadow, a cloud, a line in the sky. Am I getting warmer? Am I getting it right? All I can do is go one step at a time. To move means to change direction of residence or location like 1976 characters Weezy and George were moving on up to the East side, to a deluxe apartment in the sky, we're moving on up to the eastside a deluxe apartment, we finally got a piece of the pie. To move means to dislodge to displace from a fixed position, a craft to change action or thinking over a system over another like Randy Crawford who wrote everything must change, nothing stays the same. Everyone will change, mothering and no one goes unchanged. To move spiritually means to change one's reservation in eternity it's a progressive movement or enunciation of what was in favor of what is, to modify one's behavior to align with God's plan (UBC October Fest)

Teresa Fry Brown utilizes a wide range of definitions and Black popular culture references when introducing the title of her sermon. She provides definitions of "move" so that the audience gains a wide understanding of what she means when she professes it. By saying the title over and over she engrains the words within the minds of the audience. This is helpful, as the title serves as a major theme of the sermon. Therefore, if the audience remembers the three-word title, they are more apt to recall the 30 minute sermon.

Rhetor as Audience

These women take it a step further to integrate themselves into the audience. While many rhetors are lauded for knowing information about and connecting to the audience, these rhetors are the audience as they situate themselves within it. By making this rhetorical move, they displace authority, showcase relationality, insert subjectivity, and showcase vulnerability. Trust is built when the rhetor situates themselves within the audience.

In her sermon, "Hagar's Tears," Eboni Marshall- Turman states (Marshall- Turman), "Now I don't know much about the Euphrates or the Congo, I only had to walk from Chapel drive to Campus Drive, but even still it was hot that day I did not know if I was going to make it and you know, know exactly what I'm talking about today." Here Marshall Turman references particular streets on the campus of Duke University where she is delivering the sermon. This allows the audience to visualize the preacher completing activities that they complete themselves; relating to themselves.

In her sermon entitled, "I Will Survive" Dr. Eboni Marshall-Turman in response to the sermon title mimicking the popular song by disco queen Gloria Gayner she states (Sunday Service) "but I'm not talking about the dance floor tonight, although I do cut a mean dougie, I do wobble with it, the real Harlem shake," here Marshall Turman is speaking at Morehouse College, an all-male historically Black college in Atlanta, GA. Though the sermon references a complementary text, and serves as a theme, it also serves to help Marshall Turman to connect with the audience. She suggests that she

will not be speaking on dance and then listed three dances that were popular among Black youth at that time. She situates herself within the experiences of the audience to showcase her connection to their culture. The rhetors understanding of the audience's culture is integral to the reception of the message as it builds trust.

Teresa Fry Brown ensures that she connects with the audience as well within her sermon, "Just Keep Moving." When speaking of her salutations at an anniversary at an African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) she follows with, "I'm AME so I go through this all the time." Saying this lets the audience know that she is a part of the same denomination as them, meaning that the formalities are familiar to her. She continues through with her salutations that seem to be a custom of this particular denomination. Audience connectivity is integral to these Black women preachers. They do so in a number of ways that include, but are not limited to: joke telling, narrativizing, utilizing popular culture and criticizing politics. While they showcase their knowledge of the audience, they always make the rhetorical move to suggest that they are a member of the community in which they are speaking.

Contextualized Obstacle

This is the portion in which the preachers present the obstacle of life's circumstances. This obstacle can be self-inflicted or created by outside entities; however it is necessary that this portion is narrated effectively in order to build the sermon to its climax. The obstacle names that situation or hurdle that prevents societal and spiritual liberation. It (the obstacle) is never to remain isolated as it is the work of the preacher to rhetorically rectify the situation.

Within Marshall Turman's sermon, Hagar's Tears, the obstacle is the social location and positionality within society. She explains by saying,

She [Hagar] and her child cast out because she is poor, because she is a woman, because she is a poor woman of African descent...there are women and men and children right here in Durham who, like Hagar and Ishmael, because of social indicators, because they are poor, because they are colored, because they are women or sexual minorities have been cast out by our -isms, by our phobias, and they are crying Hagar's tears because they don't know if they will make it (Sunday Service).

The obstacle here stems from societal constructions of oppressive conditions. It also speaks to the subjective intersections people are living with. Marshall-Turman begins with Hagar and branches out to the audience. This is an important step for the audience to realize that there is an obstacle, it is real and a solution is needed.

Vashti McKenzie introduces the obstacles through the wounds as a symbol, ...we all got 'em...when I get to yours raise your hand. Some of us suffer in silence. We camouflage our wounds and no one around you know you were slowly bleeding to death. Some of us bleed all over the place exposing our wounds, risking infection not as some badge of courage, but to gain attention and sympathy and to tempt other personality to commiserate with us... There are the walking wounded. You're her, yea you are. Injured enough to be impaired, but not enough to take you out of the game. There are the waiting wounded. Injured and caught in a chronological time warp waiting for the

reversal of the condition. There are the weary and wounded. Injured, tired, drained of spiritual resources, drained of enough sanity, that when you do go to sleep you can get any rest...Then there are the wasted and wounded. Those who have resigned themselves to the wounding thinkin that it is permanent, thinking it will happen again, thinking they deserve the wounding, thinking it is some sort of predestined punishment so they waste away because of the wounding. If we think that the wounds handicap us, interrupt our flow or become a reason why we cannot and should not, then they become excuses to why we don't (Don't Let Your Wounds).

The realized obstacle in this instance is the perspective and treatment of the ways people are wounded. The obstacle directs the audience to first acknowledge their condition and then to understand the need to overcome the obstacle.

Teresa Fry Brown outlines the obstacle of stagnation tin, Just Keep Moving by saying,

Self destructed behavior became the order of the day for many of them. Some decided the cost to change was just too high...Some encountered disappointment that hamn promises became counterfeit check that no denominational back could even cash. Some got so caught up with "but I can't" and "they won't let me" theology they couldn't focus on God's possibility of promise. Some began to slide into zombie-like trances under cancerous leadership to grow unchecked spiritual cancers. Some became complicitous is their own self deception that had gone so long that the truth was a vague memory. Some continued to voice

opinions in private telephone conversation emails and texts during worship services, chat rooms, on Youtube and Instagram and Twitter and Facebook, conference calls, and side-walk sidebars, parking lot patter and restaurant rhetoric, in the meeting after meeting at the door at the temple because they're too afraid to sneak up inside. But we've always done it this way. Became the montra of those that were afraid to change. We're too lazy...

Though Fry Brown is speaking of the Israelites in the wilderness, she likens their experiences to those in the audience and identifies complacency and stagnation as an obstacle. Fry Brown positions the obstacle in a manner that the audience realizes that it is an identifiable problem; whether in the Biblical text or their own lives. By introducing the obstacle in this way, the preachers sets up the audience to receive their solution to the obstacle – the ethical remedy.

Womanist Hermeneutic

The term hermeneutics describes how people interpret the Bible, as well as the theories and methods that they use to accomplish that task. Interpretation here refers to reading, studying, and engaging the Bible in order to find meaning and practical life application base on one's own particular culture, life circumstances and worldview (Floyd-Thomas 55) .

This section engages interpretations of the Bible within the sermon. The preachers' content varies, but they all insert Black women's efforts for liberation. They do so with a liberative stance to women, more notably Black women. According to Dale P. Andrews (220), "Womanist hermeneutics challenges Black preaching praxis to be

introspective to the practices of wholeness and liberation within Black life and the faith community as well as the larger society.” Each woman uses the platform to speak to the injustices people face on the intersections of race, class, gender and sexual orientation.

Ethical Remedy

The ethical remedy is presented to the realized obstacle as a solution to overcome the obstacle. This remedy usually mimics the title and serves as rhetorically as a thesis of what should take place in reaction to the obstacle presented. Each preacher

Within Teresa Fry Brown’s sermon *Just Keep Moving*, she outlines an ethical remedy to the *contextualized* of complaining and becoming stagnant in the will of God. She posits, in order to remedy this obstacle, it is necessary to keep moving within God’s will. Moving is in the ethical remedy in that if one moves, they overcome stagnation.

Fry Brown’s sermon, *Immeasurable Possibilities* posits an ethical remedy that God is able to transform people and situations to the better and has the capacity for immeasurable possibilities. This remedy is a direct response to the obstacle that suggests a transformation is needed within individual people and society.

In *Don’t Let Your Wounds Get in the Way*, Vashti McKenzie posits an ethical remedy of using wounds as catalysts and strength of God’s love to do great things. This is in contrast to allowing wounds getting in the way of prospering. Therefore, the title introduces and affirms the ethical remedy.

Within her sermon, “Digging New Wells” McKenzie instructs the audience to have a working knowledge of government operations like that of forefathers, but learn

contemporary government tactics and issues and operate in today's fight for justice. The ethical remedy is to conduct informed political acts. She acknowledges the acts of those before her that fought on behalf of economic segregation, but insinuates that the political climate has transformed and there are new tactics that must be employed.

Eboni Marshall-Turman employs ethical remedies to the contextualized obstacle as well. In her sermon, *Hagar's Tears* she affirms that God sees the tears and desires of those cased out by society and acts on their behalf, therefore, those who feel that way can count on God. This is a direct action to remedy the societal pressures of shaming and oppression placed upon varying groups.

Within the sermon, "I Will Survive" Eboni Marshall-Turman ethical remedy is to act with resiliency because we will survive. Again, the contextualized obstacle is that "we" are all suffering or afflicted in various manners. She posits this as a tactic more than hope, but for action within hope.

As explored within the title section, the ethical remedy mimics the title. It is essential that the audience leaves with the most important portion of the sermon which is the ethical remedy to the obstacle. By selecting a title that is provocative and situated within the ethical remedy, the audience may be more inclined to remember the ethical remedy. If one is attempting to construct a womanist sermon, they may begin at this stage. The main objective of the ethical remedy is to promote an ethic of liberation. This liberation is spiritual, but just as much as the objective is spiritual, it is social and political.

The formula below will prove helpful if someone is attempting to write or perform a womanist sermon. It displays each preacher, their sermon and their identified obstacle and ethical remedy. One can begin here filling out this formula to develop a sermon if they choose.

Table 6: Title, Obstacle, and Ethical Remedy Formula

Teresa Fry Brown	Just Keep Moving	Obstacle	Complaining and becoming stagnant in God's will for living.
		Ethical Remedy	Just keep moving and living into God's will.
	Immeasurable Possibilities	Obstacle	A transformation is needed within individual people and society.
		Ethical Remedy	God is able to transform people and situations to the better and has the capacity for immeasurable possibilities.
Vashti McKenzie	Don't Let Your Wounds Get in the Way	Obstacle	We are all wounded in some way or another.
		Ethical Remedy	God is able to transform people and situations to the better and has the capacity for immeasurable possibilities.
	Digging New Wells	Obstacle	There is economic segregation.
		Ethical Remedy	Use the work ethic and knowledge of government operations like that of forefathers, but learn contemporary government tactics and issues and operate in today's fight for justice.

Table 6 (cont'd)

Eboni Marshall Turman	Hagar's Tears	Obstacle	based on societal constructions, people have been casted out of communities of acceptance
		Ethical Remedy	God sees the tears and desires of those casted out by society and acts on their behalf as well.
	I Will Survive	Obstacle	We are all suffering or afflicted in "various intensities".
		Ethical Remedy	Through God's mercy, we will survive.

A Womanist Preaching Method

Salutations and prayers are utilized by the womanist preachers to 1) impart theological claims that explicate their relationship with God, 2) display humility and 3) show respect to their audience. These rhetorical moves serve as an introduction to their sermons and are integral in building audience relationships. Salutations and prayers establish a foundation for the preceding rhetorical strategies offered to be received.

By introducing the title and contextualized obstacle, the preachers situate themselves within the audience. They must understand the culture of the audience in order to bridge the audience's culture and experience with that, which is taking place within the biblical text in order to state the contextualized obstacle. They also must have a working knowledge of the audience's language to create a title that resonates with the audience's experience. They effectively make this connection to the audience by situating themselves within the audience.

While they situate themselves within audience they also engage their subjectivity as Black women by inserting womanist hermeneutics and gender-neutral translations of

the Bible. They do this by providing interpretations of the Bible that shift gazes from the praises of men to the tenacity of women while also privileging everyday Black women voices ranging from familial to arts to the academy. Selecting a Bible that includes women and children furthers this notion that they engage their subjectivity as women.

The ethical remedy posits an ethic of liberation. They all end with transitioning themselves and the audience from a place of need to a place of uplift. They have a strong desire to both social a spiritual uplift; which is posited within the ethical remedy.

These collective tenets operate as a method for preaching a womanist sermon as well as a synopsis of Black women's contribution to the fields of Rhetoric, Black Studies, Women and Gender Studies and Homiletics . In scaffolding the sermon, McKenzie, Fry Brown and Marshall-Turman, showcase moves that make meaning of particular relationships between the rhetor and audience while also promoting womanist liberative ethics. They've established ways to *be* within the audience and as an authoritative rhetor. Thusly, this method speaks to what makes up Black women's preaching rhetoric by outlining tenets to the sermon. The following chapter will conclude what Black women's preaching rhetoric is and how providing a method of Black women's preaching contributes.

CHAPTER FIVE
AIN'T I A PREACHER?:
BLACK WOMEN'S PREACHING RHETORIC

Black women's homiletic rhetoric builds upon the fields of rhetoric and homiletics. It challenges power relations and dominant narratives of God's positionality, broadens the scope of religious rhetoric, provides space for inclusivity and incorporates rhetoric of hope, liberation and activism by privileging the intersectional realities of Black women. Vashti McKenzie, Teresa Fry Brown, and Eboni Turman Marshall execute this "broadening" by inserting their contexts, putting into conversation cultural and sacred texts and scaffolding objects of textuality. This chapter serves as both an implications chapter as well as a chapter of posting future trajectories for the field of (cultural) Rhetoric.

Liturgies of Black Women

Traditional histories of rhetoric frequently begin with liturgies of Augustine and ethics of Aristotle, to build cultural standards for the discipline, however my research situates the culture and liturgies of Black women as making important contributions to these histories. Scholarship in African American Rhetoric(s) praises preachers and the institution of the Black church for its cultivation, however underrepresents Black women preaching rhetoric. It is important to note that subjectivity often guides hermeneutics through the vehicle of homiletics. So all the while Homiletics and more notably African American Homiletics, is lauded for its contribution to the field, Black women are underrepresented within those narratives. I have positioned Black women's homiletic rhetoric as necessary for understanding religious womanist hermeneutics,

ethics, and rhetoric. This insertion aids in a more well-rounded understanding of rhetorics as a guided by intersecting subjectivities.

My study showcases the varying strategies for making-meaning within the sermonic process. Fry Brown, Marshall Turman, and McKenzie have added to the scope of what and who are consider “audience” by blurring the lines of rhetor and audience and living within the audience and speaking from within. Rhetorically, this move takes into account the intersectional realities of the preachers and the “audience”. They must understand where shared constellating truths take place and draw from those cultural experiences. By doing so, shared obstacles and ethical remedies are better realized because the preacher has rhetorically positioned themselves as both orator and audience.

African American Rhetoric

The implication for Black women’s homiletic rhetorics adds to narratives surrounding the cultivation of African American Rhetoric as both an indictment to Black women erasure and a continuation of activist rhetoric. African American rhetorician and women’s studies scholar Gwendolyn Pough’s research helps me to explicate the role of my research in African American Rhetorics as she states her research of Black women in Hip Hop. Pough says in her book *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Cultur and the Public Sphere* (2004), “We seek to complicate understandings of hip hop as a male space by including and identifying the women who were always involved with the culture and offering hip-hop feminist critiques of the music and the culture”. In this like manner, I am complicating understandings of

homiletic rhetoric as a male space by inserting womanist preachers who have always been involved with the culture and offering feminist and womanist critiques of its theology and ethics. My work accomplishes this by showcasing alternate readings of Biblical narratives that highlights the interconnected oppressions of Black women like that of Hagar and the erasure of women and children in the numbering of people.

Jacqueline Jones Royster, states that African American rhetoric is, “The study of culturally and discursively developed knowledge-forms, communicative practices and persuasive strategies rooted in freedom struggles by people of African ancestry in America” (Royster). Therefore, African American Rhetoric has the capability to be inherently activist, due to the context of Black people in the United States. Each of the womanist preachers in my research disrupts space and time by re-membering Black lives through activism through the pulpit. They privilege the intersectional realities in writing their sermons to create liberation. We can see this in their calls for liberation in their sermons’ plea for: surviving, God hearing the tears of the subjugated, moving to an ordained location, immeasurable possibilities, building upon liberation strategies of previous generations and prospering despite our wounds.

Theology

Theological inclusivity is achieved through Black women’s homiletic rhetoric. Not only is God’s image transcended to include all of humanity, all rhetoric of humanity is expanded to include subjectivities of all. All in all the conception of God is expanded – allowing for a theology that is not restricted by gender. As a result, all can be represented in the “imago dei” of God. These women have either constructed an

inclusive theos or worked very hard rhetorically to ensure that the rhetoric of their constructed God did not subjugate women. By not gendering God, these womanist preachers make meaning of a God that can possibly be assumed in the likeness of a Black woman or any human person.

Black womanist homiletic rhetoric makes meaning of liberation. Throughout their sermons they are consistently wrestling with what it means to be liberated on varying fronts. They take on social liberation through race, ethnicity and gender. They also keep spirituality and theology center to their liberation ethics of God being an optimistic aid. But equally important is the liberation of the spirit and the social through womanism. It is not enough to liberate the Black woman. They are looking to womanism as womanism was created to do, to find liberation for Black women by using the epistemologies of Black women. They use the epistemologies of Black women to free oppressive thinking for the audience regardless of the audiences subjectivity. It is the crux of their messages to liberate the spirit and the mind.

Everyday Practices

Black women's homiletic rhetoric also lends itself to thinking about the everyday practices of individuals. Michel de Certeau, French Jesuit and scholar, analyzes the everyday to understand how theory is articulated. Rather than serving as cultural vacuums, ordinary people within their daily lives are making meaning of cultural representations. The consumer then is not stagnant receiving that "produced" by institutions, but serves as co-producers of culture.

In other words, Certeau's work is helpful in thinking through how these womanist preachers operate within institutions that have their (institutions) understandings about women and their role in preaching. For example, these womanist preachers have been cultivated within the contexts of their humanity while also operating within the contexts and rhetorics of the Black church, the African Methodist Episcopal and Baptist denominations, Christianity, and higher education. All of which have dominant rhetoric that suggests women, especially Black women, are not to preach, hold authoritative positions, or ignite gender equality rhetoric. Self-proclaiming themselves as womanist lends itself to owning a subjectivity that is inherently aware of these institutions and against these institutions.

While the Black church has reinscribed gendered politics, my work centers the role of Black women within authoritative positions, making authoritative decisions. Fry Brown and Marshall Turman have the audacity to situate Black women's literature, activism, theology and ethics as complementary to Biblical scholarship. By doing so, they make claims to who and/or what can be valid alongside Biblical materials.

Homiletic Method for Preaching

While there are offerings provided by womanists scholars in the field of homiletics that include the value of theology and hermeneutics there is no actual method for preaching a womanist sermon. My work provides a preaching method for preaching a womanist sermon. Therefore, preachers, rhetors and homilists alike have a method of womanist preaching that compliment other methods of preaching in both African American homiletic traditions and other cultural methods for preaching. This

helps those to have inclusive rhetoric within their sermons as well as scholarship.

When illustrating the offerings of Black preaching, Black womanist preaching is spelled out here in my research to add to those of Black men.

Vashti McKenzie concludes her sermon, “Digging New Wells” as I would wish to conclude this research project. She says,

Help the least. Look beyond your own needs and dig new wells. Cheer the fallen. Search out and seek the sick. And dig some new wells. Lift the down trodden. Heal the broken. Help the lonely. Rescue the shipwreck and dig some new wells. Transform a ministry. Mobilize the voters. Take someone with you. Run for office and dig some new wells. Help a friend pass through the crowd. Inspire the young. Stretch out on a new vision. Refuse to quit. And for God’s sake graduate. Every round goes higher and higher. We are climbing Jacob’s ladder soldiers of the cross. Ha ha. Rise. Shine. Give God the glory soldiers of the cross. Every round must go higher and higher or our communities, country, our nation are in trouble (McKenzie)

McKenzie’s mantra is a declaration to build on the efforts of the generations before. I have made an effort to add to the works of Black feminists and womanists and impart their voices to rhetoric scholarship. It is my hope that when scholars speak of a narrative of the cultivation of liturgies they now have language for Black womanist homiletic rhetoric.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Every Round goes Higher and Higher by Vashti McKenzie

Our father and our God we thank you for this gracious moment that you have assembled all of us together that we may call upon your name together. Now God I your servant get out of the way that you may have your way with us today and this we ask in Jesus name and together the people of God said, amen. It's alright to say Amen again. Be seated in the presence of God. To dean of the chapel, pastor preachers to faculty and staff and students. To broader community of Duke University. To my partner in life and minister, my husband supervisor Stan McKenzie, who shares both the blessings and burdens of ministry. To my sisters in public service praise God for marvelous cadre of women who unselfishly serve this community, I thank you for your love and support and your circle of sisterly love. The word of God has already been lifted in your hearing from Genesis the 26th chapter. The context of our sharing is verses 1-18 and our text than is verse 18 Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham, his father. And our theme this morning is every round goes higher and higher. It's ok to say Amen. In a speech in 1967 Martin Luther King Jr called for global fellowship that was remnant, reminiscent of John's beloved community. The world wide neighborhood of the beloved lifted the "who is my neighbor" concern. Beyond one's tribe and race and class and nation. It was a call for unconditional love for all human kind. Made in Riverside Church in New York City. He

said the off misunderstood this off misinterpreted concept so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I'm not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I'm not speaking of that force that is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Yesterday it was a fight against racial segregation, today it's a fight again economic segregation. One in 15 of our neighbors is living in extreme poverty, defined as those whose income is 50% or less than the poverty level. The middle class is quickly dwindling. Children are raised in misery. Seniors are forced to make choices. Seniors didn't even think they'd have to chose between medicine and meals. And 1% of our neighbors make just as much as the bottom 40% altogether. That's an Amen. King went on to say that we cannot afford to worship the God of hate or bow down before the alter of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever rising tide of hate. History is cluttered of wreckage of nations and individuals that pursue this self defeating path of hate. He went on to say we're now faced with the fact my friends that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with this fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum in life of history. There is such a thing of being too late. Are we too late? This echo from the past this fierce urgency of now, can it find a resting place in the 21st century? The past this echo from the past uh, one young preacher said to me, that's the problem with you people, I love when they say you people, don't you? You people. Yesterday means more to you than today. You are long on yesterday. Very short on today and tomorrow is never on the agenda,

maybe she's right. Do we view our history in the proper perspective? Do we live in the past instead of learning from it? Are we commemorate the life and legacy of Martin Luther King as just a mere footnote in American history? As we commemorate his life and legacy are we more considered to the monument than the man's message and movement? Winston Churchill says in the last line, the longer you look back the further you can look forward. Cicero says it this way, to be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to forever remain a child. Alexander Sojour-Neitson reminds us if we don't know our own history, we will simply have to endure all the same curses and sacrifices and absurdities all over again. Handom Robinson writes you cannot begin as if there was nothing before you. The Bible is filled with the minutes of the previous meetings of the past generations that is peppered with the word remember. Remember the Sabbath day. Remember the wonders he has done. Remember that I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Remember his covenant forever. Remember me when you come to your kingdom. Do this in remembrance of me. In Deuteronomy in the future when your sons ask, tell them you were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but God brought us out by miraculous signs and wonders. Then C. S. Lewis says to us, it is not remembered, but the forgotten past that enslaves us. Have we forgotten the paths that brought us safe thus far? Haven't we? Have we forgotten how we got here in the first place? Have we forgotten the bridge that carried us over the rough waters of Jim Crow separate but equal or Apartheid? Have we forgotten the cast of characters that suffered and sacrificed when strange fruit hung on southern trees? Have we forgotten the pioneering spirits who launched out into the deep to open

schools and build institutions and hospitals and plant churches and colleges and seminaries on chauffer wages, domestic wages or any way I can get wages? Have we forgotten the zeal to go to the places where injustice roars the loudest? Have we forgotten the secrets of success of our ancestors? The lessons learned of yesterday's mistakes? The energy and intellect it takes to create institutions. Have we forgotten how to circle the wagons against the common enemy? Have we forgotten how to put all of our gifts on the table unselfishly without looking for credit, it was my idea, my thrust, my movement? Have we forgotten how to start with what we have until we get what we need? Have we forgotten how to take risks? Have we forgotten how to take a stand and raise our voice against the injustice of the world? Have we forgotten how to speak for those who have not found their voice? Have we forgotten how to get up on election day and vote whatever choice you have? Have we forgotten how to hold elected or appointed officials accountable for what they promised? Have we forgotten that every earthquake taught us to hold on. Every wind taught us to seek out safe harbor. Every midnight gave us appreciation for blue skies and sunshine. Every rough road taught us to appreciate the smooth highways of the promise places of God. Every mistake. Every mishap. Every misunderstanding taught us the value of grace. Every miscarriage of justice drew us closer to God. Every experience was a lesson, a classroom where character is taught. Every event is a training ground for the road ahead. All of our yesterdays are a preparation for today. Every app. Every upheaval. Every fallout. Every experience. Every movement. Every moment. Every compassion or catastrophe shorts that's taken yesterday in preparation for tomorrow. I'll just say Amen for myself.

Every mountain you climb. Every unexpected valley in your life. Every river crossing. The sharp turns taught us to hug the curves. The deep valleys taught us to lay low until it was time to rise again. And every high mountain taught us to strengthen our muscles to climb higher. Many times in this millennial rush to serve the present age of post-modernity climbing up contemporary community with this nationwide slogan that it's all about me, but the slogan is now changing. It used to be I wanna have it all and I wanna have it all right now. Now it's changing I just wanna hold on to what I have. As we engage the text in this first part of this book we discover one who existed before the tick of the clock to create everything and everyone. Giving dominion and power to humankind that is the first part of Genesis. The second part begins with the stories of the mothers and the fathers of the faith. It tells us how God stepped into the history of humankind and how they responded. On the way to the text we find that Adam and Eve had already left the garden, Cain killed Abel, the tower of babel came up and came down, Noah built, launched the arc and God put a rainbow in the sky and promised no more water, but fire next time. Abraham had been called by God to go home and go towards a promised place. The covenant was given. The old womb of Sarah has come to life and she has given birth to a son by the name of Isaac. When we arrive at chapter 26 to the story of the adult Isaac, we find that he lives in the shadow of his father Abraham. The greatness of the father overshadows the son. We read of no great achievements of Isaac the same as we do the father. And many times some of us feel overwhelmed of the achievements of the past and some may begin to wonder will it ever happen for me? That is long look to long at the past and you may miss the bright

future staring you in the face. Chapter 26 is a snapshot of Isaac who in spite moral indecision and short-comings received an extraordinary blessing that in some respect outshines the father. Life happens haven't you noticed? It always does when you think you have all your stuff organized neat and planned. Life happens. Has it every happened to you? You have all your ducks in a row? You got your 2 year, year 5 you're in your tenure plan and life happens. You think the road is clear, the forecast is sunshine and blue skies are in your future and life happens. And so for Isaac a famine happened. A Biblical recession with no end in sight. Isaac goes to Abimelech in Garan Philistine territory. He panicked went to a place and people who in the past had been hostile neighbors. Fear will do that to you. Fear will send you in the arms of your enemies, thinking that the leopard spots will change. He went to a place that enjoyed greater landfall and even planned to go to Egypt and God requested that he stayed in the land awhile. And the promises I will be with you. He panicked because he doubted that God would make provision for him and his family. Fear ruled and faith withered. Thus God repeats the Abrahamic covenant that this is the promise of land the promise of Abadea and the promise of all nations would be blessed through you. The promise was spoken as guaranteed. I will be with you and I will bless you. The Abimelech Isaac faced was not the same one who had confronted his father. It was perhaps the son or the grandson he had to deal with and sometimes you can get real comfortable in alternative locations. It is not the place where you ought to be, it is just a temporary resting place and we forget that it is just a temporary transition and we begin to make permanent decisions in temporary places. You may even forget what you were doing

when life happened, but God has a way of arranging events that force you out of your temporary comfort zone and towards the place where God intends you to go. God used Isaac's prosperity to move him out of the area. A plan to help get him where he needed to go. So God used Isaac's success to create jealousy amongst the Philistines. You know everybody's not happy about your happiness. Right? Oh ok. Everybody's not happy about your happy and the Philistines were not happy about Isaac's success. He used it to get him out of the place where he should not have gone in the first place. The Philistines became envious of his prosperity and resources so they stopped up the wells that he depended upon to feed his flock and family. And so reluctantly he left Garah, but remained in the valley region. His large herd needed water so he cleared the wells that Abraham had dugged and the Philistines stopped up the wells. There may not have been large lists of accolades of great achievements, but for Isaac, but in verse 18 he digged again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham. The wells were essential to living. They were a necessity. Anything that's essential becomes sacred. The survival of the flock and family depended upon the availability of water in order to live in a safe, secure, prosperous and productive future it meant that Isaac had to rediscover the past and redig the wells of his father. And so what shall we say to these things? There is something in the past that is overlooked and abandoned, a treasure from the previous generation. There is something that is untapped and unused and something of value that remains today from the past. Something left over from the past. Something of the past was needed for Isaac survival in the future. The wells may have been old, archaic, rusted and busted. The equipment to dig the wells may no

longer be appropriate to dig new wells in the future. The well may not work like it used to or in the same way anymore. But there was something of value, something of use, a former thing. God used the legacy of the past to bless the future. That's it. No past no legacy. No past no heritage. no past no history. No past, no legacy. Yes each new generation must deal with the new context that they live in, but what was needed in order to survive and thrive came from the past. It is difficult sometimes to reach your goals in one or two generation, but each generation much build on the foundation left by their fathers and their mothers. Just because it's your daddy's well, do no turn your back on it, because it's old or passe, it's not cool. God may have set aside what you need today from your daddy's well. Even nomads who cross the desert have enough sense to bury jars of water in the sand in case they run out of water. They will never be trapped in the sand in the desert or die if first because of a lack of water because they have learned to bury their treasure so when the next day comes they already have a resource to draw on. Then we see that old enemies return in new ways. Yes they do. Some of the same tricks and stunts and temptations and problems and issues and events may come around for this time in a new way. Every new day brings a new devil. Amen. But Isaac had to fight his daddy's enemy. The enemy had the same name, Abemilech, but it was a newer model, it was not the original. Just like Isaac we may have to fight our father's enemies all over again. We must have, we may have to face the enemies of our ancestors all over again because they're coming back in a new 21st century way. We may have to fight for things that we now take for granted. We may have to fight again for the right to vote. We may have fight again for equality in fair

play. We may have to fight again for opportunities and funding and collective bargaining and residual against residual racism, sexism, ageism, and classism. We may have to sit-in again, and march again, and picket again and demonstrate again, tie up somebody with something with faxes and email or text messages. We may have to do this stuff all over again. And notice that the old wells were not just handed over to Isaac. The wells were not owed to him and the future was not just his for the asking. He couldn't walk around the valley of Garah and Naman and claim the well or stand up and shout well cometh. He had to go to work. He didn't have a sense of entitlement. If he wanted the water, water cometh after work cometh. Hello? (taps mic) Is the mic on? Can you hear me back there? He had to work to open the well. He had to roll up his sleeves, take the stones out. He had to strengthen the walls of the wells. He had to protect the progress of the well. He had to rebuild the walks and dig deep for fresh water from an old well. They had to work and work hard for their future. There was blood and sweat and tears. They had to sacrifice to get that well open again and just as they did it so will we. They had an opportunity to take it to the next level. Read down a little further in the text. They dug a new well. And the Philistines took it over. HE called that well strife. Isaac dug another well. Lost that one too. He called it opposition. This third time he learned from his mistakes and dug the well outside of Philistine territory and named it Rehoboth meaning broad places or living room. They revisited the blessings of their father's well. But they also digged dug some new wells of their own. As my grandmother would say, momma may have and poppa may have but God blessed the child that has his own well. Each new generation must deal with the context

of their present community and dig new wells in spite of opposition. And lastly the old wells that Abraham dug were evidence that God provided in the past. If God provided in the past surely God has the power to provide in the future. There was a track record here. God's ability to provide. God's commitment to provide. God's willingness to provide. They asked learned from the value of history not live in it, but to learn from it. Be humble and stand on the shoulders that history provide. The old wells will help you to get over and sustain you in times of swift transitions, but in order to break new ground and plow new fields and seek new horizons and find new answers to old problems expand projects and programs in new way. Improve an old product you will have to dig some new wells. In other words you gonna have to show some new initiative. Rediscovery something of value from the past use it to inform your future, make their ideas better then one day when the sun sets on your journey when you have prayed your last prayer, sang your last song, have gone in to come out no more. Maybe just maybe somebody will take what you left behind and take it to the next level. Amen. Do not despise the past, but build on it. And take it to the next level. Moses did well but Jose Joshua took it to the next level. Abraham achieved great things, but Isaac took it to the next level. John the Baptist did well, but Jesus took it to the next level. We have to re remind ourselves that before we arrive, somebody else was already on the scene. Senator Hiram Revels did well, but Barack Obama took it to the next level. Before there was a tiger woods there was a lee elder. uh huh. Serena or Venus Williams there was Althea Gibson. Before there was a I hate to Alex Rodriguez there was Jackie Robinson. Ha ha ha ha. Before there was Luther, Usher or Kanye, there was a Paul

Robeson. Before there was a August Wilson there was a James Weldon Johnson. Before there was a Beyonce there was a Lena Horne. Before there was a Nikki Giovanni there was a Phyllis Wheatly. Before there was a Kobe Bryant there was a Bill Russell. Before there was a Oprah there was Ida B. Wells. And before there was Martin and Megan glory to God there was a Hiram Rebel. Every ground goes higher and higher. Learn the value of history. Dig new wells. There are challenges ever before us. It's time now to dig some new wells. And go and some new different directions. It is time now for you to give your best, try your hardest, turn the corner, go to the front line of action. It's time to dig some new wells. Serve until you can't serve anymore. Love the most. Lift the burdens of the weak and dig new wells. Stretch the limit of your knowledge. Walk the extra mile. Try some new things. Dig some new wells. Preserve the back. Break the barriers that stand in your way. Help the least. Look beyond your own needs and dig new wells. Cheer the fallen. Search out and seek the sick. And dig some new wells. Lift the down trodden. Heal the broken. Help the lonely. Rescue the shipwreck and dig some new wells. Transform a ministry. Mobilize the voters. Take someone with you. Run for office and dig some new wells. Help a friend past through the crowd. Inspire the young. Stretch out on a new vision. Refuse to quick. And for God's sake graduate! Every round goes higher and higher. We are climbing Jacob's latter soldiers of the cross. Ha ha. Rise, shine, give God the glory soldiers of the cross. Every round must go higher and higher or our communities, country, our nations are in trouble.

Appendix B

Don't Let Your Wounds get in the Way By Vashti McKenzie

Come on Trinity let us worship God this morning. God's not dead he's yet alive. He has risen from the grave and we are so glad, we have come to celebrate, we have come to praise God. We have come to give the glory for the devil shot his best shot and he missed again. Come on and praise God up in here. Father in the name of Jesus we thank you for this glad morning where we come and celebrate the resurrection. Thank you for what you did for us. You beat sin. You beat death. You beat hell. And you rose with all power in your hands. Now come and teach us, talk to us, minister to us from your word and we give you the praise, honor and credit. In Jesus name we pray let everybody say Amen. It's alright to say amen one more time. Come on a praise God with your hands as you find your seat. Hallelujah. You may be seated in the presence of that Lord.

Aren't you glad for resurrection morning. Hallelujah, thank you Jesus. It's good to be back in the house once again my brothers and my sisters and to your pastor, pastor Moss I bless you. Thank you for allowing us to share this moment at Trinity. To my husband, partner in life in ministry supervisor, Stan McKenzie stand up, I love you, you should see how good looking the man God gave me...whew! Hallelujah. You know sisters, come on Help me now! Don't you understand? Baby when you got one Amen and he's a good one baby. Every now and then you gotta lean back and think, aw yea

than you Lord. Yea. She's alright to flirt across the room. I tell y'all, y'all better learn how to do that. Ha ha ha...yes. Ha ha ha ha. Open your Bibles if you will. Settle down now Settle down, settle down. Open your Bibles to the gospel of John. See if you can find the 20th chapter, the gospel of John the 20th chapter. The gospel of John, the 20th chapter. If you can stand, stand for the reading of the gospel. And I'll begin reading at verse 19. On the evening of that day the first day of the week the doors being locked where the disciples where for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said to them peace be with you when he had said this he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again peace be with you. As the father has sent me eve so I am sending you. And when he had said this he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone they are forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness from anyone it is withheld. This is the Word of the Lord you may be seated. Mmmmm. Mmmmmmm. Needy is the word of the Lord. Our text stand is verse 20 and when he had said this he showed them his hands and his side. And when he said this he showed them, his hands and his side. And so for the moment that is mine, our subject this morning is "Don't Let your wounds get in the way" mmmmm....don't let your wounds get in the way. Tell your neighbor they need to know that this morning. Don't let your wounds get in the way. Come on find somebody else, they didn't have caffeine this morning they need an uplift, amen. Don't worry about Starbuck's is in your future later on but tell your neighbor, don't let your wounds get in the way. God ahead turn around, Don't let your wounds get in the way. Come on say it with conviction and confidence, don't let your

wounds get in the way. This time with attitude baby, attitude means you work your head, work your neck and get your finger in the air, come on tell them one more time, don't let your wounds get in the way. I think we're almost there, we're almost there, I think we're almost there. And there's a little praise song that goes a little like this. I'm sure you've heard it. When I think about the goodness of Jesus and all he had done for me, my soul shouts Hallelujah. I thank God for saving me. The premise of the song is that if you think about what Jesus did then you thank Jesus for what Jesus has done. So, then if you think then you will thank. Uh uhn. If you think about how good God is, then you would thank God for his goodness. If you think about how good the Lord has been to you then you would thank God for his goodness. If you think how every morning brings words of the Lords love and kindness then you would thank him for his love and kindness. If you think about how his love and mercies arrive fresh like a hot cup of coffee then you would think God for his love and mercies. If you think about how God has smiled upon you, then you would thank God for his favor. If you think about how his will amen is our peace, then you thank God for the peace. IF you think about how Jesus stood with us when everybody else ran away then you would thank him for standing by your side. If you think about how he kept us, then you would thank him for his keeping power. If you think how he lead you over the tricks and traps of culture and community then you would thank him for helping you. IF you think how he befriended you while everybody turned their backs, then you would thank him for being closer than a brother. When you think about the promises that he made and the promises that he kept, then you would thank him for the

promises. When you think how others were thrown and battered by the restless sea of time and God brought you rest, then you would thank him for the rest. When you think about how he kept trouble away or how he kept you in the time of trouble then you would thank him. When you think how he answered your prayers in spite of your doubts and fears then you would thank him. When you think about how Jesus helped you, reach unreachable goals, manage unmanageable schedules, remain calm in uncomfortable situations, overcome unbearable problems, you would thank him. When you think of the goodness of Jesus and all he's done for me, your soul will shout, thank God for saving me. When you think how he forgave you. When you think how he saved you. When you think how he bled for you. When you think how he died for you. When you think how he rose for you with all power in his hand then you would thank him, you would thank him, you would thank him. Just think about it. When you think about it, you will thank him. Say yess.

Whew! If you would just think, then you thank. So then the key to the thanking is the thinking. And if your thinking is off, then your thanking will be off. And if your thinking is off so is your thank. So the key is the thinking. For as John Milton writes, "the mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven out of hell or make hell out of heaven" whew. So it is, when we think about a thing and how you think it and how you perceive its meaning and impact makes a difference upon what you thank God for. Jesus shows us a different way to think about the wounds we encounter in life. The thorns in the flesh that are caused by illness or accidents, wounds inflicted by traumatic experiences. Wounds created by exhausting overwhelming high intensified events. A

different way of thinking about the wounds, precipitated by chronic deprivation that becomes corrosive, eroding our well-being due to physical, verbal or emotional abuse. The wounds that come from social economic factors caused by some perceived lack. Wounds from those who rise to criticize prior to unbiased objective investigation. Wounds inflicted by those who cant crucify the ones they want to crucify, but manage to hang a surrogate sacrificial lamb. Wounds caused by those who control information and now want to control what you preach. Uh mmm. Watering down the gospel to a pablum of an infinal of optimism that equates Christianity with nationalism uh huh, uh huh, uh huh, uh huh, that fails to see that one can be a true blood American and still participate in social criticism for they forget uh hu, they forget to apply what Jesus said to what you were doing, how you were doing, when you do it and to whom you are doing it to. Uh huh. So this Jesus who's resurrection we celebrate today, we forget that he afflicted the comforted and comforted the afflicted. Uh Huh...that Martin King Jr and Ghandi and Jeremiah and Jesus uh huhrha uh huh it wasn't about the anger, but it was a righteous indignation that leads to a prophetic passion uh hu as William So coffin calls a passion that demands confrontation. Took power not nearly preaching the who of Jesus but preaching the what of his words uh huh and the how you preach it when you preach it to whom you preach uh huh that purveyors of information are trying to be judge and jury over prophetic utterances without realizing that they didn't call the prophet so they can't tell the prophet what to say. And for some who stand on the outside trying to stay away from the fire, if they do it here today, they're coming from you tomorrow. HmMMM hmMMM. Hmmm. Mmm. Mmmm.

Touch your neighbor and say wounds. Jesus shows a different way of thinking about our wounds. And we all got 'em. (raises hand) I got wounds. You got wounds. When we get together we gone examine our wounds. We gonna shout all over Gods heaven. Some of us suffer in silence. Mmmhmmm. When I get to yours just raise your hand. When I get to yours raise your hand. Some of us suffer in silence We camouflage our wounds and no one around you knows you were slowly bleeding to death. Some of us bleed all over the place. (crowd laughter) Exposing our wounds risking infection not as some badge of courage, but to gain attention and sympathy and to tempt other personality to commiserate with us. Raise your hand when I get to you place. They are the walking wounded. You're hear, yea you are. Injured enough to be impaired, but not enough to take you out of the game. There are the waiting wounded. Injured and caught in a chronological time warp waiting for the reversal of the condition. There are the weary and wounded. Injured, tired, drained of spiritual resources, drained of enough sanity, that when you do go to sleep you can't get any rest. Too tired to get up and too wired to stay down.

In a situation that won't go away. Ehhh yaae eh. Then there are the wasted and wounded. Those who have resigned themselves to the wounding, thinking that it is permanent, thinking it will happen again, thinking they deserve the wounding, thinking it is some sort of predestined punishment so they waste away because of the wounding. If we think that the wounds handicap us, interrupt our flow or become a reason why we cannot and should not, then they become excuses to why we don't. They wounds may be visible to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Or

they may be invisible because we carry them as scars on our hearts and minds and our sights. We may feel those who haven't been through what we've been through, that their lives are somehow better because they did not go through what we went through. They don't understand what we went through because there was no middle passage in their past. They didn't go through what we went through so there's no Jim Crow or Separate But Equal on their resume. There's no enslavement or forced genocide in their biography. There's no off switch there no wounded me. There's no camp spade in the background of their life. There's no racial profiling. There's no Northern Illinois University, there's no columbine, there's no Virginia Tech back there. There's no drive by. There's no home invasion where they live. There's no daily racism. Consistent sexism. Persistent economic passism. They don't know what we've been through, so they can't sing nobody knows the trouble I've seen. That's somehow, if you think it because they didn't go through what you went they some how have an advantage. So you may begin to think nothing good is er going to happen because what's in on your resume in your biography in you past and that you're somehow stuck in a marred and marked life, and so the wounds become a pair of sunglasses in which you wear day and night and when something good to happen, the wounds darken the rush of good feeling that come with every good and perfect gift that come from God. So instead of seeing the blessing of God you see the wounds. And because your thinking is off your thanking is off. Mmm hmmm

So this is when the wounds get in the way. Did you see Madea's family reunion. How many saw....There's a song in that movie that goes something like this: As time passes

they begin to multiply adding up secretly like the rings of an old oak tree there are wounds in the way. Some old some new, all stifling, debilitating and cruel, they are wounds in the way. Some are passed down from elders to youth, they don't belong to you they are wounds in the way. As time passes they begin to accrue some a strange sort of value so you don't think you are worth holding on to because you don't want to change who you are, they are wounds in the way. So how many of us would confess this morning that there are wounds getting in the way of our living everyday.

Mmmmm. (hand raised inviting)

Shall we engage the text? Jesus met with his disciples after the resurrection and unlike most of us who are more willing to hide our wounds, cloak our wounds, perfume our wounds wardrobe our wounds. Jesus walked right in there on the first day of the week and showed them his wound to his collection of disciplines. He previously said to them the news of the resurrection, but came now he came himself. They were locked in prayer or participating in a ritual behind closed doors. They had locked themselves in and shut the door. The disciples met perhaps to know each others' mind or to strengthen one another. They were behind closed doors maybe to work on a new strategy after what happened over the weekend. Proper management of the situation or to engage in a little damage control. Their door was shut the locks were in place. The blinds were closed. Because the wounded tend to hide or strike out and hurt somebody like they've been hurt. Yet even though the door was locked Jesus appeared to them. Which means even though they were locked in they couldn't lock Jesus out. Somebody ought to say Amen. He shows up and then shows his wounds. Have

you ever wondered why he just walked in the room and showed his wounds? Some scholars in the majority opinion believe that Jesus showed his wounds to prove that he was the same Jesus that hung on the cross and rose from the grave. The wounds proved that he was who he said he was. He was the real Christ and he wasn't an imposter. The wounds were the evidence. The tell-tell signs of the resurrection. It was validation of his life and his teaching. The wounds spoke of the resurrection. Jesus is not just a good guy. He's not just another prophet or teacher, but he is the son of God who said he going to suffer, said he was gonna die and said he was gonna rise on the third day and he did. And so he showed his wounds. They were the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies as he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity. It is was Isaiah spoke about that Jesus bore the marks of his affliction and ours it is why Jesus walked in the house, Jesus showed his wounds. His wounds were the result of someone else's sins and not his, oh baby that's hard but when you are wounded not for what you did, but for what someone else did and what they did wounded you. Florrid Swanson Wilson writes the showing of the wounds in the room on the first day of the week was the Lord's acts of kindness they were acts of mercy. Swift acts for friends struggling to understand what happened over the weekend. Acts of mercy for those confused and misunderstood. It was a look and see situation, amen. The resurrection did not block out the wounds. He showed his wounds. The wounds were not erased. The resurrection did not reverse the wounds. Jesus rose from the grave in spite of the wounding, with the scars and the sores that were produced by the hurt and pains of a brutal public crucifixion. The wounds

themselves were a sign of healing. The scars had formed over the abrasion were his skin was scraped off as he stumbled while carrying the cross. The wounds were a sign of healing the laceration where his flesh was torn by the leather whips. The penetrating wounds from the spear in his side. Clots had formed over the bleeding holes in his hands and his feet that indicated healing like stretch marks on a woman's body that shows at one time new life had stretched the skin to a breaking point. It is healed now, but the scar remained. Jesus showed his wounds they identify with the human condition that God fully entered into our daily life through his son. Entered into the daily injustice and pain of exclusionary idioms. He passionately carries our wounds in his body and loves for our healing. The wounds remind us that God through his son, Jesus Christ, will never ignore, never negate, never minimize the human condition. He will never be beyond our reach or our cry as Jesus suffered for us and he suffers for us now. Jesus shows his wounds they are more than validate his resurrection. It also demonstrates that in spite of what happened to him on Calvary, he didn't let his wounds get in the way. The wounds of his descent did not prevent his ascent. The wounds of his demise, did not get in the way of his comeback. The wounds of his downfall did not prevent his uprising. The wounds from his humiliation did not prevent his elevation. The wounds of his agitation did not get in the way of the uprising motivation. The wounds of his crucifixion did not get in the way of his glorification. The wounds did not get in the way. The wounds remind of us the providence of God, but we don't believe the half of it. In spite of what we think or feel or the events that surround us in human history, god's hand is still on our lives. We

may be wounded but we are still in the hand of God. We may be weary but we are still in the hand of God. We may be waiting or worn out, but we are still in the hands of God. We may have old wounds or new ones. Open ones closed ones, healed one,, or those who are on the way, god's hands are still on our lives. Our help (ah ha) is in the name of the Lord (ah). The maker of heaven and earth.(ah) And this is one of the fundamental truths of this moment, that God secures our lives and our future. God is for us. Our wounds cannot abort the will of God through God's people. It is what Israel claims in the post exilic period in Psalms 44, it is what empowered Jesus to bare the cross as a suffering servant and the abandon express in Psalm 22, it what empowers does empower and will empower us today. So instead of walking and waiting and weary and wounded, the resurrection says its time to rise above your wounds and don't let it get in the way. Remember what the apostle Paul said in the midst of his own suffering "if God be for us, who can be against us?" yes we proclaim it today. He is risen, he is risen indeed. It's another way of thinking about your wounds. That the wounds won't get in the way. Somebody outta thank god that the wounds won't get in the way. When you think about it, then you thank God about it. That the wounds won't block the blessing. That the wounds won't usurp God's promise, that no matter what happens and what others try to do to you, nothing can separate you from the love of God. So don't let your wounds get in the way of your future. Don't let your wounds get in the way of you going back to school. Don't let your wounds get out of prison and staying out this time. Don't let your wounds get in the way of a new relationship. Don't let e wounds get in the way of the way of the promises of God. So

let me go back to where I began, if you think about the goodness of Jesus and all he's done for me, your soul will shout, hallelujah. I thank for saving me. When I think what they use to kill me. God used it to keep me, then I thank him. When I think about his mercy, I thank him. When I think about his love, I thank him. When I think about how he stood me up after I fell down again, I thank him. When I think how he fed me, when I had no money and I thank him. When I think he provided a roof over my head when I had no place to stay and I thank him. When I think how I deserved judgment and he gave me grace, I thank him. When I think about his favor, that I didn't earn and I don't deserve, I thank him that in spite of my wounds I still here. In spite of my wounding, I'm still here. And if Jesus got up from his wounds so shall we. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Whew!. Yes! Yes! Yes! Don't let your wounds get in the way! Don't your let your wounds get in the way! Tell your neighbor go on tell em', you ain't talkin baby, tell 'em you should open your mouth and you should say something to them. Go on tell 'em don't let them wounds get in the way now. Don't let your wounds go on, tell 'em. It stops right here. It stops at resurrection Sunday. Jesus got up and we getting up outta here too. Don't let the wounds get in the way. And don't let your wounds get in the way of you saying yes to Jesus Christ today. Come on my brother, come on my sister and say yes.

Appendix C

Hagar's Tears By Eboni Marshall Turman

Please be seated. let us pray. Here I raise mine Ebenezer. Hither by thy help I'm come.
And I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when
stranger. Wandering from the fold of God. And to rescue me from danger to pose his
precious love. Hide now your servant behind the cross. That in this preaching moment,
someone might see Jesus and decide to follow him. Amen

A few days ago, it must have been Wednesday or Thursday of this past week. I thought
I was going to die. It was so hot (crowd laughter). Now I'm very clear about who I am, I
am a Northerner by birth and by pedigree coming straight from that great city New
York, New York. So great I've been told they had to name it twice. I am new to this
region. This great state of North Carolina and as I walked across campus this past week,
it was so hot. Rays of the sun were beating upon my brow with such fierce intensity that
I just thought that I might not make it. It's hot in North Carolina. As I reached for my
water bottle on that day I could not help but to conjure the poetic sensibilities of one
Langston Hughes, who amidst the heat of the movement for Black freedom, penned "I've
known rivers, ancient, dusty rivers," I sipped my water and remembered it was Hughes
who said "I bathed in the Euphrates and I built my hut on the Congo, I looked upon the
Nile, I heard the singing of the Mississippi, I've known rivers" Now I don't know much
about the Euphrates or the Congo, I only had to walk from Chapel drive to Campus

drive, but even still it was so hot that day I did not know if I was going to make it and you know, know exactly what I'm talking about today. Maybe you were not caught on campus in the sun last week, but someone here knows what it feels like when life begins to heat up, for it seems sometimes you in one moment are in the frying pan and then in the next moment you are in the fire. Someone may be breaking a sweat right now thinking about what you went through last week. What you went through last month, what you've been through in the past year. When you received that dreaded call perhaps informing you that there is not much time left and though we have all heard it said, when the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved. We have a building, a house not made hands eternal in the heavens. The grief that we've been carrying for years have scorched our faith and perhaps someone does not know how you will make it. Someone is breaking a sweat right now. Thinking about what you may have to walk into next week. Maybe it's tension on the job or perhaps trouble in your household or perhaps a hard conversation among friends. And although the words of Jesus echo in our hearts "Lo I will be with you. Even unto the end of the age", anxiety sings our faith and we don't know how we're going to make it or perhaps we just have a lot to do. We're Working and we're studying and we're caring for children and we're caring for parents, some of us have to rob Peter to pay Paul we run hither fither and yond serving on this committee and that board and sure we have heard it said, "I can do all things through, who strengthens me" the truth is, we're burning up from exhaustion. We just don't know how much longer we'll make it. Believe it or not this is where we find Hagar in our text today.

Hagar thought she was going to die. She and her son Ishmael, that they would not make it out of the wilderness. Now a patriarch and a misogynistic gaze typically reads Genesis 21 as the story of Abraham and his faith, but today we find in this text the story of Hagar, an African slave woman. Womanist theologian Deloris S. Williams would call her a Sister in the Wilderness. She did not know how she was going to make it and in case we missed it in the text, Hagar was not Abraham's lover, she was not Abraham's wife, Hagar was not Sarah's best girlfriend nor was she Sarah's maid, Hagar was a slave. The text tells us and is confirmed by our understanding of slavocracy that as a slave woman, Hagar was caught in the intersection of social biases, namely gender bias and racial ethnic bias, Hagar, like Sarah was subject to Abraham because she was a woman. But at the same time she is subjected to Abraham and Sarah because of her racial, ethnic and economic designation as an Egyptian slave woman. She is poor. Yes. Hagar is poor and Hagar is Black. Yes. And Hagar is unlettered and it is based on this social location as slave woman. A-a-and Ishmael's social location as a descended of a slave /that the story begins to heat up Hughes says, "I've known rivers, ancient dusky rivers" Sarah says cast this slave woman out with her son. Abraham, he didn't want to do it. He did not want to cast Ishmael out. The text tells us that Abraham was distressed on account of his son, but he did it anyway. We've all found ourselves in situations where we knew we should've gone right, but we went left instead. Situations where we should've gone up, but we went down instead. Situations where we should've said no, but we said yes instead. Yes to the money and yes to the power and yes to the fame. And even the great apostle has told us, "for the good I would do, I do

not, but the evil that I would not do, that is what I do" Abraham, he knew he was wrong. The Bible says he was distressed, but he casted Hagar and Ishmael out anyway and the fact of the matter this morning sisters and brothers that sometimes even God's people are wrong---dead wrong. Especially when it comes to matters of racial justice. Especially when it comes to matters of gender justice. Especially when it comes to matters of economic justice and the intersections thereof. Sure we come into the church singing "it is well with my soul" we even go out singing "guide me o thou great Jehovah pilgrim in this barren land" in the Black church tradition we sing "lead me guide me along the way for if you lead me I will not stray, Lord let me walk each day with thee, lead me oh lord, lead me" but as soon as we move out of the solace of the church walls we do an about face and we desert the justice the mercy the humility that the God of Amos calls us toward. Sometimes the people of God, yes those who are called by God's name, yes, those who are given the promise, yes those who recite the scripture "fret not thyself because of evil doers neither be thou envious workers of eniquity for they shall soon be cut down like grass" even the people of God sometimes, just wrong.

Some will say, that God told Abraham to cast them out. God said, "Abraham do not be distressed, do whatever Sarah tells you to do" and this my friends is a fair reading, but the word of God is revealed in the New Testament reading this morning also tells us that God has numbered the hairs on our head. The gospel tells us that God knew us before we were formed in our mother's wombs. There is a song that says, "Jesus knows all about our struggles, he will guide til the day is done" insofar as we serve an

omniscient God, a God who knows our going out and our coming in. God knew what Abraham was going to do before Abraham had the opportunity to do it. God had a contingency plan in place. I've heard it said like this, "what man means for evil, God means for good" The psalmist would say, "he prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemy." The prophet Isaiah would say "no weapon formed against me shall prosper" God can take our absolute worst and turn it into God's best. No matter how you slice it, Abraham was wrong. Abraham was a slaver. Casts this slave woman out, but God had a plan. Even David, oh David was a rapist "create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me" But God had a plan. The widow at Zeraphath was down to her last "I have not cake, but a hand full of meal" But God had a plan. Esther was scared for her life, "I will go to the king even though it's against the law and if I perish, I perish" But God had a plan. Mary came up out of the ghetto "what good can come out of Nazareth?" But God had a plan "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" Jesus was born in a barn and died a slave on a cross on a hill, far a way stood an old rugged cross, but God had a plan. The emblem of suffering and shame, but I love that old cross where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners were slain and what is God's plan you say?

Ahhh....that the lamb shall lay down with the lion. What is God's plan? You say that we shall beat our swords into plowshares and study war no more. What is God's plan? That the borrower should become the lender. That the first shall become last. That the last shall be first. What is God's plan? That every valley shall be exalted and-and every mountain shall be made low. And that crooked places shall be made straight and the

rough places made plain. God can take our worst and turn it into God's best. So Abraham casts Hagar and Ishmael out into the wilderness. In some translations the text says they were casted into the desert. You know it's hot in the desert. And Abraham put bread and the skin of water on her shoulder and sent her away. So not only has Hagar been cast out based on her social location as an African slave woman who had been coerced into surrogacy by Sarah's scaming ways at the hands of the man of God, but she had secondarily been weighed down by being forced to carry what Abraham had placed on her shoulders. Some of us, some of us are in the habits of making other people carry our stuff. And others of us are in the habits of letting others unload on us. Zora Neale Hurston, that great giant of the Harlem Renaissance, characterized Black women as the mules of the world, always subject, carrying someone else's load. Cleaning someone elses kitchen. Scrubbing someone else's floors, caring for someone elses' children, cooking someon else's food. And here comes Hagar, carrying what Abraham had given her, until she finds out for herself that what she had been given was insufficient for her journey. Sometimes we have to recognize other peoples' stuff is not ours to carry. Other peoples' prayers might take us part of the way. The song sings, "my mother prayed for me, had me on her mind, took a little time and prayed for me. My father prayed for me, the preacher prayed for me. The deacon prayed for me." Other peoples' prayers might take us part of the way. Ahh, But if we want to take it all the way we're going to have to learn to pray for ourselves. Other peoples' hopes and dreams might take us part of the way, but unless we hope and dream for ourselves

we will not make it all the way. Hagar had lived her life carrying other peoples' things. And had no thing of her own.

So here we find her weeping in the wilderness. She and her child cast out because she is poor, because she is a woman, because she is a poor woman of African descent. The cool air in the chapel might make it easy to sit back and consider Hagar to imagine her life in the heat of the day. It may allow us to forget that it is hot in North Carolina too. That there are women and men and children right here in Durham who like Hagar and Ishmael because of social indicators because they are poor because they are colored because they are women or sexual minorities have been cast out by our isms, by our phobias, and they are crying Hagar's tears because they don't know if they will make it. Hagar put her child down and lifted up her voice and wept, but in verse 17 we're told that God did not hear her cry. (long pause). Perhaps, perhaps you have cried Hagar's tears. Perhaps even on this day, you are crying Hagar's tears. Maybe it's you who have been cast out. Maybe it's you who are weighed down from what you've been carrying for 10 and 20, and 25 years, maybe you are crying Hagar's tears because your family and your friends have turned their backs on you or maybe you're crying because you went left when you should've gone right, the heat of life's wilderness has got you crying Hagar's tears. You've been praying over and over again, but it seems like God does not hear you. You don't know if you will make it. But the psalmist told us "that though weeping endures for a night, joy comes in the morning" Isaiah informed us that, "unto them who mourn in Zion, God gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning the garland of praise for the spirit of heaviness" Hagar cried and God did not hear

her. Womanist Theology would suggest that God is partial and discriminating. Don't believe me ask the Canonite or the first nations. God did not hear her. But the text says that God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. God showed her though God did not hear her. God showed her where the water was. I am the living water that never runs dry. So the next time you find life heating up on you, the next time you find yourself in life's desert, the sun scorching you, the heat suffocating you and you don't know if you will make it, remember that Hughes told us that "even the Negro speaks of rivers, I've known rivers, my soul has grown deep like rivers" But Hagar, Hagar reminds us that in the desert, it is only God who shows us where the water is.

Closing: My foremothers, those African slave women who toiled with their children in the heat of the Southern day would've said it like this, "wade, children, in the water, God is going to trouble the water" It was hot last week and I did not know if I was going to make it, but I reached for my water and wiped the sweat from my brow and I kept on walking. Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

Appendix D

I Will Survive By Eboni Marshall Turman

God of my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, who shall I be afraid? When evil doers came upon me to devour my flesh. They stumbled and they fell. Though a host came against me, my heart will not fear or break out against me. In this will I be comforted. Ne thing have I desired of the Lord, that I seek after, that I would dwell in the house of the lord all of my days of my life. To behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in God's Temple.

Good evening Morehouse College. ("good evening" responds the crowd) I am so glad to be in the service one more time. My dear friend Rev Brooks called me and asked me if I would be available to come and I said Yes, I would be there. Because the students here at the AUC, morely I would gladly be here and I give honor to God who is always the head of my life, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end to our loved dean Lawrence Carter for his leader of this great chapel, to rev. Brooks for his leadership, his assistant to dean carter in the workings of this ministry. To faculty, revs, administrators who may be here. The chaplains for their support of work of Gospel. To this great singing body who have blessed our souls on this night. To all the students. To all the members of this gathering. To students here at Morehouse, Spelman and Clark Atlanta. To friends of the body of Christ, I greet you with the joy of Jesus always in the name of the Creator, in the name of the Christ and in the name of the Holy Ghost good evening.

I see my dear friend and colleague who is here, Dr. Rosetta Ross told me she would be here. She is professor of Religion at Spelman college and I am so grateful she thought it not robbery to be present. Thank you for coming Dr. Ross

It is, I believe, the third Sunday of lent. And I am a Baptist. Black Baptist. We are not especially liturgical. And yet it is the Thursday of lent, amen. So I thought it appropriate to turn to the Old Testament in the book of Lamentations on tonight. Lamentations the 3rd chapter. The word of God beginning at the 16th verse. It is a familiar passage of scripture taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the text. Lamentations 3 beginning at verse 16. "He had gave made my teeth grind on gravel and made me cower in ashes. My soul was bereft of peace. I have forgotten what happiness is. So I say "gone is my glory and all that I had hoped for from the Lord. The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me, But this (audience, but this) I call to mind and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his merices never come to an end; they are new every morning; great, (audience great) great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in God" The word of the lord is blessed. Let us pray.

Here I raise mine Ebenezer. Hither by thy help I'm come. And I hope by thy with pleasure to safely arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God and to rescue me from danger into the fold of his precious love. Hide though servant behind the cross of God, that thy people may not see the woman of God,

that they may see Jesus and decide to follow him. This is your servant's prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

I do know that I am at Morehouse tonight, but in the spirit of womanist theologian, better yet, womanist matriarch Deloris S. Williams, I'd like to speak with you very briefly this evening on the submit, "I Will Survive" I will survive. And I know that some of you have not engaged your theological minds in quite some time. There's a reason why the song says, "I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus" Some of us who have not engaged our theological minds in quite some time may have all conjured the lives of one Gloria Gaynor, perhaps Donna Summers and God blessed the disco. But I'm not talkin about the dance floor tonight although I do cut a mean dougie, I do wobble with it, the real harlem shake, I'm not talking about the dance floor tonight. No, this evening's subjective affirmation and prophetic proclamation encapsulating in the words "I Will Survive", words that have been uttered by Black women across the ages, beautiful Black queens of the disco and bold Black womanist theologians of the Ebony, I mean the Ivory Tower, this affirmation emerges from an experience I had a few years ago when I visited Africa, the mother continent, what had formerly called Gold coast what is now called Cape coast Ghana, by then I had the opportunity to visit the slaves dungeons of El Mina, and while the lament of the slave spirits were pressed into me by way of the Atlantic....I remember thinking to myself, we were not supposed to survive. As I made my way to the door of no return having returned as I made my way to the door of no return having returned to the skeletal remains of white and black suffering, the place that for centuries had been designated

as the last vision of Mother Africa that captured Africans would ever see before boarding slave ships, bound not for the promised land, but for the peril of American slavocracy, I gazed out of the door of no return, having returned, and I remembered thinking, we were no supposed to survive and it all came flooding back to me. That's right the former of Black exile tonight we're talkin about Jeremiah's Lamentations, the horror of Black exile, it all came flooding back to me from the stink of the maafa to the fury of Nat Turner's rebellion from David Walker's appeal, Ida B. Wells' red record, from white sheets to burning crosses, from lynching trees to African burial grounds, from 4 little girls in a burmingham church uh uh uh uh the great Black poet Dougie Randall Pinn, mother dear may I go downtown instead of out to play and amongst the streets of Birmingham in a freedom march today "no baby no you may not go or I fear the guns of fire, but you may go to church instead and sing in the children's choir" From four little girls in a Birmingham church to a fallen King on a Memphis balcony. From Emmitt Till to Trayvon martin. From Jordan Davis Medgar Edvars to Jordan Davis from Theo ..to Renisha McBride. From white only to a new Jim Crow. And Like the prophet Jeremiah, the thought of our afflictions and our homelessness is wormwood and gall. And when I think of it, my soul is vow with envy because sisters and brothers we were not supposed to survive.

Although it is the case that most of us, none of us rather have experienced the horrors of the middle passage AND though many of us have not experienced the terror of Jim Crow, the truth is we all know what it is to be afflicted by the challenges of this world. You Morehouse men I know you well. You can put your nose in the air if you

want to and look escaped if you want to but the fact of the matter is, though we are afflicted in various intensities, affliction or suffering is the equalizer of the human condition. God said cursed be the ground for thy sake. Thorns and thistles will it bring forth to thee to thee turn to the ground for dust thou art and to dust thou shall return. Suffering is the equalizer of the human condition. And when life hurts so bad, we sometimes feel ourselves find ourselves beginning to wonder if we will ever survive. Somebody knows what I'm talking about because it was you who lost your mother or father. Your sister or your brother. Your loved one and though you've heard it said since you were a little boy or a little girl absent from the bond of his presence though the Lord though the elders your grandmother and your grandfather have sung about they said when you see me crying and building me a home, this earthly house is unassumed and can my soul find a house somewhere to stay. Though you've heard it said by the great Apostle in the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved. We've got a building and a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens you are so afflicted by your grief that you don't know if you can survive your gall or maybe it's not that deep. Maybe your student loan just ran out and you're wondering how you're going to eat tomorrow. Uuhh those heard it said God's name is Jehovah Jirah the Lord provides. You can't help wondering how you're going to survive. Or maybe your family members, your best friend turned their back on you abandoned you when you needed them, oh the ancestors knew something about, they said I've been rebuked and I've been scorned and I've been talked about so you born the Psalmist said when my

father and mother forsake me then the Lord shall take me up, but as the tears roll down your face you wonder if you'll ever survive your best friend stabbing you in the back. This is where we find the wailing prophet. Some say it's Jeremiah grinding his teeth on gravel cowardly in ashes in our text we find the prophet crying. He is lamenting. He is mourning the confluence of his personal affliction and the suffering his people. The text tells us that Jerusalem is burning. You've heard uh Detroit was burning. That New York was burning. That, that Philadelphia was burning. That Newark was burning. That Los Angeles was burning. The text tells us that Jerusalem is burning. The chosen of God have been killed. Imperial militarism is in full effect in fact the circumstances are so devastatingly dramatic that Jeremiah confesses "my soul is bereft of peace, my spirit is bowed down within me" Who says that men don't cry. We find Jeremiah breaking down in tears because the circumstances of his people and his personal afflictions seem to leave him no other option. I don't know about you, but I know what it's like when things get so bad that you have none, no other alternative than to break down crying. When you're so mad, so disturbed, so confused, so humiliated, so hurt, and all you can do is cry. Someone in here cried themselves to sleep last night. Somebody woke up this morning crying, wondering why me Lord, someone might be crying right now in your row, somebody in your club somebody in your group is crying right now and wondering when the tears will stop falling, but do you know what happens when a prophet cries?

Jesus, Jesus is known as prophet and king and John the evangelist tells us that when Jesus cried, Lazarus got up from the dead loosed him and let him go. Jesus is known as

prophet and King and Matthew tells us in the 27th chapter that when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice at Eli, eli leba sobathani the veil of the temple was wrecked in twain the earth did quake, the graves were open, and the dead were raised. Do you know what happens when a prophet cries. Jeremiah was crying. And you need some crying prophets today because when a prophet cries that's when things start to change. The old becomes new, the last becomes first, the sick are made well, and who are the prophets? These are they. Who are the prophets? Those who are in the midst of their afflictions have been contacted by God. Who are the prophets? Those who in the midst of their affliction dare to speak on behalf of God. Who are the prophets? Those who in amidst their own sorrows, serve as intermediary between God and humanity. Now I know already where the preachers are gallivanting to and fro, flying in jet planes, living in mansions, going along to get along, shucking and jiving, stepping and fetching so you might get invited hither thither and yond. I know where the pastors are, I've been there and I've done that, I know what they do what they say and where they go and I'm not that impressed. I decided to stop by King Chapel, because I knew that I'd find some prophets. Those were not supposed to survive because you're Black, because you're male, because you're woman, because you're poor, because you're infected, because you are gay, but those who are amiss their affliction, contacted by God, Moses said, I'm slow of speech and slow of tongue, but God said I am who I am. Paul said there was given me a thorn in my flesh, but God said my grace is sufficient. Isaiah said woe is me I cuss too much, but God said, who shall I send. Jeremiah said I'm too young and I'm too pretty, God said you may be young and you may be pretty but you are consecrated

before you were born. I knew that I'd find some prophets, some apostles, some disciples who amidst your own affliction have been consecrated by God.

Now, I know that some of us don't want to talk about what really happened. We don't wanna talk about how it really went down. We don't want think about what's really going on in our lives. We just wanna gloss over the truth. The truth of who we are. Aaaand get to the good news. We wanna shout and get happy without dealing with what is really going on. A few weeks ago I got off of the plane, it was uh Valentines Day. I got off the plane and the airport was decorated with red and white room for Valentine's Day. And they had airline personel handing out candy kisses. Red and white m&ms. It was Valentine's Day. I was like dag. They didn't show Malcolm X on the plane. There were no pictures of Fannie Lou and Ella Baker posted anywhere. No one wants to talk about what's really going on. No one wants to talk about how it really went down. NO one wants to talk about blood, sweat and tears. One day of white, pink and red get more play then a whole month of Black. Lamentations. Lamentations however disrupts the way of the world by telling us, that we can get to the good news without first attending to painful realities. Theologian Christopher Moores would say Good Friday always comes before Easter. Its why James Weldon Johnson could pen God of our weary years, God of our silent tears before he would go on to say Thou who has brought us all the way. You can't really know that God brings you out unless first know what you been out from. Lamentation prophet says I am home. He says I am afflicted I am broken. Now after all that. After taking care of what was really going on in bridge he says but this I call to mind. It late and the next few weeks we will be in the

wilderness accounting for our brokenness, our affliction, but in a few weeks time we will call something else to mind. You can't really know how good God is, until you know how God has brought you through something. The writer of Lamentations says I am homeless and I am afflicted and then he says, but this I call to mind. Only after the prophet wrestles with his personal affliction and the historical circumstances of his reality is he compelled to think about something else. Something he had heard from somebody. He said but this I call to mind. He was remembering something that somebody had told him. We don't know who it was. Maybe it was an ancestor who was lead out Egypt, I have visions of one Harriet Tubman, go down Moses, way down Moses, way down in Egypt land, tell old Pharaoh to let my people go. Maybe it was his great grandfather who lived 40 years in the wilderness, guide me oh thou great Jehovah pilgrim in this barren land. Or maybe it was grandmother who crossed over into Canaan land on Jordan's stormy bayside said Cast a wishful eye to Canaan's bear and happy land where my possessions lie. Somebody. Somebody somewhere told the prophet no matter how low you are to the ground, remember Jeremiah that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, no matter how dark midnight somebody said remember Jeremiah that God's mercies are renewed every morning. Somebody told him somebody told me that there is no shadow of turn in he, thou changest not, thou compassions they fail not. Somebody told Jeremiah like somebody told me and I stopped by to tell somebody else. Somebody who might be crying on the inside. You don't know if you're going to graduate. You don't know if you're gonna pass your class. You don't know if you have a job when you get done. Go ahead and cry. but like

Jeremiah, make sure you hold your tears in tension the testimony of those who came before you. The testimony of those who said the Lord will make a way somehow. The testimony of those who said keep your hand to the plow and hold on. The testimony of those who said trouble don't last always. The testimony of those who said he is a bridge over troubled water. The testimony of those who said he is a bright and morning star, that he is the fairest of ten thousand rose of Sharon, the lion of Judah, the beginning and end, the alpha and omega, my grandmother said he is a mother to motherless, and a father to the fatherless and a friend to the friendless, but there's something else that you must remember. It's an ancient African ...it's an ancient African myth about a girl we know something about girls. Cause the bible says the spirit of the Lord descended on like a dove. No the ancient Africans and the Egyptians they called a bird a fuse. And so that this Phoenix rise into the world and after sometime, the Phoenix built a nest of twigs and somehow these twigs were ignited. The twigs caught on fire. and in the sheer fire, the twigs was reduced to nothing but ashes. How would we ever survive. It was almost like nothing could survive the tragedy of the Lord. When everything seems to go up in flames, but the story goes on to say that without those deadly ashes of sorrow it those ashes of tragedy and affliction that the fire that the fire had left behind that the fetus the bird was reborn, that was a regenerating, that was renewed that was resurrected the Africans said, the Phoenix came out of the ashes. The point is, as we consider Jeremiah's chief long before Jesus was ever born, long before the prophet ever lived there were Africans. Long before Jesus was ever born. Long before the prophet ever lived, there were Africans. Who understood that , that God is faithful,

the Phoenix came out of the fire. There were Africans who painted pictures on the walls of a bird that would die but that would rise again. Ashes to ashes, but rise again. The Western Christians, y'all know who I'm talkin about. They see the writings on the wall, they see the African writings on the wall and they craft their own narrative in the creole language they say Africans said the Phoenix came out of the fire, but the Westerners said it descended into hail but on the third day it rose from the grave but I'm at Morehouse and it's my tradition the Africans said the Phoenix came out of the fire, Western tradition says he descended to hell and on the third day he rose, but I'm at Mo'house and this tradition playing church Broad Wilmore says we're radical, Benjamin Mays says we're prophetic, Peter Perrish says we're a surrogate world, Deloris Williams says it's a wilderness experience, Keri Day said it's a transcendent anointing, but I just call it the Black Church and in the Black Church they say it like this, Early. They say early, they say early, they say early, early, early, early one Sunday morning, he got up. The Phoenix, the Phoenix came out of the slump and if God could do it to Jesus what is given to Christ by grace is also given to us. Uhhhh those said the eyes in Adam all died, even though in Christ all should be made alive, what is given to Christ is given to us, so I'm here to tell somebody there was flames on the cross, there were flames on balmed buildings, there were flames hovering, burning bodies swangin, from pop lawn trees we were not supposed to survive. Weren't supposed to say Black is beautiful. We weren't supposed to say right on. We were not supposed to say sho' nuff. We were not supposed to worship together and pray together and purge together. Lord knows we have to cry sometimes. The writing is already on the wall. The Phoenix came out of the

fire and because the Phoenix came out of the fire this I can call to mind. That God's mercies are new everyday. Even though it seems like we're walking through flames sometimes. This I can call to mind, though we are walked through the flames we will not be consumed we will survive, though some things get hot sometimes this I call to mind that God's compassions faileth not we will survive. Though things get hot sometimes this I call to mind God's mercies are new every morning we we will survive. The Phoenix sisters and brothers came out of the fire, great is God's excellence through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Appendix E

Just Keep Moving By Teresa Fry Brown

Had it not been for the Lord on our side. Oh taste and see that the Lord is Good and his mercies endureth. I have looked all over I have never seen the righteous forsaken. For I know I have plans for your life, plans not promised. When I think of the Goodness of Jesus and all he's done for me. my soul cries hallelujah. Lord sayeth

First acknowledging that it is God's will and God's way that any of us are able to be here this morning to worship in spirit and truth. To Dr. Rev Cedric Vaughn that's a heavy name (loud chatter from audience) I thank him for his kind invitation. To all clergy who are present to the deacon board, to the deaconess, to the trustees, I'm AME so I go through this stuff all the time. members and friends, God sons of soil salvation. God's daughters of dust and deliverance. I'm grateful to be here for this preparatory period for the 91st anniversary. I understand that during the anniversary we reflect on things that have happened before. Sankofa means we learn from our past so we can go forward. Sometime anniversary means we may spend too much time on the past and not look to the future. So let us go to the word this morning of Deuteronomy the first chapter v. 6, 7, and 8 from the Common English Bible. Deuteronomy 1:6-8 in the Common English Bible. And Horeb the Lord our God told us. You've been at this mountain long enough. In going into the hills of the Ammorites surrounding the areas in the deserts the high lands and the low lands and areas southern region and the sea

coast of the land of the Cannonites and the Lebonites range all the way to the great Euphrates river. look I have laid the land before you. Go and possess the land that I promised to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as the descendants after them. The topic the Lord would have us attend this morning is Just keep moving. Just Keep Moving. To move means go past to another place in a certain direction in a continuous motion. Walking as Mary Mary would say. Tell me what you see when I pass by. A shadow a cloud a line in the sky am I getting warmer, am I getting it right. All I can do is go one step at a time. TO move means to change direction of residence or location like in 1976 characters Weezy and George were moving on up to the East side, to a deluxe apartment in the sky, we're moving on up to the east side deluxe apartment, we finally got a piece of the pie. To move means to dislodge to displace from a fixed position, a craft to change action or thinking over a system over another like Randy Crawford who wrote everything must change, nothing stays the same. Everyone will change, nothing and no one goes unchanged. To move spiritually means to change one's reservation in eternity it's a progressive movement or enunciation of what was in favor of what is, to modify one's behavior to align with God's plan. Gospel writer of my youth once wrote, I move from my old house, I move from my old friends, I move from old way of life. We have to move on to a brand new life. As we mature, As we mature, as our bodies begin to age medical professionals health club emphasize the essential nature of exercise effort keeping fit training and movement. The mothers and fathers would say either you're going to use it our lose it. There are benefits of movement. Brain stays healthy. You have some flexibility. Your creativity increases

and enhances your mental and emotional and spiritual well being and lowers your risk of dying. I'm on assignment to share with you that from the time God spoke us into being, the spirit moved across the face of chaotic waters. God breathed God's sustaining breath into humankind from dirt and spit the world has kept on moving and active and changing evolving according to God's plan. Teaming with life. When it appeared that we had stalled and stopped and got stagnated on what we used to be and what God wants us to be. According to the Biblical text, God's world will continue to move on with or without us so we might as well keep moving. In the 5th book of the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, we find a 120 year old Moses, 40 years after the exile still leading the children of Israel. In the text, Moses is in the last weeks of his life. He's been with you through a seize of making bricks without straw under Egyptian bondage under a new king.

He didn't know Joseph or how they adopted the land of Goshen. He's been with them through plagues of bloody water and frogs and lice and flies and urine on livestock and boils and hail and locus and darkness and even in sudden death. He has lead 600,000 plus women and children there are actually 3.5 million cause brothers married four people then I'm so glad (we're past that)...There was that miraculous parting of the red sea the Yom shook by God's direction of song east wind. They had clothes that always fit and shoes that didn't wear out, protective clouds by day and illuminating fire by night. They traveled in the wilderness of sin fed by quails that were showered on them. Manna out of air, water out of wine. There's that mountain top vision of God when he wrote with his finger on ... stone, there was that indubious party at the foot of the

mountain you know where they honored the golden calf, some of us are still honoring golden calves today. Attacks by internal and external enemies many who initiate followed Moses preferred slavery to freedom. God put, he witnessed God's punishment of an entire generation for their disbelief of God's promise of a land of milk and honey. They did not see the promise land, only their desert surroundings. They forfeited their inheritance for a transient high that died in the wilderness. Self-destructed behavior became the orr of the day for many of them. Some decided the cost to change was just too high. Some opted for total promotion for others to make lott out of the leadership. Some encountered disappointment that human promises became counterfeit checks that no denominational bank could even cash. Some got so caught up with but I can't and they won't let me theology they couldn't focus on God's possibility of promise. Some began to slide into to zombie-like trances under cancerous leadership to grow unchecked spiritual cancers. Some became complicitous in their own self deception that had gone so long that the truth was a vague memory. Some of them perpetuating self entitlement while others languished in poverty. Some continued to voice opinion in private telephone conversation emails and text during worship services, chat rooms, on Youtube and Instagram and Twitter and Facebook, conference calls, and side-walk sidebars, parking lot patter and restaurant rhetoric, in the meeting after meeting at the door at the temple because they're too afraid to sneak up inside. But we've always done it this way. Became the mantra of those that were afraid to change, were too lazy to get up off their seat and do nothingness and try something new. Anyhow, it's in the text. Moses is leading the 60 and under crowd. Whom faith and...of Egypt and some had

been born in the wilderness. Who would soon be following Joshua in the quest for the promise land. To help him bear the burden of leadership God appointed 70 leaders elders and judges to help him. Now standing on one side of the Jordan they could see the land that God had promised their ancestors. That they hadn't occupied for 400 years. And even after experiencing God's saving power in the wilderness the deliverance and salvation of God the children of Israel were camped on the edge of enlightenment on the periphery of proof on the rim of reward on the border of blessing on the fringe of finished on the tip of through on the lip of liminality they were on the residence on the plane of Moab of un poisonous snakes and fear of scorpions and immobility and their willingness to change their location, homelessly living in the past. Passively dreaming of the time of reward existing in a wasteland of rock instead they were becoming restless and second guessing God. Maybe they had just paid attention to the wrong report. CNN had too many commentators that didn't have a clue what they were talking about, Fox was permanently intringed at some red tinge outlook on life. PBS was having another pledge drive and couldn't be bothered with the faith journey. MSNBC was giving intellectual critiques of the position. CSPAN kept repeating over and over and over and over and over again Moses and Pharaoh's great speeches of the past. BBC had accurate information but didn't know the culture. The wilderness dwellers were so caught up in who they used to be they couldn't fathom what God wanted them to be for the next 91 years. There they stood and they could almost see it. They can almost (smacks lips) taste liberation, they could almost smell independence, they could almost touch self-determination on the other side of -- but they hesitated.

Stop moving. Became camped down in the valley of almost. Have you ever been moving along without morning? Couldn't go another what the elders used to say another foot? That they could envision deliverance but they found themselves with doubt seeking into their conversations and disappointment becoming their pillows, and desperation their placing their bedding, and disbelief their...and dreams. They seemingly forgot what they heard about. Moses' mountain top experience. They began to murmur. And nothing than Black people murmuring. You know I don't who they think they are, I was here when they got here. I'mma be here when they go. I don't know what they...askin us to do stuff then take all the ...don't they know I got somewhere to be...always new people comin up in here, we was here when laid the foundation, murmuring. Murmuring. yes. No ownership of what to do next, no incentive to change the position no attempt to move closer, just inching along the poor inch worm. Perhaps they thought the water was too deep, transition too hard, so they remained in complacency camp in going along to get along. Alliances and half-my gift group and wine a lot wine a lot wine a lot out calls. Stepping it by sleeping mortalized by information, riveted by rebuttal, calcified by cautiousness, in the text Moses begins his last sermons serious by reminding the people of His plan and their responsibility. They actualize their gifts, the plan that God can make for their ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel and Leah cause the brother couldn't make up his mind. God instructed Moses to start speaking to the people. So Moses take test on the second yard...going to the parents and grandparents at the foot of Mt. Sinai. He knew it was up to the current or the current generation to follow the law to chose life or

chose death like the last generation. He understood that tomorrow was not promised, we could only do what we can do today. Perhaps he began to extort them so they could remember their history and all the ways God had made them in the crux his sermon tells the children of Israel and God's children today you have been 'round this mountain long enough. You've been around this mountain long enough. It's time to wake up and put some feet on your trade. You [inaudible]...comfort zone. Forget what was behind and start reaching for what's ahead. The French Philosopher Albert Camu said change is the struggle of death between the future and the past. The reason many of us don't move and change and transform anything, anybody is because we scared to work up a sweat for God. We try to do something that ain't even on the bracket battered blessing you gettin in the way with our own stuff some how and everybody else can go straight to hell(?) no advancement unless some self-proclaimed prophet tells us what to do. Our future remains stagnant and stuffled and stuck on stupid. And God has promised us a future filled with hope. Not harm, but good. God's word in the text proclaims its time to move on too what we'll be. Yesterday was fine, learn from yesterday, but it's time to move on to what you'll be. The sounds of salvation are dynamic they're not stagnant. We have to listen to the words of God, today is the day. You've stayed in that place long enough. It is time to get up and move away from all those things that kept you where you were. The amalgamation despair, to keep of alienation, the stack of shame, the world of guilt, the abundance of oppression, the fuse of having to be in control, the mess of never ever wrong, the mask of holding a grudge, the manner I'm the only one that cares, the cuteness of failure that cam from our own temple, the barrow [inaudible]

of afraid to confront any political realities long enough. Such matter what's said I quote Those who don't remember their past are doomed to repeat it. Listen to God's message. I have given you the land. The promise of God is a gift. Stop being, you know when I was growing up, my aunt had this wonderful French provincial furniture that she had laid away but she was paying money on it you know., but it had plastic over it. Plastic over it. You know and in the summer time your behind would stick to the plastic. plastic over it. and what they didn't understand is that plastic and the heat, there's a chemical that's released that starts destroying the fabric that's underneath. That's what we're doing to our blessings. Some of us keep the plastic over our blessings because we want to show everybody when they come to visit, what our blessings are but it's destroying itself open it, use it. The promise is a gift from God. Open it up, God is commissioning to stop waiting. Stop waiting for somebody else to free them. Stop waiting for something to happen. Waiting for someone else to make them happy. Waiting for their night and shining armor. Waiting for the next celebrity look alike...check yourself in the mirror while you're waiting. Waiting for the next talk show schedule. Waiting for the new media defined (?) Waiting for the next mega conference to waste all your money for something God told you anyhow. Waiting to be rescued from a gladiator in a suit uh. I'mma wait on that one. Said I give you permission to move. God says it's time to sift out the shadows and do what seems impossible. Don't we know that God will call people that nobody else expects to do something? To do extraordinary things. Have we been in prison...boarding school Samuel was hearing sounds in the night, harp playing sheep watching David was dealing with his personal

issues, Whining Elijah was promoting his solitary ministry, agricultural special Elisha was plowing his own fields, Temple worshipping Isaiah was mourning the death of a king, moon called Jeremiah was fearful of public speaking, privilege second wife Esther was avoiding her responsibility, whale dwelling Jonah was a defiant racist, five timed divorced woman at the well was seeking respectable long term relationship, sea salt smelling Peter was seeking to broaden his land coefficient building, wounded woman Mary Magdalene was seeking freedom from social and psychological spiritual...(can't hear) maybe a school of theology deviant don't you see its killin who ever doesn't agree Saul was surrounded by the weight of his own wrong thinking, long poolside beggar kept waiting else to put him in the water instead of getting up and getting there himself, life long beautiful gate weight no contribution to society man was begging for a handout. Every one of us has an excuse sometimes. Putting off getting up and moving when God says move. But look at God's direction throughout the Biblical text. God saying we're not sponges time for us to move when God says move. God says I'll require you to do things that nobody else even thinks about doing. I'm gonna ask you to ward some folks during storm of a hold bunch of animals, I'm gonna ask you to go to a fiery furnace without any protective hear on. I'm gonnna ask you to fight giants with a sling shot and a couple of rocks. I'm gonna ask you eat take out, out in a cave where the birds will come and serve, I'mma ask you to go to sleep with lions all around you. I'm gonna ask you to share your last piece of food with some strangers, I'm gonna ask to cut half of yor designer label to somebody else that not looking. I'm gonna ask you to pray for somebody who can't even see. Now is the time to act. To move. To break camp. to

discard anything that's holding us back from being who God wants us to be. God says you've been around this mountain long enough. You've been setting in that place much too long. God says right now I just want you to listen to my instructions and do what I tell you to do. God says get up and get moving. Pack your bags and travel light. Put a for sale sign out the front of your stuff. Sort the memories of your SD card. Turn off utilities. Give away whatever you don't need. Have your mail forwarded let nothing or nobody turn your house. Put your TV and...God says come one my children it's time for you to get up and get ready. This is not an after while, by and by, milk and honey kind of thing, I want you to get up and get to work today. If we don't move we become tepid and apathetic and lurk and insomnia and comatose, paralyzed by putting things off and hurt by making excuses if pale of what could've should've would've been. Going around in circles blaming everybody else for our own mess. Transferring our stuff on people that we don't even know. Content of being Sunday morning sense of entitlement, my family built this church, Christ is already in it, beggin blessin smooth sailing long as ain't nobody lookin. When things go my way, if they sing my song I will amount to bad preaching...it's all about me, not giving unless somebody calls you out, I run this you betta dance to what I say, I can almost taste it, almost feel it. People will atrophy muscle. Dreams become nonexistent. Outreach being stingy. Community involvement being apathetic. our faith becomes stagnant and stinks up the nostrils of God. You've been on this mountain for too long. Blaming somebody else for too long. Afraid to dispose of our own toxic absess for too long. God says enough is enough. Maybe next year, too long. When I get myself together, too long. If they would just, too

long. Ain't nobody asked me, too long. My hopelessness, too long. Waiting, making excuses for why we can't inhabit the land, putting your trust in human being, forgetting about God for too long. But I'm scared, too long. I can't too long. Don't have enough money, too long. Can't pass the test, you study you might pass the...too long.

Everybody hates me, too long. They don't like me, too long. Nobody's gonna come, too long. What difference can I make, too long. I'm already tired, too long. Everybody's talkin about me, too long. Too long. Too long. Too long! God said I've already given you all the tools you need to do the work. If you just look back over your life instead of just singing the song, you'll know you've already done more than God asked you to do right now today. If you don't get up and get moving when God says move, darkness will not get out of the light's way and weeping won't move out of joys presence, and lost will not be found and the blind won't see and the death won't hear and the disabled will never walk, the voiceless will never speak the sick won't get well, the enslave won't go free and the wars won't cease, the governments won't have integrity, nations won't be united, the unemployed won't have jobs, the children won't be safe, youth won't be educated, elders won't be respected, prayers not remembered, prayers will not have purpose, songs will not be composed, sermons won't be preached, minds won't be expanded, houses will not be filled, churches will not be filled, love will not be able to be expressed, peace will not be obtainable, dreams will not be actualized, lives will not be changed believers will not seek God's faith, Faith will not seek the Word, and heaven will not be our home. For all that he's done more than anybody in this world could ever do. God promises us to heal our prayers when we call, in the wilderness on rugged

terrain and hard places and desolate surrounding in churches in schools on jobs in the building of the wheel and the claws who seek to kill and destroy something, tongues of those that lie on God is in the stairs of the people that want to replace us and the pen that want to write us out of history the words of Sirus, they continue to dehumanize us like the children of Israel. Some of us are gonna die on way. Some of us are gonna walk or turn back because course is too hard. Some of us are gonna suffer, but some of us will be able to say aren't we yet alive to see each other's face. God can move all earthly barrings. God's grace is truly sufficient for anything God wants us to do. Can't you see that God promised us to restore whatever we have lost. To make all the uneven ground level. The first and the last are gonna be receiving the same pay. Men and women are gonna be equally valued. Skin color will be transparent. Young and elders wisdom will be respected. The rough placed can be made smooth. Trouble won't last always. God never fails to send the rain of renewal and the hedge of protection of those who are following what God tells us to do. Get up off your seat of do-ntohingness and keep moving. Remember the one that covers Israel never slumbers or sleeps. We've been around this mountain long enough. God kept us when we couldn't keep ourselves. God provided us when everybody in our family said no one would notice. God stood with us when our friends walked away from us. God interceded on our behalf when everybody else was ashamed of us. Keep moving, it's time my brothers and sisters to do what God says to move new renew ship hedge transfers, to alter our positions, dislocate disturb sinking ship, shake out those muscles that are so tight, get all of the kinks out of your body so you can do what God says do. It's time to budge and serve and move and

act and inspire and stimulate and work, keep on doing its time to drive and mobile and dwell to do to impress keep on your get up off your couch and...too tired, clear off the desk and stop letting everybody else do it. Stop listening to what they said but what the spiritual corrective lens and see God in each other. Quit beggin for stuff God already said that God would do. Do something for Christ instead of whining all the time. When you vacate the premises and move God will give us what we...it's time to get up move out and do God said I promise I'll make a way out of no way. I already fought your battle free. I already wrote that nobody can check ...my anointed. nobody can ...it's time to change position it's time to move to serve a God of action and not reaction to returning the legacy of those who came before us to regenerate our communities and stop complainin about what Washington didn't do. Washington don't live where you live, clean up your own place. Time to get our minds to work together, bringing structural institutions to education somebody else to liberate somebody else, to quinch the thirst of somebody else, keep moving, we've been around this mountain long enough. I don't know about you, but I'm still glad God is speaking life for what we think is a dead situation. God is still freeing us of slavery of sin the sin of slavery. God understood that even in 2013 Black people should know that God could free us up of all of our stuff so we'll start living into the culture instead of understanding to live into what Christ wants us to be. God knew that even in 2013 somebody was gon' be setting still too long. That's why all 2000 years ago there was a meeting up in heaven one day. Jesus who was in there in the beginning and moved across...Jesus! the prophet Isaiah called wonderful counselor prince of peace, Jesus! modeled how little becomes much

when we get up and do what we're supposed to do. That's why Jesus took one historical conversation over 42 generations. One Angelical announcement, one undercover assignment in the womb of a 14 year old virgin. Jesus took no vacancy sign at a local motel. Jesus took one manger and one night of heaven and earth just couldn't quit singing. One trip Egypt took forth death. One twelve year old trial sermon. 30 years of carpentry and deeding and listening and developing writing. He took one selverished and infected water then converted the life affirming money. He took 30 recorded miracles and 3 years of healing and teaching and preaching and 3 recording resurrections 1 calmin berraging sea, 1 beating at 5000 at outdoor revival one day and turned around and fed 4000 the next...1 meeting that transferred sick and famine. 1 blessing that...1journey out of Jerusalem,..Jesus took one \$10 traitor, one prayer meeting,

Appendix F

Immeasurable Possibilities by Teresa Fry Brown

You may take your seats in recognition of God's presence and the word of God.

Immeasurable possibilities. The flickering of black and white images will be replayed innumerable times this weekend. Various counting agencies numbered the crowd that day between 200-400,000 people representing all of God's creation gathered at the foot of the Lincoln memorial on that sweltering sweltering day. Some had walked and hitchhiked over 700 miles just to be part of a protest for jobs and freedom. Some had been present since 8 o'clock that morning, sitting across the shallow reflecting pool cooling their feet. Others had come to represent the artistic expression singing protest songs and reading James Baldwin poetry and offering monetary support. 300 plus had come to report the news from around the world and 100 plus militia were present to ensure the peace. J. Edgar Hoover and his wired-tapped attendees promoted character assassination and breached privacy in the name of security and patriotism. And even over 100 politician had suspended their partisan politics just to stand in the crowd. Preachers left the separatist sanctity of individual pulpits to stand with the cause. The so-called camelot president watched the proceedings as he deliberated signing a piece of legislation that would be the first step toward extending collective civil rights in this country and there he stood. An ordinary, average sized well educated passionate man in a dark tie and a white shirt delivering the closing address. 187 years after the

declaration of independence that all men were created equal. An ordinary man standing on the precipice of extraordinary prophetic ministry on August 28, 1963. A man who learned ethic of love in the crucible of his faith at his father's church in Atlanta and his own pastor in Augusta in Montgomery. He had learned much from the teaching of seminary professors in Atlanta and Rochester and Boston and though he had through the lived experience of countless freedom patriots named Johns and Evers and Robinson and Hamer and Larouso and Ghandi. If we watch carefully, I can imagine we can even see the sweat cascading down his face. We hear his poetic proclamation of freedom as he invoke the style of classical Black preachers partly newly researched and written. Part conversation with other ministers like a SNCC worker named Prathia Hall who spoke of having a dream. Partly refiltered old sermons and speeches like the one he preaching on April 10 in 1957 in St. Louis called "I have a dream". Part extemporaneous, part emotional and potential of the moment. Partly enlivened by the call and response of all of God's children setting on that mall. King discarded his prepared notes and launched into his notes of reclaiming the soul of America of all of God's creation of all God's sons and daughters and daughters of son, living together in a finely textured tapestry of love and unity. A time when people like us would be judged on our internal character and not our external pigmentation. A time of a new world a new people a new justice. Just new and he passionately spoke of it because he believed in immeasurable possibilities. The lectionary text for today is a spiritual object lesson about immeasurable possibilities, boundless potential, limitless prospects in estimable results and transformative action in ordinary places among

ordinary people with ordinary circumstances. In chapter 1 of John we know that John has written a Genesis-like thematic hymn about the witness and work of John the Baptist and he begins and Jesus begins gathering his disciples like Andrew and Nathaniel and Jesus then as we shift into chapter two there's a time stamp on his actions. Three days later there was a wedding in a village called Cana. 8-9 miles north of Nazareth Canaan was a fortified village of ordinary people on the 30 mile route between Nazareth and Capernicum. God always chooses unlikely places to reveal God's glorious action on our behalf. The text says, there's a wedding. According to the prevailing custom wedding festivities began on the third day of the week and lasted 7 long days. Having paid for a wedding, I wouldn't have enjoyed this at all. Invitations to, attendance at and assisting with the wedding was part of one's social obligation and it showed someone's status and honor. Jesus and the disciplines, joined by his mother entered Canaan and we don't know at what point he entered into the wedding festivities, just that he showed up and isn't that just like Jesus. We don't know when Jesus shows up, it's just that Jesus is. And it's accustomed that the guests were reclining on mats and they were eating and food was copious and the wine was flowing and the music was going and they were dancing and then the wine ran out. To be short of wine was a serious embarrassment for the host parents and the newly weds. Everyone in attendance would know the shame of the family that failed to provide adequate wine - can you imagine the social networking lighting up? Facebook updates and posting of pictures of empty cups turned over. Twitter updates of the reactions of the guests. Paparazzi flashing cameras in the bridal chamber. TMZ having the nerve to interview

the disgruntled guests? Social columns saying this was the wedding disaster of the whole year and there were probably even plans for a new reality show about what happens when you run out of wine. Can you imagine the kind of critique that probably went on about why those people in Washington anyway? Who told this person that they could talk about world peace? In the text, Mary must've been helping as women do when these kind of occasions have and she went to her son seeking help and said we've run out of wine and Jesus looked at her like what do you expect me to do? And I know some commentators said he was rude to his mother, but perhaps it's like one enters a special ministry or has a calling on their lives and their family and friends don't understand what has to be done. And they're the one that always is called on to pray when you get together. You know wha--ok ok. So maybe he was turning not to be rude to his mother, but to say woman my time has not come, the people aren't ready for me to do what I've been sent here to do, but something must've shifted on the corners of Jesus' hear and Jesus begins to help. Mary goes and he says, do what they tell you to do. Jesus realizing he was not the host but he was a guest, but he knew that something had to be done. So often we try to preempt God and don't do things when we're supposed to do them, but do them when other people tell us to do them, but Jesus is saying it's the already and the not yet. It's time for me to do something. At this time he decides to help the host. And perhaps we can learn something here. He didn't call attention to himself he just began the work. Jesus didn't wait for a photo-wop, he just began the work. Jesus didn't wait to be on CNN or FOX or anything, he just did the work. What follows as one of 7 miracles presented in the book of John, known in contemporary faith

circles as a book of healings but Jesus' first act was one of provision. Of abundance of newness of transformation of unexpected change of sharing and saving. There was enough water for ritual hand washing as the guest continued to eat, but there was no wine. There was water enough to sustain life as they knew it, but there was no wine. There was enough water to dilute the fermented wine had there been some, but there was no wine. In the land of abundance, there's enough for some, but not enough for everyone. They're haves and have-nots, they're rich and they're poor, they're educated and uneducated. There's housed and houseless. They're insured and uninsured. There's enough water, but not enough wine. We know that in Israel, wine was a symbol of joy and blessing and warmth and celebration and wisdom. It meant restoration to the kind of world that God wanted it to be. Hadn't the prophet Amos said, "it won't be long, I'll make everything right says God, for my people in Israel they'll rebuild the ruin cities, they'll plant vineyards and drink good wine, They'll work in their gardens and eat fresh vegetables, I will restore everything, when it's time" So here in the text we understand that many commentators pay attention to the six stone jars, stone representing impurity the 20-30 gallon jars and Jesus tells his servants go fill them with water and fill them to the brim. And filling them to the brim means that nothing else can enter. Sometimes we have just enough compassion for our folks, but God is saying fill it to the brim so that nothing else can get in. And whatever Jesus did, the servants did it. And it's not clear when the water was turned into wine. There's no time stamp we can put on Jesus. There's no recording of when the the the color changed from clear to some beautiful rose. We don't know that, but with Jesus it's never an issue of when, but what is being

done. And and and then Jesus says take take some to the wine steward and and and the text says when the host drank the wine, can you see his face light up like when, ok never mind, can you see his face light up as he tastes the wine? And he says so many people just give ordinary things to the first people, but you know how uh in churches it probably doesn't happen in places that you go, but sometimes at churches the people who are serving just give anything to the first people, and they put a little bit back for themselves to take home to enjoy later. You know, that's been my experience, it's just been my experience. Ok and so the wine steward takes it to the bridegroom and says most of the time people give just anything at the beginning and they save something, but you have saved this. I've never tasted anything like it. You saved it to last. Isn't it interesting, I believe that this morning the text says that throughout history God has sent prophets and kings and leaders to show people the more excellent way. To show people the possibility for change and when their missions were ignored God sent God's very best. God sent God's only son, born in obscurity in an out of the way place. Beginning ministry in an obscure place like Canaan. Live with obscure people named disciples and fisherman and harlots and everything else and performing the miraculous wherever he went the true vine, the wine of grace and mercy, the wine of deliverance and life, God sent Jesus to change our poor to good. And our good efforts to better efforts and our better efforts to best efforts and our best to exceptional extraordinary efforts. Jesus' first act of public ministry is an act of restoration of saving grace to all who believe and want to live according to God's teaching. The texts says and the disciples believed in him. Sometimes the people closest to us don't believe until they see

the miraculous all us, but the the disciples who had been traveling with him believed in him and Jesus came to do more, to provide us with immeasurable possibilities for faith. That one act set the stage for all that would come after that. The one act is God's cairos God's in breaking in ordinary time, even in the midst of destruction. The one act is like a rose that comes up in concrete. The one act is like the last person you expect does the most miraculous things right before your eyes. I want to tell you this morning that God is doing new things in unexpected places. Not just when someone is pulled from the rebel of an earthquake, but right around you today, God is doing the miraculous in unexpected out of the ordinary places. It cannot programmed by digital wizards. It cannot be prognosticated by some self-named prophet. It can't be talked about at nauseum by talking media heads in the midst of you right now God is changing water into wine. We don't have to taste it like the wine steward in the text. We may not be aware of the need for change. We don't know when the change comes. When don't know how the change is going to happen. We don't know who is going to be the change agent. We don't know what it is going on, all we know is that God is and God is still working miracles today. God knows that in this moment we need transformation. At this time we need change, we need alteration we need resolution we need to become who God wants us to become. Surely the day is come, needs to become now is the time. And so here we stand in 2010 a new day a new year a new decade 47 after that day in washington. It often seems however as if the promise of that moment, the impotence for movement toward universal freedom the infinite repercussions of extraordinary actions in the ordinary overlooked in out of the way places like St. Augustine and Greensboro

and North Laundale and Selma and Albany. The prophetic urging toward a beloved community. The activist demonstration of liberty and justice for all. The call for end of war that countless selfless sacrifices. The depths of intellectual interrogations. The innumerable prophetic sermons and urgings somehow have been in tuned in an annual of a replaying of a 17 minute and 27 second dreamscape rather than us getting up and doing something about it. We have to remember that faith is active not passive. We need to focus on are tension not on dreaming, but being wide awake engaging the world before catastrophe strikes. We must remember that we have been empowered through the life, teaching, ministry, sacrifice, resurrection and promise return of Jesus the Christ to live our faith in such way that even our minute acts of love and care positively impact the lives of our brothers and sisters next door as well as over there that we never see. There's an old song that says little become much when you place it in the master's hand. Have we placed ourselves in the master's hands? God is calling each of us to as King was taught by Gandhi, to be the change in the world that we want to see not just once a year for a day or not off, but everyday in daily attention to those that have less than we have. God is calling us to stand in the gap for someone else. God is calling us to dream our own dream, to see our own visions. To step out on faith and do the work we know and not waiting for committee meeting not waiting for great big group to do it, not even waiting for a budget, just doing what God has placed on our hearts. Changing the water of our zigzagging back and forth on issues into a zeal to do God's work. The yearning into a yes. The excess into an escape from apathy. Our worry into wonder about how wonderfully God is. Our violence into vision. Our

underhandness into understanding. God is calling us to transform human tragedy into triumph. Scandal into success. Ridicule into redemption, quarrels into quiet. God wants us to convert the water of peril into the wine of promise, the oppression into oneness, the negativity into nurture. The mendacity into mercy, the lies into love. God wants us to replace killing with kindness and jealousy with justice and havoc with hope and greed with grace and frustration into faith. Today like the wedding at Canaan we are empowered to turn the water of envy into the wine of new energy, destruction into deliverance, the chaos into calm, the bigotry into beneficence, apathy into action. Today we are called on to resolve with the courage of our convictions to reclaim the legacy of those who built on the foundation of Jesus and his love. To regenerate all of our communities, to reaffirm the richness of our very cultures, to be kind enough to work with each other to reconstruct all institution of faith to share a cup of kindness in Jesus name. Today we are to perform to impact those who feel loveless and embrace those who feel lonely even if they're in our own homes. To watch those who are covered in the dirt of the world. To reach out for people who feel locked out and stand for those who have to strength and even to speak for those with no voice. Today we intercede for those who cannot pray for themselves, to education someone else, to liberate someone else, to quench the thirst of someone else, to feed the soul of someone else. To change the ordinary water of our existence into the wine of beloved community. On April 3rd 1968 Dr. King laboring under premonition of his appending death gave his "I've been to the mountain top" about limitless potential about all who act in selfless faith. He challenged each of us more than I have a dream. Let us develop a dangerous

unselfishness. Let us rise up to night with a greater readiness, Let us stand with great determination and let us move on in these powerful days. These days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make American a better nation. Today our service to others is the rent we pay for being here. Our selfless help of someone else benefits promised life in immeasurable possibilities. In ordinary places by ordinary people in, in ordinary circumstances then we will all experience boundless potential, limitless prospects, inestimatable results and immeasurable possibilities for all of creation, God bless...[inaudible].

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