



## **JUSTICE EMPHASIS SUNDAY**

### **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**Sunday, October 11, 2009**

**Lisa D. Rhodes, Guest Cultural Resource Commentator**

Dean of Sisters Chapel, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA

Scripture - Isaiah 58:6: Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

#### **I. Personal Reflections: Elmina Castle, the Atlantic Slave Trade and Justice**

During the summer of 2006, I traveled to Ghana, West Africa, to engage in what Cheryl Finley calls “cultural heritage tourism.”<sup>1</sup> On the last day before the delegation from Atlanta was to return to the United States, we visited Elmina and Cape Coast castles, fortresses where Africans

were held in dungeons before their horrific exit through the Door of No Return and across the Atlantic Ocean to the systematic degradation of enslavement in the Americas.

On this unforgettable day, at the ocean, under grey clouds, I painfully connected to my past. With tear filled eyes, I retreated within and heard the words of resistance from the spiritual, “O Freedom.”

O freedom, O freedom,  
O freedom after a while,  
And before I'd be a slave,  
I'd be buried in my grave,  
And go home to my Lord and be free.

There'll be no more moaning, no more moaning,  
No more weeping, no more crying...  
There'll be no more kneeling, no more bowing...  
There'll be shouting, there'll be shouting...

I was jolted back to the present by the voice of our Ghanaian tour guide, Kofi. Kofi's words pierced my heart, as he shared the story of African peoples: many--who in spite of their captivity, dehumanization, beatings, rape, humiliation, torture and enslavement--survived. A range of emotions overwhelmed me, although anger and rage were amongst the most prominent, a spirit of self-determination, resistance and struggle prevailed.

This was a transformative moment. My understanding of the interaction between remembrance and embodied experience and what it means to be a woman of African descent intensified my sense of moral agency. At this intersection of profound spiritual awareness, I had no desire to be a picture-taking tourist, but witnessed as a reflective family member. I stood in the courtyard outside the female dungeon listening to our tour guide direct our attention to stairs that led from the female dungeon to the Governor's bedroom, where African women had no choice but to be sexually assaulted, objectified and exploited by white men. This visual created a visceral reaction to the long arduous history of black women's experiences of the tri-dimensional injustice related to racism, sexism, and class oppression; and, its continued multi-dimensional expression and impact on the lives of black women and adolescent girls in twenty-first century America.

## **II. Rationale**

I commenced this cultural resource offering for Justice Emphasis Sunday with the painful reminder of the dark days of iron shackles, stench-filled dungeons, un-welcoming stairs, and the door of no return—as a clarion call to keep before the nation and the world the continued need to raise our voices for justice. Injustice continues to prevail. Shackles have been replaced with handcuffs and excess force by police officers against black men and the yoke of economic dependence and unemployment; concrete courtyards and stench-filled dungeons by the cradle to grave prison pipeline, prison cells and life sentences, and un-welcomed stairs to the Governor's quarters by continued sexual violence against women and children.

In twenty-first century America, black women, men and children suffer disproportionately from social, economic, and political inequalities. Far too many of us within the Church are satisfied with church attendance, sitting in the pews, and fasting and praying, as an outward form of personal salvation, piety and righteousness. The prophetic words of Isaiah call us to action and a moral agenda that undergirds a life ethic which advocates for justice for ALL.

### III. Historical Lessons: Women and Injustice

In 1840, abolitionists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were not seated at the World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London, because they were women. This rejection became a seed that resulted in the first Women's Rights Convention held eight years later at Seneca Falls, New York. The Convention was attended by sixty-eight women and thirty-two men, including Frederick Douglass.

Using the Declaration of Independence as a guide, Stanton drew up the Declaration of Sentiments that defined the meeting and was signed by the attendees. This Declaration listed eighteen "injuries and usurpations" on the part of man toward woman.

*We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all **men and women** are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.*

*Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; ... But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, ... it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.<sup>2</sup>*

This 1848 historic document states that all men and women are created equal; and yet, black women continued to have to contend with issues of race, gender and class. American antebellum (pre-Civil War) culture often placed white women on a pedestal with privileges that were not extended to black women—free or slave. The "cult of true womanhood" or the "cult of domesticity" described the role of women and the nature of femininity. This classist and racist ideology that defined womanhood basically excluded black women, who were oppressed as a socio-historical group and too often exposed to sexual exploitation by white males.

In 1851, Sojourner Truth, an ex-slave, and anti-slavery preacher, became a voice for women's rights and equality of the sexes in a powerful speech that galvanized a Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio. Several decades later, in her eighties, Sojourner, ever the activist, tried to vote in her home in Battle Creek Michigan.

*Sojourner Truth, on Saturday before the recent election, appeared before the board of registration, in the third ward where she resides, and claimed the right to have her name entered upon the lists of electors. Upon being refused, she repaired to the polls on election day in the same ward and again asserted her right to the ballot. She was politely received by the authorities in both instances, but did not succeed in her effort...<sup>3</sup>*

#### IV. Contemporary Justice Work Through Film



Forty Acres and a Mule Filmworks is Spike Lee's powerful and much needed media activist production company that keeps before the nation the fact that justice is still being denied to so many. In 1989, in his third film, Do the Right Thing, Lee depicts a multi-ethnic community engaged in controversial issues, textured by the triple dynamic of race, gender, and class.

Against a backdrop of smoldering heat and the concrete realities of black urban life, Spike Lee calls forth a response to injustice. The movie takes place on a single street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York. In the film, black urban life is characterized by unemployment, alcoholism and violence, with few mediums for cathartic release, except for a ghetto blaster which gives voice and freedom to the "Black Noise" of Public Enemy's clarion call to "Fight the POWER." The film's title, Do the Right Thing! is issued as a directive from "Da Mayor" of the block, played by Ossie Davis. Lee brilliantly closes with dual statements: Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. saying, "Violence is never justified under any circumstances," and Malcolm X stating: "Violence is intelligent when it is self-defense."<sup>4</sup>

Lee continues his testimonial contemporary witness in his documentary 4 Little Girls. It tells the story of the 1963 bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama which took the lives of four little black girls, the 1963 March on Washington and the intensification of the Civil Rights Movement challenges to segregation and racism. In explaining why he made the documentary Lee says:

*African Americans are far too quick to want to forget. We don't want to remember. It's always: "Let's forget about slavery, Emmett Till, Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers. Why you wanna go back and bring that up--dredge up that stuff?" Consequently, we have a generation of black kids who think this is the way it always was--that we could always live where we wanted, eat where we wanted, have church where we wanted. We need to remember.*

While a graduate film student at New York University in the 1980s, Lee wrote a passionate letter to Denise's father, Christopher McNair, asking if he could do a movie about his daughter. Mr. McNair, who had shunned giving any more than tempered, cursory comments about his daughter's death--partly due to fear of retribution, partly because he was tired of people telling him to "let it alone"--declined.

Years later, Lee pitched his idea to McNair again. This time, the reluctant father said yes. “I realized it was stupid to forget,” McNair says of his change of heart. “I want people to, number one, know who the four little girls were and, number two, understand that it just doesn’t pay and that this could have happened anywhere in the United States. Those girls--my daughter--should not have died.”<sup>5</sup>

More recently with When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts, Lee provides us with an intimate, heartbreaking visual narrative documenting New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the breakdown of moral resolve and justice in the repeated failures of local, state and federal responses to the crisis.<sup>6</sup>

## V. Gender Justice: Theological and Cultural Sources

Women are the gatekeepers of the community, the hands that rock the cradle, nurturers of values, and the bridge that binds generations of black youth to culture, history and religious life. Yet, black women and our children are the most vulnerable targets likely to experience the impact of injustices and inequality.

### A Womanist Corrective



Dr. Delores Williams

Sisters in The Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, Delores Williams’ autobiographical and scholarly reflections about what it means to use as a primary theological source, the faith, thought, and life struggle of African American women, is extremely useful for correcting gender injustice experienced in black religious thought and practice.<sup>7</sup> Attention to black women’s issues and life struggles of oppression must be primary in any moral discourse that seeks a remedy for injustice in church and society.

Williams confronts the “colonization” of the female mind and culture<sup>8</sup> and challenges black theology, religion, church tradition, and all of Christianity to use black women’s experiences as cultural sources. Although in some respects denominational churches have sustained black women emotionally and provided “theological space” for expressions of faith, black women, who make up over seventy-five percent of black churches, have been excluded as a vital leadership force in religious life and culture. This exclusionary ecclesial practice is woven into the very ideological fabric of both broader church and black religious life and culture. Historically, cultural sources have been presented as only white and black male experiences. Patriarchal and andocentric theologies,<sup>9</sup> liturgy, and leadership have been primary agents in making black women’s thought invisible and colonizing the female mind and culture.

Williams’ contribution to the development of a theological corrective is designed to help black women see the need to transform the sexist character of church and theology, while also bringing black women’s experience into the discourse of all Christian theology. This corrective is called Womanist theology.<sup>10</sup> Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm, and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of Christian religion in the black community. It is a theology that is concerned with the faith,

survival, and freedom struggles of black women. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces that limit a positive, productive quality of life. It identifies and critiques black male oppression of black females, while also critiquing white racism that oppresses all black people, female and male.

Womanism affirms the full humanity of women, yet it critiques white feminist participation in the perpetuation of white supremacy. Although organically related to both black male liberation and feminist theologies, Womanist theology is distinct in that it introduces new issues, constructs, and analytical categories to the biblical and hermeneutical interpretation of community and black female experience. It allows for a critical engagement in meaningful discourse and ethical reflection on the faith, spirituality, and moral agency of black women. It empowers black women who have been and continue to be dismissed and relegated to the sidelines of religious leadership and judicatory offices. It seeks to awaken and exorcise in women oppression that they have internalized and help them resist a misogynistic religious culture that perpetuates the oppression of women.

Two traditions of African American biblical appropriation have been useful for the construction of black theology in North America. The first is liberation of the oppressed, which shows God relating to men in freedom struggles. The second tradition, Womanist theology, emphasizes female activity and de-emphasizes male authority. This second tradition is most useful for examining the theological and cultural intricacies of black women's experiences.

## VI. A West African Woman's Perspective



In Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a native of Ghana, West Africa, invites a closer look at what has and continues to shape women's lives. Anchored in her matrilineal parentage from the Asante community, this work studies the traditional influences and modern social structures that have shaped and continue to fashion African womanhood.<sup>11</sup>

Oduyoye's analysis of the role, expectations, norms, language, and images embedded in African folktalk and proverbs, and the social and religious customs and practices evident in relationships between women and men, marriage, culture, and religion clearly illuminate patriarchal ties to socioeconomic and political structures that oppress women and render them powerless. The very social history embedded in the religious corpus of folktalk has its origin in patriarchy, a cultural and social system of male control and dominance. Therein, patriarchy operates in the socialization of young women and men, subliminally transmitting oppressive language, images, behaviors, customs, and practices to generations of girls and boys. Oduyoye challenges the daughters of Anowa and calls the Christian Church to deconstruct patriarchal oppression and work toward the vision of a "New Woman" in a "New Africa."<sup>12</sup>

Oduyoye locates her vision for African women along a historical trajectory of resistance that began with protests against colonial exploitation and demands young people get involved and struggle against white racism and intraregional divisions.

The cultural ethos of resistance and struggle present during the Civil Rights Movement and the support of United Nations-sponsored meetings gave the Women's Movement a global face, voice, and increased visibility. It was at Nairobi in 1985 that significant numbers of African women were outwardly defying their "well-behaved," "docile," and "contented" images. Throughout the late 1980s to the present, the Women's Movement has caught fire, and African women are living to tell their story on their own terms.

## **VII. Prisons, Profits and Policies: America's New Slavery: Black Men in Prison**

In Racism, Prisons and the Future of Black America, Manning Marable, Professor of History and Political Science, and the Director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University, calls on black leadership throughout America to place the issue of mass imprisonment at the forefront of their civil rights and advocacy agendas.<sup>13</sup> Of the approximately two million Americans incarcerated in federal and state prisons and local jails throughout the United States, more than half are black men and women.<sup>14</sup> American prisons are disproportionately filled with young black males, largely due to drug related charges that receive more severe punishment and longer sentences than many more violent crimes. In 2007, according to U.S. Justice Department statistics, black men were being locked up at the rate of 4,618 per 100,000 compared to white men who were being incarcerated at the rate of 773 per 100,000.<sup>15</sup>

The policies and laws that contribute to incarceration disparities clearly demonstrate a pattern of racial bias and injustice. Civil rights leaders and organizations continue to address racial bias in sentencing as indicated in their leadership conferences and reports.<sup>16</sup>

### **Who Protects Us From YOU: The Cradle to Prison Pipeline**

Oppressed people have historically used language, dance and music to mock those in power, express rage, and produce visions of subversion. These cultural forms are transcripts with hidden texts that produce both communal knowledge about social conditions and foster communal resistance. The rap lyrics from the song by KRS-One, "Who Protects Us From You," is an example of how rap's social criticism and assessment of police harassment and brutality especially against black men relates to everyday life and the relationship between social protest, resistance and moral codes of society.

The impact racialized processes of unequal justice have on our youth is even more devastating. Racial disparities are evident at every level of the juvenile justice process. African American children under age eighteen comprise fifteen percent of their national age group; yet, they are disproportionately represented in the Juvenile Justice system.<sup>17</sup> This is what the Children's Defense Fund founder and president, Marian Wright Edelman, calls "The Cradle to Prison Pipeline." In her Child Watch Column, in an article titled "Let's Put the Justice Back in Our Juvenile Justice System," Edelman describes the juvenile justice system as a major feeder into the cradle to prison pipeline.<sup>18</sup>



The pipeline sucks many young people into adult criminal justice systems through legislation such as the Three Strikes Law in California, juvenile justice codes that target black and Latino youth and the poor, as well as Proposition 6. Proposition 6 would have changed current law to require more children, even children as young as fourteen, to be tried and sentenced as adults. Such laws and codes remind us what ensnared Genarlow Wilson in Georgia, the Jena 6 in Louisiana, and so many more throughout this country, who are unduly tried and convicted as adults and receive what should be called cruel and unusual punishment. Child activists and community leaders see the cradle to prison pipeline, Proposition 6 and the overall racialized processes of unequal justice as a way to ensure that prisons stay full and private interest groups profit.

Those who opposed Proposition 6 included the California Federation of Teachers, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California, California Democratic Party, California Teachers Association, California State Chapter of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Dolores Huerta, Co-Founder of the United Farm Workers, Friends Committee on Legislation, Children's Defense Fund of California, the League of Young Voters, and Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL).

According to the League for Women Voters of California:

Proposition 6 which was on the November 2008 ballot would have cost over \$1 BILLION dollars the first year, and \$20 BILLION over 40 years.

It also would undo trends towards youth rehabilitation; and force people in public housing to be subject to annual criminal background checks, which could lead to families losing their homes.

Prop. 6 claims to be a comprehensive anti-gang and crime reduction measure. Yet virtually every study of gang problems and high-crime communities calls for a coordinated balanced approach that includes the use of community service workers and mental health, drug and alcohol services along with tough law enforcement.

Unfortunately, Prop. 6 takes money away from those programs. It focuses on the symptoms, not the causes.<sup>19</sup>

With a coordinated campaign with supporters including many in law enforcement, the proposition failed during the November 2008 election.

### **Who Profits from the Prison Industrial Complex?**

The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a system in which government and private interests intersect and prisons are used to benefit a few. Private investors, corporations, politicians and policy makers invest in prisons as a business and their money and privilege perpetuates and influences legislation and policies that continue the cycle and benefits the return on their investments. The increase in prison construction and personnel sustains an injustice system which financially supports the investments of corporations.

The blatant disregard for black life is callous. To think that such extreme disciplinary measures are increasingly the norm is horrifying. Where is the redemptive, restorative, rehabilitative nature of humanity? Where is the outrage? The greatest victims of the racialized processes of unequal justice are young African American and Latinos and, therein, the prison pipeline places the yoke of slavery around the necks of our future generation. Manning calls the burgeoning racialized prison industrial complex the great moral and political challenge of our time.<sup>20</sup>

### **VIII. Violence Against Women – A Justice Issue**

About ten years ago, in a conversation with a very dear family member, she talked about why Yolanda Adams' *In The Midst of It All* was so meaningful to her life. One night when her abusive husband was sleeping, she held his gun in her hand, sat on the edge of the bed crying and thought about killing him for the numerous times he slapped, kicked, and punched her; for the numerous times he emotionally disrespected her, cheated on her, degraded and humiliated her in public and in front of her children. But, she could not commit this crime and credits God's saving grace for keeping her from killing her husband in the midst of his violence and abuse.

Every day three women die in the United States as a result of domestic violence, murders, and assaults by husbands and boyfriends. That is approximately 1,300 women a year.<sup>21</sup>

#### **The Church Failed A Victim of Abuse**

On September 27, 2008, in a newspaper article in the "Faith & Values" section of the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Gracie Bonds Staples wrote, "Something is terribly wrong with a religion that condoned a husband beating his wife and that blamed her when he did. Tranteegus Allen knew this in her gut but her husband always had a 'good' reason to hit her, as he quoted Scripture to justify it. Even when she sought the counsel of friends and family at her church, they defended him and blamed her. Her story is one of many that have come to the attention of domestic violence experts who say that too often houses of worship fail to protect women by not holding their intimate partners accountable." The black church and Domestic Violence Institute endeavor to address issues of accountability, while providing training for pastors, lay leaders, victims and the perpetrators of violence.

In a 2004 issue of Essence, in an article entitled "Sanctified and Suffering," Renita Weems, biblical scholar, underscores how many of us interpret God's work in ways that leave us victims. She describes two sister friends who have chosen to remain in relationships that pummel away at their spirits. Many black women seek to justify their victimization by blaming it on "God ... God told me to stay; there must be a reason for my suffering; this is my test, my cross and my burden; God will not put more on me than I can bear." One sister's husband batters her the way his father battered his mother. The other sister feels God is calling her to ministry, but acquiesces to her pastor's belief that women are not called to be preachers. "'God doesn't call women,' he has stated hundreds of times from the pulpit." Dr. Weems encourages women to find a spirituality that will empower them rather than blindly believe biblical interpretations that leave women as victims are truth. "God does not demand that we give ourselves completely away in relationships. Save some self for yourself—you will need her one day."<sup>22</sup>

On college campuses, female students are experiencing an increase in the number of violent incidents. But, what is more horrifying, is that many young black female college students arrive on campus with a history of sexual assault or domestic violence in the home. When I conducted a group meeting of thirty students at Spelman, fifty percent of them reported, while sharing their spiritual autobiographies, sexual assault by a family member or family friend during their formative or adolescent years. As a result, the Chapel on the campus of Spelman College developed a Faith and Social Justice initiative, a spiritually based advocacy group, renamed by students as, "Righteous Noise." This student organization sponsored a sophomore assembly during Domestic Violence Month. This assembly was designed to increase awareness and encourage student engagement in advocacy, on behalf of stopping violence against women. Dr. Traci West, Professor of Ethics and African American Studies at Drew Theological seminary, spoke on the theme, "Telling the Truth About Violence, Black Women, and God." After the lecture, Nicole Fraise and Leslie Hunter, student members of the Sista Speak-Up spoken word ministry, shared, through poetry, the impact of domestic violence on the family. Their words are inspired by their spiritual activism and fueled by an unwavering faith in a God of justice.

### **A Prolonged Prayer**

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord, my soul to keep.  
If I shall die before I wake, I pray the Lord, my soul to take...  
My Mommy, she showed me love  
She tucked me in and kissed me on my forehead each night  
Then she'd iron Daddy's clothes and try to survive the next fight  
I lay down and tried to sleep,  
But my closed eyes couldn't block the sound of Mommy being beat  
Daddy said the creases in his pants weren't "just right"  
I think that was the reason for their fight

In the morning Mommy fed me  
And put some ice on her eye  
Dressed me for school, packed my lunch, and kissed me good-bye  
My mommy's love was strong  
Despite the pain she never cried  
Granny,  
Granny loved my Mommy, and told her it was wrong  
Mommy said the pain never lasted long  
"Oh it was just one slap"  
I could hear Granny say "But Baby Girl, love don't love like that"  
"Oh he loves me, or I'm sure he did"  
I could hear my Granny say "Baby Girl, it ain't love just 'cause ya'll got kids"

Mommy would argue "he did it out of anger, he said he was sorry. He still cares about me.  
In fact, come to think of it, it was a love tap."  
I could hear my Granny say "But Baby Girl, love don't love like that"  
Mommy would say "we have really good moments and that's why I stay"  
Granny would answer her crying, "Baby Girl, think. Why stay for a moment when you're losing your days. Think of your kids and all the time you waste"

My Mommy she showed me love  
Told me there was no limit to my dreams  
It was hard for me to dream in between my Mommy's screams  
In the morning Mommy fed me  
And put some ice on her eye  
Dressed me for school, packed my lunch, and kissed me good-bye

I heard Mommy tell Granny, "It was only a shove"  
And I could see Granny shaking her head, " But Baby Girl, that just ain't love"  
Seeing my Daddy in handcuffs a fight gone wrong  
Mommy didn't feed me in the morning  
Mommy... was gone  
I'm holding Granny's hand and I can hear her cry  
She told me Mommy's in Heaven, asleep now  
And I wonder if she's happy up there,  
Granny said in Heaven you don't get beat  
Standing over Mommy's grave I could hear her say "He loves me til death do us part"  
Yeah, that's what Mommy would say  
Granny would answer her, tears in her eyes  
"Baby Girl, if it was love, you'd be here today."

Father Forgive me... for I have sinned  
Now I never thought I'd be writing this,  
It's a letter I know you'll never receive  
But see I've got to get this off my chest...  
It's because of you that a beautiful black queen was put to rest...  
God blessed her with so many loved ones yet....  
She gave all her love to you  
And what did you do?  
You killed her  
You killed her mentally,  
murdered her emotionally  
and beat her to her death...

Now you tell me... What kind of husband does that?  
What kind of man beats the mother of his child, his better half, his wife...  
The supposed love of his life!  
I guess....  
I guess you loved her just how you loved me  
'Cause when u got done with her u turned to hit me

See this love affair,  
yeah I said it, this love affair  
went on for years but I put an end to our threesome  
Like Jackie Robinson, I pulled out my bat, better yet like Jackie Gleason

all through the night I beat u.  
I beat you to your death and smiled at your blood  
I laughed at your life,  
then stared at the judge,  
hoping he'd let true justice reign,  
but he looked in my eyes right past the pain.  
Right past the scars  
and right past the tears,  
and sent me to prison for 16 years;

...but a lifetime sentence in any man's jail  
could never compare to the lifetime of Hell you put me through!  
So yeah I sit and I think and I pray to my God  
hoping he knew I was going against all odds  
and it was only for my protection that I ended your life....  
See that woman you killed was much more than your wife ....  
She was my mother and my very best friend  
but at the age of 19, because of you, our friendship was forced to end....

Father forgive me for I have sinned...  
Father forgive me for I have sinned...  
Nobody heard my cries...  
No one was there to listen  
And I just wanted...  
No needed...  
The pain to end...

I forgot that I could call on you, trust in you, confide in you  
My refuge, my Redeemer, My one true friend....  
"Father forgive me....For I have Sinned."

So.....  
Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord, my soul to keep.  
If I shall die before I wake, I pray the Lord, my soul to take...<sup>23</sup>

### Notes

1. Finley, Cheryl. "The Door of (No) Return." Common-Place 1.4 (July 2001) part. I. Cultural heritage tourism is a type of travel-related identity seeking, where people visit monuments, historic sites, and other places of interest in an effort to get a glimpse of where they came from and an understanding of how they define themselves. Roots spurred the first big wave of African American heritage tourism in the late 1970s, together with the designation of both Cape Coast and Elmina as World Heritage Monuments.

2. Lewis, Jone Johnson. "Declaration of Sentiments – Seneca Falls: Women's Rights Convention 1848." About.com. 1999. Online location: [www.womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrage1848/a/seneca\\_declaratn.htm](http://www.womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrage1848/a/seneca_declaratn.htm) accessed 5 May 2009
3. Truth, Sojourner. "From the Battle Creek Papers." Sojourner Truth, Narrative of Sojourner Truth, A Bondswoman of Olden Times, With a History of Her Labors and Correspondence Drawn from Her "Book of Life." The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers. Oxford University Press, 1991. p. 231.
4. "Spike Lee Films." About.com. Online location: [http://worldfilm.about.com/od/spikesfilms/Spike\\_Lee\\_Films.htm](http://worldfilm.about.com/od/spikesfilms/Spike_Lee_Films.htm) accessed 5 May 2009
5. Millner, Denene. "Remembering Four Little Girls." American Visions Magazine Feb/March 1998.
6. When the Levees Broke a Requiem in Four Acts. Dir. Spike Lee. New York, NY: HBO Video, 2009. Online location: <http://www.hbo.com/docs/programs/whentheleveesbroke/index.html> accessed 5 May 2009; and, Lee, Spike. Interview with Gary Susman. Industry Central.net. 2008. Online location: [http://industrycentral.net/director\\_interviews//SL01.HTM](http://industrycentral.net/director_interviews//SL01.HTM) accessed 5 May 2009
7. Williams, Delores S. Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.
8. The phrase "Colonization of the female mind," was coined by Delores Williams and refers to the ways that male culture perpetuates masculine practices and thought, subjugating female thought and accomplishments so that women's culture is not fully developed or made visible. Female thought and culture are therefore converted, assimilated, and assumed under the cultural symbols of male "colonizers."
9. Patriarchal and andocentric theologies refer to the study of God derived from biblical tradition and interpretation of scripture that supports a male-centered approach to theology as normative. These theologies silence women and other marginalized groups.
10. Walker, Alice. In Search of My Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1983.
11. Oduyoye, Mercy. The Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995.
12. A new woman in a new Africa questions and seeks, to demystify patriarchal ideologies that tend to marginalize women, to discover God for herself, and does not allow another to represent God for her, but raises her own voice. She is a woman who does not simply accept the dogmas and engage the lifestyles imposed by religion or culture but reads the Bible, always remaining open to the voice of God, knowing that what works in one situation or time does not necessarily always work in another.
13. Manning, Marable. "Racism, Prisons and the Future of Black America." The Black Commentator Aug. 2000.
14. Aizeman, N.C. "New High in U.S. Prison Number." Washington Post. Feb. 2008: A01.
15. Pew Center on the States. "One in 100: Behind Bars in America in 2008." 28 Feb. 2008 Washington DC: Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008.  
Online location: [http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/report\\_detail.aspx?id=35904](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/report_detail.aspx?id=35904) accessed 5 May 2009
16. Weich, Ronald H. and Carlos T. Angulo. "Race and Prosecutorial Discretion." From the report Justice On Trial: Racial Disparities in the American Criminal Justice System. Civilrights.org. 2009. Online location: <http://www.civilrights.org/publications/justice-on-trial>

accessed 5 May 2009

17. Krisberg, Barry. Juvenile Justice: Redeeming Our Children. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2004. pp. 81-84. See also, "Juvenile Justice – Juvenile Crime Statistics." Jrank.org. Online location: <http://law.jrank.org/pages/12072/Juvenile-Justice-Juvenile-Crime-Statistics.html> accessed 5 May 2009

18. Edelmann, Marian Wright. "Let's Put the 'Justice' Back in Our Juvenile Justice System." Children's Defense Fund. 30 Nov. 2007. Online location: <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/marian-wright-edelman-child-watch-column/lets-put-the-justice-back-in-our-juvenile-justice-system.html> accessed 5 May 2009. See also, "Cradle to Prison Pipeline @ Campaign."

[www.childrensdefense.org/helping-americas-children/cradle-to-prison-pipeline-campaign/](http://www.childrensdefense.org/helping-americas-children/cradle-to-prison-pipeline-campaign/)

19. "Vote No on Proposition 6." League of Women Voters of California., 2008. Online location: <http://ca.lwv.org/action/prop0811/prop6.html> accessed 5 May 2009

20. Manning, Marable. "Racism, Prisons and the Future of Black America." p.1.

21. "Violence Against Women in the United States: Statistics." National Organization for Women. 2009. Online location: <http://www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html>. accessed 5 May 2009. See also, "Intimate Homicide Victims by Gender." United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 2007. Online location:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/tables/intimatestab.htm> accessed 5 May 2009

22. Weems, Renita. "Suffering and Sanctified." Essence Dec. 2004.

23. Fraise, Nicole and Leslie Hunter. "A Prolonged Prayer." Used by permission of the authors.