

HIP HOP | SPOKEN WORD | POETRY AND STORY-TELLING:
A PEDAGOGY FOR CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
IN THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A professional project submitted to
the Theological School of Drew University
candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Ministry

Adviser: Dr. Susan Kendall, Ph.D.
Second Reader: Dr. Meredith Hoxie-Schol, Ph.D.

Rev. Katherine J. Myers
Drew University
Madison, New Jersey
June 2019

©Copyright
Katherine J. Myers
2019

ABSTRACT

HIP HOP | SPOKEN WORD | POETRY AND STORY-TELLING:

A PEDAGOGY FOR CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

IN THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Rev. Katherine J. Myers

Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church, Newark, New Jersey

This Doctor of Ministry project investigates Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story-Telling as a practical pedagogy for Christian religious education curricula in the African Methodist Episcopal Church through the lens of a narrative inquiry. While a significant amount of research has been conducted in the academy regarding how to incorporate elements of Hip Hop in academic settings, there is little regarding the church and Christian religious education. The African Methodist Episcopal Church has seen a decline in membership, Sunday School participation, and Bible study attendance. This project explores the approach and benefits of developing a Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story-Telling pedagogy as a curriculum for spiritual transformation, discipleship formation, personal liberation and cultural reconciliation through Christian religious education.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church has a twenty-first century mandate of discipleship formation. Rather than appropriating elements of Hip Hop as a gimmick to draw youth, adolescents and millennials into the church and Christian religious education ministries, I have developed a Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story-Telling theoretical framework which is an extension of engaged pedagogy, culturally-responsive pedagogy and Hip Hop education pedagogy to be used for transformative Christian religious education in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

DEDICATION

Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights. Prov. 18:15 (MSG)

To my paternal grandparents, Wilson and Janie Myers, and my maternal grandparents, Willie James and Annie R. McKnight. Without you there would have been no me.

To my parents, Nathaniel and Madeline Myers Ilardi. I would not have chosen any other parents. I miss you both more than the world could ever understand. Daddy, you were never just a father; you were my Daddy and best friend. Mommy, thank you for your intellect, wisdom, creativity, and your third eye of wisdom. There will never be another like you.

To my brother who has been my rock, Nathaniel Myers, Jr., and his wife, Cathy Stewart Myers. I thank God for a godly man and woman of God who both continue to pray for me and be there for me.

To my niece, Chenea N. Myers. I love you and God has a plan for your life above anything you could ever ask or desire for yourself. Keep your head up and your heart and mind stayed on Jesus. God loves you and so do I.

To all my aunts and uncles who were surrogate parents to me in my youth and impressed upon me the love of God and humanity. Thank you.

To the village of Bethsaida and Elijah United Methodist Churches, Kingstree and Lake City, South Carolina: I thank you for molding and shaping my Christian faith, my sense of the beloved community and my love for God and people.

To the Hip Hop culture, community, and movement which continues to speak truth to power: May the God of our ancestors continue to raise up prophetic voices for generations to come.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. Col. 2:8 (NIV)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank God for seeing fit to take a little barefoot pigtailed country girl and placing a call to ministry on my life. I thank God for Kingstree, South Carolina, and Williamsburg county, a rural town that until recently many have never heard of in this country.

To the Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church, Newark, New Jersey: I thank you all for your constant words of encouragements and your fervent prayers. I want to thank anyone and everyone who allowed me to bounce my ideas off during this journey of *faith seeking understanding* and my research for my Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story-Telling pedagogy. A special shout-out to all my millennial sorority sisters for keeping it 100 percent and sharing in my journey by lending your insight and wisdom regarding Hip Hop culture.

It is impossible to list everyone's name, and I pray the absence of your name is not received as an oversight. God, I thank you for the time, talents, and efforts of those listed below for assisting me on my journey towards my Doctor of Ministry degree from Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, New Jersey. To my colleagues in the class of 2019 Courageous Leadership in a Changing Culture Cohort: I thank you all for your wisdom, knowledge, stimulating insight, encouragement and prayers. May God continue to bless you and keep you as we all continue in ministry.

Drew University: Dr. Susan Kendall PhD (Advisor), Dr. Elisa Ortega-Aponte PhD (Second Reader), Rev. Dr. Kevin D. Miller, Drew Theological Seminary Deans and Faculty.

Local Advisory Committee: Rev. Dr. Danielle Hunter, Bro. Dorian McDonald, Dr. C. Northington Purdie, Mrs. Kyla Trinetta Brown Slaughter, Rev. Dr. Ronald L. Slaughter and Bro. Darryl Stewart.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc.: Eta Omicron Zeta Chapter, Plainfield, New Jersey, Anjanette Highsmith and Aja R. Harris.

Tech Data: Adrian Buckley and Scott Manicke.

And to all my family and friends.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW: SAINT JAMES AME CHURCH.....	2
SAINT JAMES AME CHURCH IN CONTEXT.....	6
CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION:.....	9
COUNTRY MEETS HIP HOP.....	12
INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH	18
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	21
OVERVIEW OF THE DMIN PROJECT.....	24
PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT	24
MAJOR CONCERN.....	25
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	30
BIBLICAL & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	32
WHY A PEDAGOGY OF HIP HOP SPOKEN-WORD POETRY STORY-TELLING ...	33
LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS	37
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	38
RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN	39
JESUS LIBERATE THROUGH HIP HOP ORAL TRADITION	39
CHAPTER TWO – CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.....	46
INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION – SETTING PRIORITIES.....	46
WHAT IS EDUCATION?.....	47
EDUCATIONAL & LEARNING THEORIES	49
CHAPTER THREE – AMEC AND EDUCATION.....	53
AME CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.....	53
CHAPTER FOUR - DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, AND FINDINGS.....	59

INTRODUCTION	59
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SUMMARY	71
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FINDINGS	72
CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION.....	74
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	76
APPENDICES	81
APPENDIX A: CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SURVERY RESULTS	81
APPENDIX B: LAURYN HILL DISCOGRAPHY.....	86
APPENDIX C: SOCIAL ACTION COMMISSION.....	87
APPENDIX D: HSPS CIRRICULUM RESEARCH AME WEB PRESENCES	88
APPENDIX E: SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.....	94
APPENDIX F: HIP HOP EDUCATION MANIFESTO.....	96
APPENDIX G: DMIN PROJECT DEMO WEBSITE	97
APPENDIX H: MISEDUCATION OF LAURYN HILL TRACKLIST & LYRICS	98
LOST ONE	98
EX-FACTOR	103
TO ZION.....	106
DOO WOP - THAT THING.....	110
SUPERSTAR.....	114
FINAL HOUR	117
WHEN IT HURST SO BAD	120
I USED TO LOVE HIM.....	122
FORGIVE THEM FATHER	125
EVERY GHETTO, EVER CITY	127
NOTHING EVEN MATTERS.....	131

EVERYTHING IS EVERYTHING	133
THE MISEDUCATION OF LAURYN HILL	136
CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF OF YOU.....	136
TELL HIM	138
APPENDIX I: MTV UNPLUGGED 2.0.....	141
INTRO	141
ADAM LIVES IN THEORY.....	144
OH JERUSALEM.....	146
WAR IN THE MIND.....	150
I FIND IT HARD TO SAY (REBEL)	154
JUST LIKE WATER	156
I GOTTA FIND PEACE OF MIND.....	160
THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY / LAURYN'S SPEECH.....	163
I GET OUT	166
I REMEMBER.....	169
SO MUCH THINGS TO SAY	170
THE CONQUERING LION / OUTRO	172
APPENDIX J: HIP HOP SPOKE WORD POETRY STORYTELLING CIRRICULUM FRAMEWORK.....	174
APPENDIX K: SAINT JAMES AMEC NEWARK	222
APPENDIX L: RAW DATA.....	225

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The theological term, Imago Dei, is the foundation of my doctrinal and Christian beliefs and ideology. However, simply knowing one has been created in the image of God isn't enough for spiritual and discipleship formation. The Courageous Leadership in a Changing Culture cohort Doctor of Ministry program has given me the opportunity to pursue a concentration in Christian religious education. My desire is to spiritually discern through research studies God's vision for Christian religious education for Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church in Newark, New Jersey. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1816 as a religious institution dedicated to the liberation of diasporic Africans. The founders discerned that education was necessary for liberation from spiritual and physical bondage. In present day Western culture, the church must compete with multiple external entities which consume congregants' time or willingness to commit time to attending ministries associated with Christian religious education.

Kenneth Hill emphasizes, "At present there is no single text encompassing all of the theological, philosophical, and educational imperatives that underpin our theological and practical notions of Christian education."¹ Given Hill's assertion and the noticeable decline in Bible study and Sunday school attendance at Saint James, I wanted to research a radical approach and redefinition of Christian religious education. Hip Hop culture has been commodified and commercialized to the degree its history has been rewritten and its culture misunderstood. Nevertheless, the tenets of Hip Hop are germane to the pedagogy of Christian religious education in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.² Hip Hop culture is woven into the fabric of African American culture and has been responsible for discipleship and spiritual formation as well as identity formation within the diasporic African cultures and communities. This is evidenced by the 40-year movement which began in the South Bronx, New York, and now spans the globe. Throughout the project, I have intentionally utilized the correct spelling of

¹ Kenneth H. Hill, *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Kindle Edition, Kindle Location 108.

² Throughout this project Christian religious education will be used as it relates to the history and trajectory of the movement. However, in certain cases Christian Education is used to represent the title used within the African Methodist Episcopal church documentation and Book of Doctrine and Discipline.

Hip Hop with capital letters and no hyphen out of respect for the culture.³ “To spell Hip Hop incorrectly as hip-hop is to deny our right to exist as a people. The use of the term hip-hop to describe real people reduces those people to products.”⁴

Christian religious education within traditional African American churches has taken on numerous ecclesial models over the years. Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story-Telling (HSPS) as a pedagogy for Christian religious education will generate within our sacred spaces an innovative approach to teaching, preaching, and learning the Gospel of Jesus Christ and an aid in evangelism. Reflecting on the needs of the community in which I serve, many of our children are classified as ‘at risk’ and live in single-parent homes. Proverbs 18:16 reminds us our gifts shall usher us into the presence of greatness. My context states this Proverb this way: “Your gifts will make room for you.” God blessed me with the gift of poetry and story-telling, and my story has been woven into this DMin project. Many of the youth and adolescents I have had the privilege to minister with have expressed excitement and were more engaged in the word of God when they realized they could utilize their gifts of rapping, dancing, singing or Spoken word to articulate biblical stories and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hip Hop culture is a story and tells the story of the importance of making space for our youth in our community and sacred spaces to learn and grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Education has remained a core component of the African Methodist Episcopal church’s mission and I believe HSPS will further Saint James’s vision of, “Making Disciples, Building Families and Meeting Needs.”⁵

OVERVIEW: SAINT JAMES AME CHURCH

Saint James will celebrate 179 years of service and ministry in the Central Ward community of Newark, New Jersey, this year. In June of 2011, Rev. Ronald L. Slaughter, DMin was appointed its pastor. Saint James is one of the top ten largest churches in the connectional African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) denomination. It is one church with two

³ I have opted to utilize the spelling of culture provided by KRS-One. “The Temple of Hip Hop was formed to work in 3 phases. (1) As an organization that protects, preserves and promotes Hip Hop Culture. (2) To open a cultural learning center and facility for Hip Hop Culture, featuring a museum exhibiting artifacts of Hip Hop Culture. (3) To build a school recognizing and teaching Hip Hop as the consciousness of our common culture, and (4) to create an authentic collaborative history for the culture.” KRS-One. *The Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (Kindle Locations 407-410). powerHouse Books. Kindle Edition.

⁴ KRS-One, *The Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument*, powerHouse Books. Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 1021-1022.

⁵ Saint James AME Newark vision statement.

locations.⁶ Our Newark campus worship experiences occur inside the Gothic landmark cathedral purchased in 1945 from the First Presbyterian Church located on Martin Luther King Boulevard. The South Orange campus is located at the South Orange Performing Arts Center. While much has changed in both the state of New Jersey and in the ministries of Saint James since 1945, many things have remained the same for minorities living in a blighted community. Social conditions, as well as other factors, create numerous challenges for ministering in urban communities.⁷

The United States of America has an estimated population of 321 million people and is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Given this excess, many across the globe find it reprehensible that 13.5 percent of its people live in poverty.⁸ Absolute poverty is classified as a condition which severely deprives an individual of basic human needs such as food, water, and shelter. Relative poverty is a condition whereby an individual lacks the resources (income) to sustain an average standard of living. Asset poverty is a condition defined by the inability to access resources. Many factors contribute to a person's condition of poverty: generational lack of assets and wealth, demographics, and unemployment.⁹ African Americans who are disproportionately affected by these systems have also endured systematic racism, discrimination, oppression, and social inequalities. This combined with the lack of education has led to the blighted conditions in Newark.

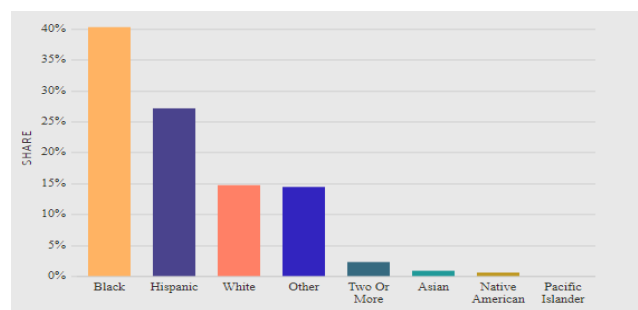


Figure 1: Largest Race or Ethnicity Living in Poverty in Newark, NJ¹⁰

⁶ See Appendix L for a photo of the church.

⁷ My use of the term Urban is to denote a community which is densely populated and / a large city. I am aware Urban has been used as a dog whistle for ghettos.

⁸ “Facts about Poverty,” <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/hunger-and-poverty/hunger-and-poverty-fact-sheet.html?gclid=CNnX8sfV8dACFYaNswodwL8B0w>, accessed November 12, 2018.

⁹ “Definition of absolute and relative poverty,” <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/glossary/definition-of-absolute-and-relative-poverty/>, accessed May 20, 2019.

¹⁰ “Data USA,” <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/newark-nj/>, accessed May 20, 2019.

With these underlying reasons in mind, an increase, for example, in employment rates does not automatically equate to a decrease in poverty levels. The rising tide does not lift all ships to the same level. According to Feeding America, a United States-based hunger organization, in 2015, 42 million Americans lived in food insecure households.¹¹ Sociologist Mark Rank posits poverty should be addressed by evaluating wealth versus determining poverty based solely on income.¹² African Americans continue to bear the ill effects of policies and laws, systematic racism and social inequalities in the United States which have created wealth disparities and asset poverty which disproportionately affect minority communities. According to Thomas Shapiro, director of the Institute on Assets and Social Policy, “nine of every ten Black Americans will encounter poverty during their working adult years.”¹³ He goes on to state that the African American asset poverty rate is 54 percent, twice that of Euro-Americans.¹⁴ This kind of asset poverty results in the inability to readily liquidate wealth during an unexpected crisis, which often results in middle-class individuals becoming homeless. They are also more at risk when they experience the loss of a job or death of a loved one or primary caretaker.

Poverty is a global dilemma disproportionately impacting women and children at a rate of over 21,000 deaths per day because of hunger and preventable diseases.¹⁵ New Jersey has a population of 8.9 million residents, with Newark having the largest population of people, roughly 300,000. New Jersey is one of the most religious and ethnically diverse states, and some reports list New Jersey as the second wealthiest state, with a median household income of \$71,919. Thirty-six percent of Newark's residents live below the income poverty index, as compared to 14 percent statewide. The number of African Americans living in poverty in Newark is currently 46,349 residents.¹⁶ The New Jersey Health department reports African Americans represent 53

¹¹ “Hunger and poverty,” <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/hunger-and-poverty/hunger-and-poverty-fact-sheet.html?gclid=CNnX8sfV8dACFYaNswodwL8B0w>, accessed September 22, 2018.

¹² Mark R. Rank, *One Nation, Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. p. 162.

¹³ Thomas M. Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (p. 37). Oxford University Press, 2005. Kindle Edition

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 37

¹⁵ “Today, around 21,000 children died around the world,” <http://www.globalissues.org/article/715/today-21000-children-died-around-the-world>, access April 6, 2019.

¹⁶ “Newark, New Jersey (NJ) Poverty Rate Data,” <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Newark-New-Jersey.html>, accessed April 6, 2019.

percent of the residents living with HIV or AIDS while representing only 14 percent of the state’s population.

Women and people of color have overwhelmingly been affected by poverty in the hands of local governments. This is an example of what Joe Soss describes as “localism” in American culture. Rooted in the English system of relief, localism is a system which categorizes residents on the moral basis of the undeserving (poor) and the deserving; the distinction is based on race, ethnicity, gender, and religion.¹⁷ America’s history of white-supremacy, rooted in heteronormative Euro-American males acting as moral agents for “the least of these,” continues to play out in the United States government at the expense of the poor and the needy. As one report argues, “Economic and political forces no longer combat poverty – they generate poverty!”¹⁸

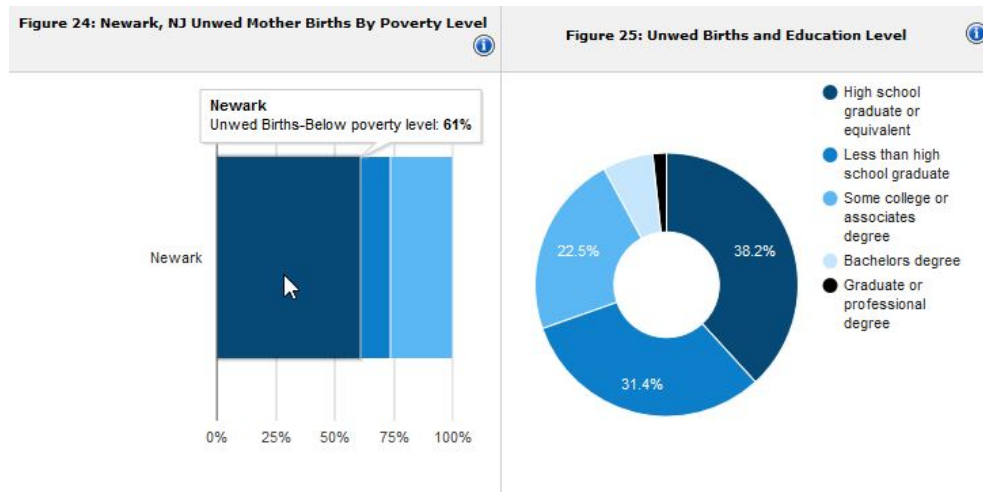


Figure 2: Unwed births, poverty and education levels¹⁹

These statistics are alarming and heartbreaking. However, it is my belief that the African Methodist Episcopal Church and traditional Black churches are uniquely suited to rise to meet the needs of this moment. Given AMEC’s twenty-first century mandate of discipleship

¹⁷ Joe Soss, Richard C. Fording, and F. Schram Sanford. 2011. *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race*. Chicago: University of Chicago. p. 87

¹⁸ William Goldsmith and Edward Blakely and Bill Clinton. *Separate Societies: Poverty and Inequality in U.S. Cities*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed April 7, 2019).

¹⁹ “New Jersey Demographics Data,” <http://www.towncharts.com/New-Jersey/New-Jersey-state-Demographics-data.html>, accessed May 20, 2019.

formation, the church has an opportunity to seek and save the least of these by educating our communities.

SAINT JAMES AME CHURCH IN CONTEXT

The longevity of Saint James’s ministry and service to this community is impressive. Saint James’s congregation survived the deadly Newark riots of 1967 which destroyed entire city blocks. In the last three decades Saint James has expanded to include Saint James Prep Charter School, Saint James Social Services, and Saint James Towers to educate, feed, house and clothe Newark’s devastated communities. Saint James AME Newark is a historical landmark with a gothic edifice, but more importantly, Saint James AME Newark has remained a hallmark in the community because of the visionaries God has placed in leadership and the willing servant disciples who attend, join and serve through Saint James AME Newark.

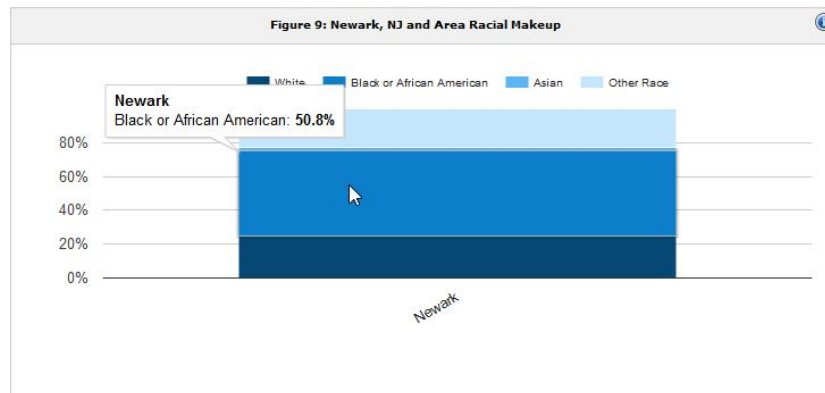


Figure 3: Newark, N.J. racial makeup²⁰

Over ten years ago, Saint James AME Newark extended the campus to the South Orange Performing Arts Center.²¹ The location has grown over the years and many Sundays there is not enough seating to accommodate the worshippers.

²⁰ “New Jersey Demographic Data,” <http://www.towncharts.com/New-Jersey/New-Jersey-state-Demographics-data.html>, accessed May 20, 2019.

²¹ One church two locations/campuses. The SOPAC campus location worship experience is similar to our Wednesday noonday worship. A very eclectic and diverse group of worshippers. Located near a college campus both noonday and SOPAC are 50-minute worship experiences/services.



Figure 4: SOPAC worship experience²²

Saint James AME Newark anticipates breaking ground in 2020 to construct an \$8 million state-of-the-art worship center and modern-day facility to serve multiple functions other than the current ministries provided on Sundays and midweek.²³ It has historically and is presently doing well in growing membership (disciples).²⁴ Even with this legacy of growth, I believe that to fulfill our vision statement of "Making Disciples, Building Families and Meeting Needs," we must be intentionally focused on Christian religious education.

Since joining Saint James over eleven years ago, I have observed a significant decline in Sunday school and Bible study attendance. The women's ministry has experienced three shifts in leadership in the last ten years. The challenge with each subsequent change for the incoming ministry leader has been developing engaging Christian religious educational material to rekindle and grow the women's ministry. Drew Theological Seminary has introduced me to numerous theological constructs and ideas I would have never imagine in the context of Christian religious education. I was inspired by the ideas of bell hooks' "engaged pedagogy," which does not parrot

²² Palm Sunday 2019

²³ Pastor Slaughter has called the capital campaign 'Dirt to Destiny' and the operating slogan is taken from Acts 5:39 "But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these people; you will only find yourself fighting against God." Saint James has communal Bible study on Wednesday's at 11:00 and Noonday worship experience at noon. The Bible study has the largest attendance of all the Bible study sessions within the church. Women's Bible studies are on Tuesday evenings at 6:30 and men's Bible studies are on Saturday mornings at 8:00 am.

²⁴ Recently the AME church has changed the language regarding membership to discipleship. In this project, I will be referring to membership primarily because the documentation cited still reflex the terminology or embedded or implicit meaning of membership. In the 1st Episcopal district, the theme from 2012-16 was "From Membership to Discipleship."

the ideologies of the dominant culture but seeks to produce a body of work which emphasized healing and wholeness.

As I reflected on the decline in attendance in my ministry context and my own experiences through the years with Sunday school and Bible study, God revealed to me that Christian religious education should minister, witness, and aid in the development of individuals' mind, body and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23-24). My own experience illustrates this. As someone born into a Christian family, I spent a lot of my youth in church and surrounded by a community of faith. During my adolescent years I was no longer sheltered by a community of faith while living in the South Bronx. There I was in the middle of an environment suffering from a drug epidemic.

I began my Christian journey metaphorically at sea. I was searching for truth wondering through life with a foundation rooted in the word of God. My faith seeking understanding – *fides quaerens intellectum* – journey placed me in the heart of Hip Hop culture at the height of a revolution and moment.²⁵ High school in the eighties presented challenges, as I navigated drugs, gangs, and violence in the streets. Through it all the word of God remained, as the Psalmist writes, a lamp unto my feet and the light which guided my path (Ps. 119:105). Hip Hop culture of the eighties provided a shelter during the Bronx environmental storm.

During this time, a Hip Hop performance troupe attended my English Literature class and gave each of us a piece of paper with a few words, inviting us to do something creative. In the five minutes allotted, I created a Spoken Word piece that I performed, based on the theme written on the sliver of paper. I rapped and sang before my classmates, something I had never done, and with that I had written my first poem. Enrolled in Advance Placement courses, I was often challenged beyond what I thought I could achieve. The poetry, spoken-word and storytelling elements of Hip Hop gave me purpose. A Southern girl attempting to fit in: Hip Hop provided a lens into the cultural politics of the day and the political thoughts of our community. This experience changed my life. It was a cultural aesthetics immersed in Hip Hop culture.

I was not blessed with a voice and rhythm like my brother. Nevertheless, God had raised up prophets in the South Bronx to speak a prophetic word through Hip Hop, and I had found my voice. I am what Bakari Kitwana would describe as a product of the Hip Hop generation, “hip-

²⁵ Anselm, Jasper Hopkins, Herbert Richardson, Anselm, and Anselm. *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*. Minneapolis: A.J. Banning Press, 2000. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Nt3WAAAAMAAJ>.

hop generationers – those young African Americans born between 1965 and 1984 who came of age in the eighties and nineties.”²⁶ God was using my journey at sea combined with my theological training to produce a Christian religious educational curriculum. While Drew Theological Seminary training introduced me to the academic works of bell hook, Anne Streaty Wimberly, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Ben Kirshner, and Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings and many others, it was Hip Hop culture that was the original pedagogy empowering me, transforming my ideologies, political theology, and abolitionist ethical thinking.

As I have stated, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has not been intentional in Christian religious education. So, someone may question amidst a significant cultural shift in church attendance, decline or shifting in denominational affiliations, mediocre Sunday school and Bible study attendance: How will Saint James sustain going forward? My answer: HSPS pedagogy to educate our community through divine inspiration and intervention of the Holy Spirit.

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION: THE EXPEDITION AND A MESSAGE AT SEA

My grandmother always pressed me to obtain an education to become a productive citizen in the United States. Religion and education were her life, although I believe my paternal grandmother achieved no more than a sixth-grade education. She and my grandfather raised eleven children with the help of God and the Holy Spirit. Out of their union the Murphy-Myers family has over thirty-two ordained ministers, preachers, and evangelists.²⁷ Growing up I was surrounded by a village which consisted of a great-grandmother, two grandmothers, two grandfathers, nine aunts, seven uncles, and two United Methodist church families; there was no lack of spiritual guidance or wisdom. My formative years were spent attending school and going to church on Sundays; the beloved Christian community was my life. Every evening my brother, grandmother and I would recite the Our Father Prayer before retiring to bed. It was our ritual to rotate each evening which of us led the prayer.

²⁶ Kitwana, Bakari. *The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture* (p. 4). Basic Books. Kindle Edition.

²⁷ And counting!

My discipleship and spiritual formation began in our home, but I was not aware my grandmothers and the village were developing a disciple of Christ.²⁸ At such a young age felt I had no personal agency, nor could I articulate the meaning of life; however, I could recite the Our Father Prayer, the Apostle's Creed and the 23rd Psalm.²⁹ All three were taught to me by my grandmothers and which sustained me. I frequently called out as a young lady, “Lord I stretch my hand to Thee,” because I had been taught from whom to seek all my help. “No other help I know,” the prayer continued. As a child, my help was the community and village of Christian disciples who taught me the Holy Scriptures and praxis of living out my faith and faith in action.

Returning to my nautical metaphor, my expedition with Christ started before my aptitude to comprehend simple nautical terms as bow and stern; yet drawing anchor, I set sail on my journey of *faith seeking understanding*. Navigating the seas of life had often been challenging without a compass (Jesus). Equipped with a simple treasure map (Bible) and the wind at my back I set sail in a caravel with no crew aboard and no destination in sight. As I navigated the choppy waters, high seas, and rough waves, I often felt the tug on my spar. Not quite the thorn in the flesh Paul mentions, yet at times I felt a constant crashing of waves against my bow. Being the captain of my ship proved to be a daunting task, nonetheless day after day the Lord provided me with directions.³⁰ Frequently my directions came via the mourning doves, overnight dreams, and melodies in my heart.

I am sure I am not the first to set sail without a compass or a destination. I am sure that many can relate to being lost at sea with a treasure map in hand during the midnight hour and a tsunami on the horizon calling out: Lord I stretch my hand to Thee, no other help I know.³¹ I spent my years at sea seeking the face, essence, and presence of God in my personal life, because no longer could I rely on my grandmothers. Throughout my journey at sea, I always knew at night when I was in my ship's compartment – although by myself I was never alone. I tired of sailing the open seas, but I was never hungry because God was supplying all my needs.

²⁸ Both my grandfathers transitioned when I was young, although God did bless me with the opportunities to know them for a short period.

²⁹ As a young girl I lived a very sheltered life with my grandmother, aunts and uncles making all the decisions for my life.

³⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

³¹ As a child my grandmother often used the phrase Lord I stretch my hand to Thee, no other help I know. Her take on Charles Wesley's “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” hymnal.

I docked for a while in rural Kingstree, South Carolina. There I was spiritually fed the word of God and nurtured by a beloved community of disciples of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I drew anchor and continued my expedition, leaving the Carolina coast and dropped anchor in the Bronx, New York. Leaving my treasure map aboard my vessel, I had to navigate the city streets with only the word of God in my heart. Because of the many years at sea, at times I suffered from *mal de débarquement* in the streets of New York. The Bronx streets confronted my embedded theologies and ideologies I had learned during my youth in South Carolina; my religiosity had come face to face with my contextual reality. I was now being confronted with other religious views and ideologies. My journey of *faith seeking understanding* began to reveal the voice and presence of God in Hip Hop lyrics and culture as I navigated the ghetto streets. The cultural institution and movement of Hip Hop spoke to the urban and societal conditions of a devastated community in a way the church could not or did not. God was using Hip Hop and my spiritual formation which began in South Carolina to empower me, liberate me, give me agency and aid in my identity formation. The church of my youth had poured into me the word of God, and Hip Hop culture was sharpening my critical thinking about God, society, and social justice. Hip Hop provided me with socio-political consciousness; Hip Hop developed my cultural competencies, and Hip Hop culture pushed me to learn more because of the knowledge spit [sic] in the lyrics.³²

God had been working on me for a very long time equipping me with tools to sail the open seas while learning to be a fisher of humankind. The spiritual gifts I found on my deep-sea diving tours were all in preparation for what God had planned, before I understood the reason I had set sail in the first place. My cultural experiences of the North and South provided me with language and the spirituality of my ancestors. Hip Hop culture, poetry, spoken-word, and storytelling prepared me to be an innovative, radical, courageous leader willing to address context, change, and to prophetically standup for social justice. My personal experience with the cultural movement of Hip Hop is the validation of the transformative nature, culturally relevant and engaging pedagogical nature of Hip Hop culture. I spent forty years at sea casting my net on the starboard side of the boat, and God said to me, I need you to cast your net on the port side of the boat - I have work for you to do (John 21:6). My journey of *faith seeking understanding* began in

³² Gloria Ladson-Billings work on Culturally Relevant pedagogy is a theoretical construct with three competencies: socio-political consciousness, cultural competencies, and supporting student learning.

a loving home and community. What I learned during my time at sea was that to be an authentic disciple of Christ did not require me to give up the cultural experiences which shaped my spirituality and discipleship formation.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church states in its polity, “The Department of Christian Education shall develop a comprehensive and unified program of Christian Education which shall lead to a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the Christian Religion, and the Christian Church, and implementation of these values for daily living.”³³ Hip Hop culture is a global phenomenon evident in the culture of the United States, on television, radio, and in our children’s schools. Hip Hop is “woke” and speaks truth to social injustices.³⁴ I have developed HSPS pedagogy as an extension of culturally relevant pedagogy, engaged pedagogy and Hip Hop education pedagogy. It can be an invaluable tool for Christian religious education. HSPS pedagogy can be used to reawaken the consciousness of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Christian Education department, ministries and the communities the African Methodist Episcopal Church serves.³⁵

COUNTRY MEETS HIP HOP

In 1981, the death of my paternal grandmother initiated my return to New York. Returning to New York was a return to the birthplace of Hip Hop culture and the place of my birth, the Bronx. I spent my formative years working on tobacco farms and attending the United Methodist Church on Sundays and vacation Bible school during the summers. My return to New York coincided with a pivotal period in the movement, culture, and history of Hip Hop. The Roland 808 drum machine had been invented, and the movie, *Wild Style*, was soon to hit theaters.

Years later, I found myself on the campus of Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. My arrival sent me into the second cultural shock of my life, just as the return to New York had years prior. A country girl at heart and a native New Yorker by birth the return to the South

³³ <https://firstdistrictame.org/christian-education/>, accessed April 6, 2019.

³⁴ The Urban dictionary defines Woke as “A word currently used to describe "[consciousness](#)" and being aware of the truth behind things "the man" does not want you to know, i.e. [classism](#), racism, and any other social injustices. The term comes from a genuine place but is becoming [overused](#). People mainly use it to sound like deep thinkers when they are just following a trend." <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=woke> Accessed 04/06/2019.

³⁵ The AME church as well as Saint James has a department / ministry which is called Christian Education.

occurred after spending the previous years in high school immersed in Hip Hop culture. Attending a historically Black College or University (HBCU) was a reminder of the African diaspora and how the construct of race holds no water when attempting to express the Black lived experience as a monolith experience. My favorite television shows were *The Dukes of Hazard*, *Hee-Haw*, *Gunsmoke*, *Bonanza*, *Wanted Dead or Alive*, and *The Walton's*. I enjoyed country music more than I enjoyed cooked food. From John Denver's *Take Me Home, Country Road* to Dolly Parton's *Coat of Many Colors*, I walked, talked, and lived country music. At any given moment I could rattle off a list of country artists or sing a host of songs from Glen Campbell, Charley Pride, Aaron Neville, Elvis Presley, Loretta Lynn, Emmylou Harris or Tanya Tucker. Willie Nelson's *Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys* was my anthem and my theme song. Nevertheless, country music had no place in the Big Apple and more importantly, in the South Bronx in the eighties.

During my high school years, I was inundated with rap and Hip Hop music from the likes of MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, Salt-N-Pepper, Roxanne Shanté, Run DMC, L.L. Cool J, Doug E Fresh, Grandmaster Flash, The Furious Five, Public Enemy, Eric B, and Rakim and KRS-One. Hip Hop was more than the music; Hip Hop was a culture, and if you weren't "down" with Hip Hop, you were "whack." I spent my first year in high school developing and re-creating my social identity, and I had no true understanding of agency. No longer could I publicly acknowledge my Southern roots or my love for country music. I had to become someone else so that I could survive. I had to get with the program in my social context. I had to show everyone I was hip, cool, and I was "down." I needed to learn the language, and I had to learn Hip Hop culture. Additionally, it was imperative I learn it fast if I wanted to survive in Morris High School in the South Bronx in the eighties. In the words of Kurtis Blow, "these are [were] the breaks."³⁶ The breaks for me were navigating and renegotiating a place in my social context, a society which moved at the speed of light coming from a culture which ran at the pace of molasses on a cold January morning.

In high school, I hid my love of all thing's country, knowing if I didn't, it would make me uncool. A known bully attempted to fight me on the first day of school because I was country in

³⁶ Kurtis Blow. *These are the breaks*. 1980.

dress, appearance and speech. It was the first and last fight of my high school years; she no longer wore the crown.³⁷

Now on a Southern HBCU college campus, I had to navigate my social identity and agency once again. Sitting in the shadows of the sunset in the courtyard of Shaw University I heard Slick Rick's *Children's Story* blasting in the air. Immediately and unconsciously I began singing:

Once upon a time not long ago
When people wore pajamas and lived life slow
When laws were stern, and justice stood
And people were behavin' like they ought to... good

There lived a little boy who was misled
By another little boy and this is what he said
Me and you, Ty, we're gonna make some cash
Robbin' old folks and makin' the dash

They did the job, money came with ease
But one couldn't stop, it's like he had a disease
He robbed another and another and a sista and her brotha³⁸

I had no idea singing a song would place me in what I considered to be a session before the Spanish Inquisition. One of the individuals sitting in the courtyard began the inquisition with: "Where are you from?"... "Do you know how to rap?" ... "Do you know how to break dance?" Also: "Oh, you from South Bronx, have you ever shot anyone?" For the second time in my life, I was in the middle of an identity crisis. The United Methodist churches I had attended in my youth had not prepared me for either of these cultural experiences. Nevertheless, at that moment I found comfort and my identity in the lyrics of KRS-One's *My Philosophy*:

I just laughed, 'cause no one can defeat me
This is lecture number two, "My Philosophy"
Number one was "Poetry" you know it's me
This is "My Philosophy," many artists got to learn
I'm not flammable; I don't burn
So please stop burning, and learn to earn respect
Cause that's just what K.R. collects

³⁷ No, I did not become a bully. The results of the confrontation it was understood the country girl could take care of herself.

³⁸ Slick Rick *Children's Story* lyrics. Songwriters: Ricky M. L. Walters

See, what do you expect when you rhyme like a soft punk
You walk down the street and get jumped
You got to have style, and learn to be original
And everybody's gonna wanna diss you
Like me, we stood up for the South Bronx
And every sucker MC had a response
You think we care? I know that they are on the tip
My posse from the Bronx is thick
In real real life, we roll correctly³⁹

KRS-One's prophetic lyrics reiterated the words of my grandparents, "You got to have style, and learn to be original" albeit not in quite the same words. My grandparents always taught me I was an original created in the image of God, and when God created me, God had broken the model. Being my authentic self was okay. The vacation Bible school and Bible studies had taught me all about Christian community and the love of God, but the Church had not taught me how to survive in these here streets [sic].⁴⁰ During my Spanish Inquisition, when asked, "Where are you from?" I was proud to say I was a New Yorker. However, something deep inside made me want to distance myself from the negative imageries of the hood and ghetto life. When queried by my college mate: "Do you know how to rap?" and "Do you know how to break dance?" I understood I was being placed in a metaphorically boxed identity imposed on me by another. I realized I needed to make a choice and stand my ground. I was being pushed to decide who I was, who I was going to associate with, and who I was to become in life. Note, it wasn't a gospel hymn or any biblical teaching that immediately came to mind (although embedded in my heart.) All I heard at that moment were the words:

It's like a jungle sometimes
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under
Broken glass everywhere
People pissin' on the stairs, you know they just don't care
I can't take the smell, can't take the noise
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat
I tried to get away, but I couldn't get far
'Cause a man with a tow truck repossessed my car

³⁹ Boggie Down Productions *My Philosophy* Songwriters: Lawrence Krsone Parker

⁴⁰ "In these her streets" is a slang phrase often heard in the South Bronx when I grew up.

Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the edge
I'm trying not to lose my head⁴¹

The musical artist Grandmaster Flash articulated what my life was like in the eighties as I traversed the landscape of the Bronx and completed my high school education. I lived fifteen minutes away from Morris High School in a crime infested neighborhood, overrun with drug dealers, crack-heads, gangs, and abandoned buildings many the results of the 1977 blackout in New York. I had an overly protective father, and I had lived a sheltered life in the backwoods of Kingstree, South Carolina. Finding my agency wasn't easy because somehow my family thought being raised in the Church meant apples didn't fall far from the tree. That is: because I had been taught the word of God, I would be immune from the evils of this world. The Church had created a utopia, an illusion that God would make a way somehow; all I had to do was hope, pray and believe. The indoctrination I received as a youth had not required critical thinking or the processing of cultural or societal issues.

I kept asking, where is God? – as I walked in fear for my life as a young girl living in the ghettos of the South Bronx. Where is God, as I stepped over broken crack vials while avoiding the old perverted men on the street corners as I walked home. Where is God as the drug dealers pushed their poison on my classmates and girls were raped and abused. Where is God for my classmates who were homeless and did not eat or sleep before arriving at school? The God I had learned about in the Church was found in my earthly father; a father that felt the only way to keep me safe from the streets was to keep me out of the streets. Nevertheless, the prophetic words of *The Message* by Grandmaster Flash spoke to my situation:

A child is born with no state of mind
Blind to the ways of mankind
God is smilin' on you, but he's frownin' too
Because only God knows what you'll go through
You'll grow in the ghetto livin' second-rate
And your eyes will sing a song called deep hate
The places you play and where you stay

⁴¹ Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five *It's Like A Jungle* lyric. Songwriters: Clifton Nathaniel Chase / Edward G. Fletcher / Melvin Glover / Sylvia (USA) Robinson

Looks like one great big alleyway”⁴²

It has been thirty years since I left my home in the South Bronx – The Bronx never left me. When God placed it in my heart and spirit to continue my education after completing my Master of Divinity degree, I cried. I had counted down the days to my graduation, and I told all my classmates, *arrivederci*, *Au revoir*, *adios*, and “see yah when I see yah.” I’m out, I was done...but God... God had other plans for my life and my ministry. In April of 2017, I was ordained an Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, First Episcopal District, by Presiding Prelate Gregory G.M. Ingram. Before ordination as an Itinerant Elder I met with Bishop Ingram as is the custom in our denomination. During my interview, Bishop asked, “In what area has the Church [AMEC] failed?”⁴³ – I replied the Church has failed to provide a pedagogy of liberation, reconciliation, transformation, and has failed in the praxis of discipleship and spiritual formation due to the church's failure to deliberately address and engage in intentional Christian religious education.

My response to the Bishop shocked me. I had no idea where the answer came from at that moment. Following ordination, I began praying and fasting as I lamented over what God would have me to do as a Doctor of Ministry project and God placed the word *Sankofa* in my spirit. I revisited all the assignments I had presented during my seminary years and realized in every course I had taken there were constant themes in my writings. These were: Education, Transformation, Reconciliation, and Liberation. The Holy Spirit reminded me of a course I had taken at Drew with Dr. Elisa Ortega-Aponte, *Hip-Hop & Youth Activism*. The final project I had submitted for that course was entitled, *Education for Liberation Youth Activism | Hip Hop | Religion Proposal*. I had developed and submitted a proposal for a modular curriculum to be used in religious settings in African American communities.

The question Bishop asked ignited the fire God had already placed in my heart, and I had confirmation regarding my DMin project. God had placed the theme in my spirit during the years I attended seminary and before acquiring my MDiv degree. My journey at sea provided me

⁴² Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five Featuring Melle Mel and Duke Bootee. *The Message*. Songwriters: Clifton Nathaniel Chase / Edward G. Fletcher / Melvin Glover / Sylvia (USA) Robinson.

⁴³ Before my response I had Bishop Ingram provide me with a working definition of ‘church’ which I used in my answer to the question. The question was also a follow up to a previous statement and question.

Christian religious education, spiritual wisdom from my elders and village. The Hip Hop community provided me with agency and personal identity formation to be a courageous leader, bold enough to apply to Drew Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program, because God has work for me to do in God's Kingdom.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

In the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Book of Doctrine and Discipline stipulates every local church shall have a commission on Christian education. The Christian education commission has five primary duties: 1) Study the needs of the local church as they relate to Christian education, 2) Supply the Church School, Allen Christian Fellowship, Young People and Children's Division, missionary members and others with materials approved by the Division of Christian Education, 3) Periodically have missionary programs incorporated with the Church School, Allen Christian Fellowship, Young People and Children's Division, 4) Hold a Day of Observance and Promotion to present the work of the Church School, Allen Christian Fellowship, Young People and Children's Division, and 5) Observe Children's Day, Easter, and Christian Education Week with emphasis on the value of the *Journal of Christian Education* during these observances.

In 2011, I formally answered the call to ministry under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Ronald L. Slaughter, and on March 9, 2013, I was licensed to preach in the African Methodist Episcopal Church by presiding Elder Howard L. Grant (now retired). In the Fall of 2013, I began my theological course of studies at Payne Theological Seminary, and in October of the same year, I enrolled in the *Class of Admissions* of the African Methodist Episcopal Church New Jersey Ministerial Institute.⁴⁴ The AMEC Book of Doctrine and Discipline has stringent educational requirements for individuals seeking ordination, one being obtaining an MDiv degree. At the age of forty-six, I did not realize I would again be returning to academia.

When I answered the call to ministry, my pastor told me to use the time to study, pray, fast, and observe our denomination. The time between formally answering the call and the time I

⁴⁴ In the 1st Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal church, all local and Itinerant candidates must attend the New Jersey Ministerial Institute which is a five-year training curriculum developed by the 1st district. Candidates who are in the AMEC ordination process and on the Itinerant track are required to complete year's one and five, however, do not have to attend the NJMI training if they are registered full time in seminary during years 2-4.

received the call from his administrative assistant to enter the ordination process was two years of me observing the A.M.E. church. I observed when I first joined Saint James under the leadership of Dr. William D. Watley, and, following the Book of Discipline, I was immediately placed in the New Life Ministry (NLM) course of study.⁴⁵ The first major issue I encountered with NLM was the content of the material. The course at Saint James is taught by laity and, in my case, a licentiate and a layperson. The materials used are the Bible, the AMEC *Know Your Church* manual and the NLM curriculum. At the time of my training, this curriculum was last revised in 2001. The current version was last revised in September 2017 (boot camp edition).⁴⁶

My NLM class consisted of three women. All of us had grown up in the church and had a personal relationship with God. I found myself frustrated each week as we covered what I perceived to be elementary material, and I was not sure how to practically use the data we were studying for my spiritual or discipleship growth. The courses were taught or designed to cover select material. The facilitator had a teacher's manual with canned answers and scriptures, and the conversations were guided and directed by predefined documented responses in the teacher's manual. My two-year period of observation and prior training caused me to question the purpose, goals, and intentions of the nurturing and discipleship training within the AMEC. I began to question the intentions of the NLM courses offered within the local connectional churches and mandated by the denomination doctrine and discipline. According to the Saint James AMEC NLM manual, the learning objective is: "The members of St. James should understand that being 'a member in good and regular standing' means the following things should line up: Relationship: Saved (Spirituality & Education), Membership: Active in Body of Christ (Service & Evangelism), Stewardship: Tithers."⁴⁷

The AMEC Book of Doctrine and Discipline sees nurturing and discipleship training as a process to full membership in the AMEC, as does the NLM course. According to the Book of

⁴⁵ According to the AMEC Book of Doctrine and Discipline "New Member: A person coming to the African Methodist Episcopal Church who has professed saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, completed ninety (90) days of nurturing and discipleship training and, under the supervision of a class leader, received a recommendation for full membership." Saint James A.M.E. calls the nurturing and discipleship training New Life Ministries. Belin, Rev. Roderick D. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition* (Kindle Locations 2644-2646). Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁶ The Book of Discipline states new members complete 90 days of nurturing discipleship. Saint James A.M.E. Newark offers a one-day boot camp to complete the requirement as well as the 90 days version.

⁴⁷ New Life Ministries September 2017 (boot camp edition), p. 3 of 76

Discipline, the objective of the nurturing and discipleship training is: “During this time, they will be placed under the supervision of a class leader. They shall be instructed in the Bible and current edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, particularly our doctrine, organizational structure, and local membership guide⁴⁸.

At this point in my life I had completed three months of AMEC educational training in the NLM class and two years in the AMEC New Jersey Ministerial Institute (NJMI), and I was frustrated.⁴⁹ As a self-professed Christian and follower of Christ, I was unable to marry much of the required curriculum provided in these training to the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the meantime, Hip Hop culture was continuing to produce new songs and lyrics which were speaking to my heart and my current trials and tribulations in life as I continued the journey to ordination. Spoken Word artists were speaking truth to power about social ills and conditions. In addition to the trainings in NLM and NJMI, and the AMEC ordination process, I was spending an enormous amount of time on polity, AME history, and doctrine. I was wrestling with the realities of life coming into this new identity as a licensed minister, and I now had to learn the AMEC Doctrine and Discipline, organizational structure, local membership guide, history, bishops' names, year of consecration, and districts. Through theological reflection, I began to ask, what is Christian religious education? Moreover, what is the objective of Christian religious education in the AMEC? At this point of observation and being in the process to ordination, I had concluded that within the AMEC, Christian religious education was indoctrination of the AMEC polity and doctrine. I could find no official documentation which articulated the AMEC understanding or definition of Christian education.

The AMEC, as well as other mainline denominations, is having to contend with a decline in membership and low attendance. The ‘one and done’ millennials and others are developing and creating virtual communities in cyberspace. The lack of intentionality regarding Christian religious education that is more than teaching denominational doctrine has contributed to this decline. HSPS pedagogy can be a viable solution to addressing Christian religious education

⁴⁸ Rev. Roderick D. Belin, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition* (Kindle Locations 2613-2615). Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁹ New Life Ministries (NLM) and New Jersey Ministerial Institute (NJMI).

needs in the AME church. A solution to aid in spiritual and discipleship formation, liberation, and evangelism.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge [education]. Hosea 4:6.

Indoctrination or education? The AMEC has a long-standing history of requiring candidates in the ordination process to obtain advanced education, educating the clergy and building institutions of higher learning. I had a hunch that although there is a mandate for clergy to be educated, the mandate or intentionality toward Christian religious education was absent on the congregational levels for the laity and servant leadership. Also, my hunch was that the decline in membership and attendance was directly related to the lack of attention being directed toward developing culturally inclusive curricula for the Christian educational ministries in our local AME churches. My DMin research project researched how HSPS pedagogy can be used to develop a Christian religious educational curriculum for the global AMEC and for Saint James AMEC Newark.

The most compelling challenge the AMEC faces in the 21st century is the decline in membership and church attendance, the lack of intentionality in the development of Christian religious educational (CRE) ministries and the emphasis on the worship experiences have led to this decline.⁵⁰ Diasporic Africans during the 20th century utilized Sunday school to educate and train illiterate members of the community to read and write. However, the primary source of Christian education in many traditional Black churches in the last decade is delivered through the teaching sermon.⁵¹

In my view, Christian religious educators and local church educational ministries have a biblical mandate and responsibility to equip the communities they serve with the resources, skills, and knowledge to navigate society and to grow in the knowledge and wisdom of Jesus of Nazareth. They have an obligation to aid in the development of disciples of Christ (Matt. 28:19), create an environment conducive to spiritual formation (Heb. 6:1), and help in the reconciliation

⁵⁰ Anne E. Streaty Wimberly. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Kindle Locations 108-109). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵¹ Kenneth H. Hill. *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Kindle Locations 1276-1277). Kindle Edition

of families, individuals, and communities (Col. 3:13). These biblical mandates and teaching are the foundation of my definition of Christian religious education.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) episcopal leadership has the 21st century theme of evangelism and church growth (discipleship) which has taken precedence over Christian religious education. Thereby leaving congregations inadequately equipped for discipleship and spiritual formation. Pastors see themselves as CEOs creating brand ministries and congregants are their consumers.⁵² This DMin project endeavors to approach Christian religious education with a new radical and innovative framework that doesn't attempt to compare to the old paradigm but is looking toward the future of Christian religious education and the life of the AMEC.⁵³ The AMEC directives states the Episcopal bishops set the course and direction (themes) for the global AMEC. Nevertheless, for Christian religious education to thrive in the local churches within the connectional AMEC, it is the responsibility of the pastors to emphasize the importance of educational ministries.⁵⁴

The AMEC from its inception understood education was and still is a passport to spiritual and physical freedom from economic, social, physical, and spiritual bondage. However, the global AMEC in many ways has not kept pace with the pedagogical theories of learning and teaching nor has the AMEC dealt with the context and changes in society that impact the communities we serve. This includes technological shifts, data acquisition, and ease of access to information. For example, E-Learning via Content Management Systems or the fact that the current generation is plugged in globally utilizing smart devices as a source of learning and spiritual growth. Individuals are utilizing technologies to create virtual communities. Technological advancements have opened the door for the growth of Hip. With the advent of social media virtual Hip Hop communities have developed.

Recently the AMEC changed its Sunday school materials, however, the materials I have reviewed and researched for this DMin project still do not broach hard topics on social issues, lived realities, circumstances, and issues encountered in minority communities daily or the

⁵² Paula L. McGee. *Brand® New Theology: The Wal-Martization of T.D. Jakes and the New Black Church* (Kindle Locations 408-410). Orbis Books. Kindle Edition

⁵³ Grant S. Shockley. (1975) "Christian Education and the Black Church: A Contextual Approach," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2. Article 9.

⁵⁴ Kenneth H. Hill. *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Kindle Location 1812). Kindle Edition.

technological shifts and advancements for teaching.⁵⁵ The *Improved Adult Teacher Quarterly* is now titled “Liberating Faith Studies.” The lessons still follow the International Sunday School lesson outlines, but the lessons themselves have been redesigned (See Appendix E).

In my youth, the African American community saw suicide as a disease that only impacted the Euro-American community or others.⁵⁶ But in the last few years and weeks, we have seen an increase of suicides in urban and minority communities. Issues such as bullying, and issues related to gender, sex, and ethnicity are increasingly impacting minority communities, and suicide rates are increasing in minority communities. The United Methodist Church is battling the issue of same-sex marriage and homosexuality, which is threatening a church schism. My experience has shown issues of sexuality, gender and suicide are not discussed in the churches I have attended. But Hip Hop culture confronts and broaches topics the church refuses to address, giving individuals agency and hope.

The AMEC quadrennial theme for 2016-2020 is social justice. Yet the AMEC leadership was so divided on the issue of sexual orientation and gender issues it prevented the church leadership from including these topics in the Quadrennial discussions on social justice.⁵⁷ The “#MeToo” movement is evidence of the continued victimization of women and girls in minority communities. This includes the church,⁵⁸ as a #churchtoo movement exists as well. Christian religious education must be holistic in its approach to healing our communities. HSPS pedagogy can be a vehicle to healing.

Diasporic Africans living in America in 1816 refused to accept their plight in life and their current Christian experience. They created a religious experience rooted in their cultural experiences; they created the AMEC. These founding diasporic Africans created a religious and Christian experience of faith rooted in rebellion to oppressive theological and ideological assertions and practices, and they knew education was the path to freedom.

⁵⁵ Saint James AME Newark utilizes Facebook live to stream worship services and communal Bible study. CMS /LMS systems can be utilized to provide an interactive learning experience for Christian religious education.

⁵⁶ This assertion is not to imply the African American community is monolithic; however, it is generally a widely held belief with Black communities I have lived in during my lifetime.

⁵⁷<https://www.thechristianrecorder.com/now-on-sexuality-in-the-ame-church/>.

⁵⁸ Tarana Burke an African American woman founded the Me Too movement in 2006 which emphasized awareness of the pervasiveness of abuse, assault and sexual assault on women and girls. The #MeToo movement was hijacked/coopted by affluent Euro-American women silencing the voices of African American women because it is now seen as an attack on wealthy men.

Christian religious education in the AMEC must provide holistic sound biblical hermeneutics, pedagogical methods and relevant content to liberate, reconcile and restore the communities the AMEC serves. Theological reflection and Christian religious education are necessary for discipleship and spiritual formation. As servant leaders working within the body of Christ, knowledge of one's theological perspective is critical to our understanding of Christian religious education. Self-awareness of one's theological perspective and embedded theologies determines how we perceive Christian religious education. HSPS is a practical pedagogy for Christian religious education. This summary of Christian religious education in the AMEC serves as background to the purpose of the research project which I outline below.

OVERVIEW OF THE DMIN PROJECT

I began this DMin project with an introduction to the study by providing the social location of Saint James and its surrounding community, including conditions of poverty and homelessness in Newark and among its minorities. In my earlier section, “Country Meets Hip Hop,” I described my personal journey of how Christian religious education, faith, and Hip Hop culture all worked together to assist in my identity, spiritual and discipleship formation. I concluded the Introduction with my call to ministry and an explanation of the DMin Courageous Leadership project and program at Drew Theological Seminary.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The purpose of my DMin project is to research through the narrative inquiry method of HSPS as a practical pedagogy for Christian education curricula in the AMEC. Catherine K. Riessman states that the development of any body of work incorporates the individual who developed the work.⁵⁹ I begin my research project by acknowledging my contextual location and how my personal experiences and context may shape and drive my point of view. According to Riessman, “story telling is what we do with our research material.”⁶⁰ Narrative inquiry as a research methodology is rooted and framed in experiences and stories. D. Jean Clandinin asserts that narrative inquiry provides a research method to study “social, cultural and institutional narratives.”⁶¹ A significant amount of research exists on how to incorporate elements of Hip Hop

⁵⁹ Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*, Vol. 30. Sage, 1993.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p1.

⁶¹ D. Jean Clandinin, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. Routledge, 2016.

into classrooms in academic settings; however very little exists regarding the Christian church. Hip Hop culture tells a story, and according to Clandinin, “stories are data and narratives are structure.”⁶² This study explored the benefits of developing a HSPS curricula for spiritual transformation, discipleship formation, personal liberation, and cultural reconciliation through Christian religious education.

The AMEC has the 21st-century mandate of discipleship formation. Rather than appropriating elements of Hip Hop as a gimmick to draw youth, adolescents, and millennials into the church and Christian education ministries, I argue that the development of a HSPS framework which is an extension of engaged pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy and Hip Hop pedagogy and can be used in Christian religious education.

In this study, I employed field observations of spoken word and poetry artist, Hip Hop lyrical analysis and Hip Hop culture. Hip Hop, spoken word, story-telling and poetry are vehicles historically and presently utilized by the disenfranchised, marginalized, oppressed and the downtrodden to overcome systematic racism, domestic violence, abuse, war on drugs, mass-incarceration and the ill-effects of Jim Crow laws in the United States to give communities and individuals identity, agency and hope. HSPS pedagogy can be used as a theoretical framework for Christian religious education and as an apparatus for teaching, preaching and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, developing disciples of Christ, reconciling communities and liberation for spiritual formation.

MAJOR CONCERN

Kingdom work is hard work. During the past seven years, I have spent countless hours in contemplative prayer, meditating, praying, and fasting (not to mention crying). As a child, my family was very active members of the United Methodist Church (UMC), and I spent my youth participating in numerous ministries initiated by our local church communities. Growing up in rural South Carolina, when I was not completing chores around the farm, working in my grandmother's garden, puttin' tobacco (southern phrase) or picking cucumbers or peppers, my time was spent at church and amongst our beloved community (individuals who attended and

⁶² D. Jean Clandinin, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. Routledge, 2016, Introduction.

those who did not attend our churches). Discipleship formation occurred 24/7/365 in our home, church and community. Everyone believed, “I am because we are” (Ubuntu). Spiritual and discipleship formation was a communal educational process, a process I find missing in many of our present-day urban communities and many of our local AME churches.

Bethsaida and Elijah United Methodist (UM) churches were the bedrock of my soteriological understanding of Jesus' mission on Earth. My knowledge of pneumatology, eschatology and my Christology I gleaned from the walk and talk of my grandmother's relationship with her God and the members of our community. My adolescent mind was molded and shaped by the theological discourse conveyed from the pulpit every Sunday and emphasized in the community in which we lived and served. The beloved community I had the privilege of growing up in was a village whose heartbeat was the church. The church of my youth was a house of worship, house of prayer, a place where one found a mentor, and an institution with a mission. The church offered vacation Bible school, promoted academic excellence, provided Christian educational instruction and life skills training. The church of my youth saw her mission as one wrapped in the ideology of παιδεία (paideia): the holistic training, education and socialization of a person.

Reflecting on my experience in the AMEC has brought me to this DMin project and Drew Theological Seminary. The message at sea was God's way of preparing me for ministry. During my wandering years in my twenties, I became a member of a Pentecostal church for twelve years. Following the death of my father I left church for ten years and set back out to sea. When God continued to prick my heart, and I started looking for a church home; I had no knowledge of the AMEC denomination. Continuing to wander at sea I mapped out a list of AME churches, once I discovered the 'M' in its name stood for Methodist. My spiritual roots and foundation in Christianity were nurtured in the Methodist church and I knew God was calling me home.

In my geographical location, all the United Methodist churches I found were Hispanic, thus the reason for researching AME churches to visit. The first church I visited was Saint James AME Newark. I had no intentions of joining any churches until I had an opportunity to complete the list I had compiled from searching the internet. The first Sunday I attended Saint James was a Father's Day. I remember calling my brother after service to inform him I found a church home.

I recall that day like it was yesterday, a woman turned to me during the call to Christian discipleship and said, “I will walk with you” (to the altar) and I advised her I did not want to join, that I was visiting. She said, “Why put off what you are going to do anyway?” I have watched the video several times over the years since that day. I had informed my brother I had walked by alone. The truth is the Holy Spirit had taken over, and God had ordered my steps to join Saint James, and indeed this woman had walked with me; stayed and prayed with me at the altar.

The divine movement of the Holy Spirit which led me to the AMEC is the same spirit which led me to Drew Theological Seminary and why my spirit is troubled that the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church leadership is failing its local and global churches in Christian religious education. I am troubled we are failing the communities we serve and the denomination by placing more emphasis on stewardship and church growth than on *paideia* and Christian religious education. In 2012, Bishop Ingram introduced a four-year strategy for the 1st Episcopal District, “From Membership to Discipleship,” and within the connectional AME church, discipleship formation is a 21st-century global mandate. The church held its 2016 Annual Certification and Pastoral Care Seminar during which the plenary discussion group sessions focused on the theme of racism. However, the only certification offered at the conclusion was in evangelism (church growth). I was unable to discover any information regarding Christian education sessions or training offered during this annual certification.⁶³

Many of our AME churches have a web presence and list Christian education as a ministry. As of this writing they have little to no information or resources published on Christian education on their church websites (See Appendix D). Most have merely cut and pasted data from the official AMEC Christian education website or have a hyperlink redirecting traffic there.

⁶³Church Growth and Development 2016 Annual Certification and Pastoral Care Seminar - <https://www.ame-church.com/news/church-growth-development-certification-and-seminar/> (Accessed April 6, 2016). The certifications offered, CERTIFICATION COURSES: EVANGELISM: Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, Youth Confirmation pts. 1 & 2, Spiritual Formation, Basic Apologetics, Advanced Apologetics, Finding Them, Keeping Them, Operating in Divine Purpose, The Flaming Sword, FRAngelism, Bearing Fruit, Organizing the Local Church for Evangelism, Understanding the Sub-Cultures of the 21st Century, The Master Plan of Evangelism, Church Planting

In total, I reviewed 150 AME church websites, and these results were consistent except for a few who offered their own Bible Institute.⁶⁴

The AMEC has not been intentional in addressing the Christian educational needs of the congregants. They (we) are neglecting to provide transformative mechanisms and tools which may be vital to restoring a broken people in a fractured society by continuing to rely on local congregations to develop Christian educational curricula or make a recommendation to purchase off-the-shelf tools. Numerous pastors I have spoken with during my research stated they are not able to afford the “*Disciple I - Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study: Planning Kit*” or in a few instances the Sunday school materials sold through the School Union (in those cases the Bible is strictly used for teaching).⁶⁵ The AMEC leadership has been unsuccessful in providing Christian religious education globally (throughout the connectional church) which teaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ in culturally inclusive and socially induced curricula which could manifest in individual’s transformation. Bishop Reginald Jackson theorizes, “The membership of our churches is in decline, and much of this is due to our failure to prioritize Christian Education.”⁶⁶

Many in the AMEC continue to describe our youth and adolescents as the church of the future rather than acknowledging our youth and adolescents are the church of now. Christian discipleship, spiritual formation, reconciliation and liberation within the AMEC is mired by a lack of ecclesial knowledge in the pews, and I will adduce led to the decline in membership. The AMEC has a rich history of requiring academic excellence. Wilberforce University (known by some as the crown jewel of the AMEC) is an example of the denomination's concerns regarding education and uplifting the disenfranchised. In 1856, Wilberforce became the first African American privately owned and operated university in the United States. Since then the AMEC has founded seventeen universities and colleges, nine of which are still operational today. The AMEC historically has fought against social injustices and providing education for

⁶⁴ For more information, see Ebenezer A.M.E. church as an example. E.B.I. Exists to nurture and equip men and women to do the work of ministry. We believe that each Christian is called to minister in some capacity. Working knowledge of the Scriptures is necessary to fulfill the Great Commission; we desire to teach men and women how to apply the Word of God in their lives. <http://www.ebenezerame.org/ministry/christian-education/>

⁶⁵ To obtain information regarding the content of the Disciple I kit, please visit <https://www.adultBiblestudies.com/product/9780687330829>

⁶⁶ A.M.E. 28th Connectional Christian Education & Youth Congress program-book.pdf

transformation has remained a core principle. However, discipleship formation and evangelism has redirected ministry efforts; causing the failing to provide a deliberate Christian religious education curriculum that focuses on freeing individuals from social, economic and spiritual bondage.⁶⁷

The lack of intentionality towards Christian religious education in the church is also reflective of the overall condition of education within the United States, particularly in minority communities. Newark is a prime example. A 2014 Religious Landscape study by Pew Research Center reported 43 percent of Christian respondents had achieved only a high school or less education; this is an important statistic to note.⁶⁸ In 1816, when the AME church was founded, there was an understanding that miseducation of African Americans was a tool used to maintain the oppression of a people physically, spiritually and mentally. For generations, the traditional Black churches utilized Sunday School to teach the illiterate in the community to read and write, and the courses were taught by the pastors who were typically educated. Trained theologians no longer teach many of our Sunday schools and Bible studies, but instead are taught by anyone willing to volunteer and serve; a phenomenon in the Black church I refer to as the “who so ever will ministry.”⁶⁹ A primary concern I have with this phenomenon is related to the diversity in embedded theology and what I have given the term, *church hopping syndrome*. Saint James teaches a Methodist doctrine, however allowing anyone without training to facilitate and teach Christian religious education courses has led to the miseducation of doctrine seen in Saint James as well as the global connectional AME church.

Christian religious education is imperative for spiritual and discipleship formation, wisdom and knowledge, and evangelism as well as church growth. I argue a pivotal moment in

⁶⁷ The move from membership to discipleship language has confused many in general conversation. In this instance, I am referencing membership. The A.M.E. Book of Discipline 2016 has been updated to add the word discipleship; however, the reference is related to membership. Also, discipleship formation is a lifelong process and the discipline states "may be received for nurturing and discipleship training as a new member for ninety (90) days." Belin, Rev. Roderick D. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition* (Kindle Location 2613).

⁶⁸ <https://www.pewforum.org/about-the-religious-landscape-study/>, accessed on May 20, 2019.

⁶⁹ Many churches financially cannot afford to hire paid staff for many of the important positions needed in the operations of church activities, also, traditional Black church over-emphasis ‘servant leadership’ and serving the church which in most cases there is an expectation one is to work for free. Who so ever will, is my expressing even if the individual is not qualified for a position in the traditional Black church it is not uncommon to see a ‘willing faithful servant’ in the position. Many people bring with them non-Methodist traditions, customs, practices, and belief which are not in line with Methodist doctrine.

the life of the traditional Black church was: 1) when the AMEC shifted her focus from using Sunday School as a resource for education/educating the illiterate, and 2) when AME pastors who had in most cases achieved academic training handed off Christian religious education ministries, i.e. Sunday School and Bible study, to the laity. In my ministry context I have met several individuals young and old who confessed in private they have limited reading abilities. The inability to read and comprehend will impact these individual's ability to grow spiritually if they are not able study and read the Bible for themselves. This is why I question the move from utilizing Sunday school as a tool to train the illiterate.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

W.E.B. Du Bois stated; "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."⁷⁰ As an ordained African American woman, I clearly understand the concept of two-souls and the warring ideas of identity. With the help of God, it took me forty-five years to self-actualize and to liberate myself from damaging biblical hermeneutics I sustained in my lifetime in traditional Black churches. Hermeneutics which at times describe my female person as less than being made in the image of God or worst, a Jezebel. Hermeneutics passed down through the generations that are oppressive to women and young girls.

HSPS along with my Christian heritage and Christian religious education gave me agency and helped promote and develop my personal and spiritual identity, and yes, Hip Hop reinforced that I am a child of God. The many years I spent wandering, traveling and exploring allowed me to grow into the disciple of Christ I am today. To deny the ghettos of the South Bronx and Hip Hop culture is to deny a piece of my soul, to deny my Southern Christian heritage would be to deny my spiritual ancestors who poured into my spirit as a youth.

⁷⁰ W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois, 1868-1963. *The Souls of Black Folk; Essays and Sketches*. Chicago, A. G. McClurg, 1903. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968, p.3.

At the age of forty-five upon entering the AMEC process to ordination, I was challenged once again in life regarding my agency and identity. Could I be authentic and in leadership within the AMEC without having to abandon the faith and experiences of my youth to fit into a new tradition with some customs and ideologies I had been delivered from and set free? The Bible teaches we are not to be conformed to this world but only by the transformation and renewing of our minds will we know God's will for our lives (Rom. 12:2). My experience in the AMEC thus far regarding the teaching of having a renewing of one's mind is that it is to be conformed to the customs and traditions of the AMEC.

Transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ (discipleship formation), liberation from sin and human bondage is not achieved via assimilation; but the emulation of Christ. As previously mentioned, during my five-year process to ordination, during the discipleship and nurturing training I received I was inundated with historical information. Information about the History of the AMEC and its bishops. The AMEC Deacon and Itinerant Elders examinations were 90 percent knowledge of the AMEC history, doctrine and polity and bishops name and dates of consecration. Although I agree it is necessary to know and understand AME church history, polity, and doctrine, it is also my belief that Christian religious education is more than denominational church history, doctrine, and polity.

My research project seeks to utilize the creative and visceral nature of HSPS to develop an innovative Christian religious education curricula. Secondly the project seeks to investigate the Christian religious educational practices and methodologies in the AMEC and the churches leadership response to context and change. My research questions include:

1. What would it look like if the AMEC helped the communities they serve by using non-traditional pedagogies which are culturally responsive, relevant, and inclusive?
2. What would the traditional Black church look like if tradition met HSPS pedagogy for liberation, reconciliation, restoration, and transformative ministry?
3. What would it look like to bridge the gap between the community and the traditional Black churches using HSPS as a liberating pedagogical praxis?
4. How can the elements of Hip Hop culture, story-telling, spoken word, and poetry be used to teach Christian religious education?

5. Why are church members disinterested in Christian religious education currently defined as Sunday school and Bible study?

These questions will be used as a guide into my investigation on Christian religious education in the AMEC.

BIBLICAL & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Christian religious education is not a term readily found in the Bible, nevertheless, the Holy Writ teaches us even Jesus increased in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52). The desire to acquire knowledge is innate and hardwired into the fabric of our beings, and all of God's creation can learn even if they have special needs. Christian religious education should not be assumed to be the study of religion (religious education) nor should Christian religious education be narrowed to merely studying the Bible and denominational doctrine and history. Its foundation is Christo-centered and must educate individuals to be able to function in the global society successfully.

The community of faith and followers of Jesus Christ are instructed to nurture (*paideia*) the children (Eph. 6:4). Merriam-Webster defines *paideia* as the "training of the physical and mental faculties in such a way as to produce a broad enlightened, mature outlook harmoniously combined with maximum cultural development."⁷¹ Diasporic Africans in the United States landed on these shores bound in chains as slaves, stripped of our language and our culture. As a global denomination AMEC Christian educational materials and curricula must address the cultural diversities within our denomination and within our local congregations. Sunday school lessons which do not include cultural context fall short in providing holistic spiritual and discipleship formation experiences.

Pastors weekly are tasked with taking an ancient text and making it relevant and consequently providing a message of hope. Laity who teach Sunday school or Bible study are given materials developed with a western philosophy entitled 'Liberating Faith Studies' which does not account for the diversity in culture, diasporic African culture, Latinx or other cultures, nor does the material address major societal issues the church refuses to address either because

⁷¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paideia>, accessed May 20, 2019.

of doctrinal indifferences or intentionally failing to address.⁷² The AMEC, a connectional and global denomination, has not adopted a constructivism approach to education. Sunday School materials are produced in the United States and do not consider the cultural factors and experiences of our brothers and sisters in other countries, including Africa.

Hip Hop culture, spoken-word, and poetry rhetoric and lyrics have opened the door to discussions the church is failing to broach regarding minority's lived realities in present-day society in the United States. It is time for radical changes and courageous approaches to the underlying assumptions of how the AMEC does Christian religious education and what is deemed Christian educational materials and content.

The following theoretical constructs inform my research: Womanist Liberation theology, Feminist Theology, Black Liberation Theology, discipleship, and spiritual formation.

WHY A PEDAGOGY OF HIP HOP | SPOKEN-WORD | POETRY | STORY-TELLING

In developing an argument for HSPS pedagogy in the AMEC for Christian education curriculum I will discuss pluralism, economic diversity, the commodification of Christianity by churches and outreach. I will conclude with why HSPS pedagogy is practical for spiritual transformation, personal liberation, discipleship formation, and cultural reconciliation.

The United States prides itself on being a melting pot of a diversity of people, languages, religions, and cultures and is a Christian nation struggling to maintain its identity (religious) by any means necessary, as is the AMEC. For years, the mainline Protestant denominations have been struggling with a decline in membership, and it is not unusual to meet an individual who identifies as spiritual and not religious. Many of these individuals are in the minority communities the AMEC serve, and many feel Hip Hop is their religion and Gospel. As a minister, I understand that in the face of religious pluralism and embedded theologies, indoctrination is not enough for this present generation of seekers. Many of our congregations have acquiesced by stating millennials do not go to church, without seeking out the millennials to understand why. My response to these assertions is often to say to the individuals, “Truth be told they do not go to *your* church.”

⁷² New name of the AME Sunday School adult material.

Religious pluralism is indeed alive, and well, however, the discourse regarding religious pluralism is not a new subject for many in the academy and leadership positions within the prominent World religions. As I pondered the construct of religious plurality, I questioned the general or perceived notion of a global understanding of the term. Religious propaganda and rhetoric spewed by our government officials and religious leaders (Evangelical) have indoctrinated individuals into believing or having hatred towards other religious groups (Muslims in particular) and others in general.⁷³ As a self-proclaimed Christian and disciple of Jesus Christ, I am bound by the commandment to love my neighbor as myself which I have taken as a commandment in my journey of faith seeking understanding.

The AMEC leadership must ask ourselves as the body of Christ what our intentions for Christian religious education are? Does the AME church see religion and Christian education as being synonymous?⁷⁴ Moreover, how do we define Christian religious education? Millennials I have interviewed since entering ministry have stated; that they cannot get with a church that preaches against other people's beliefs.⁷⁵ The paradox of loving one's neighbor and Jesus being the only way, the truth and life pose a conundrum for most indoctrinated Christians. It is also a challenge for youth and adolescents in a society whose motto seems to be 'to each his/her own' operating with an ideology in which everyone must be converted. Many of our Christian youth are living in blended families and to force them to be apologetic is asking in some cases they turn against family members. We must in our curriculum acknowledge that in some households, family members may be practicing many religious beliefs in the home.

Saint James AMEC services a diverse community, and members fall into socio-economic status' which ranges from living in predefined poverty levels to millionaires. Many of our members and those who attend our noon-day worship service on Wednesday's were raised Catholic, Jehovah's Witness and some non/converted. Most of our members have a wide range of embedded theologies and ideologies they have picked up over the years from attending various

⁷³ My reference to Evangelical here is not regarding individuals who identify as being born again. I am speaking of the White male religious talking heads who wield political power. The 81% who voted for the current president. <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/critical-essay/american-evangelicalism-and-politics-whiteness>

⁷⁴ Mary Hinton, *The Commercial Church: Black Churches and the New Religious Marketplace in America*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2011) states "Religious education is fundamentally about identity – how a people know themselves, organize for living, and work to endure through time."

⁷⁵ Previous research I conducted for a course entitled "Ministry with Those with Mental Illness" while attending Drew Theological seminary I interviewed millennials for a final integrations case study.

denominations within Protestantism and Islam. As an ordained minister, I have had the opportunity to counsel numerous members before their Christian baptism, and I have been amazed and disheartened at the lack of ecclesial understanding and in other instances no understanding as to why the AME church engages in the sacred rituals of The Lord's Supper and Baptism. Often as I administer communion, I watch as several individuals partake in the Lord's Supper and before rising from the altar they make the sign of the cross typically practiced in the Catholic church. Non-denominational churches are growing at exponential rates while the AME church continues its efforts in church growth through evangelism without an intentional educational plan in place.⁷⁶ I mention non-denominational churches because some AME pastors have begun studying and emulating individuals such as T.D Jakes as an example for church growth and ministry.

In her well-known publication, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*, Mara Einstein argues religion has transformed into a product for consumption rather than a vehicle for spiritual transformation.⁷⁷ The commodification of religion as a product or brand, argues Paula McGee in *Brand® New Theology: The Wal-Martization of T.D. Jakes and the New Black Church* has created within the African American culture acceptance of prosperity gospels and theologies.⁷⁸ The proliferation of religious marketing trends specifically within Christianity should not be taken as a simple discourse of academic interest. Serious reflection and research regarding the significances of popular culture and the impact on religion are essential for the understanding of the trajectory of the future of Christianity and my DMin project the AME church. H. Richard Niebuhr argued in *Christ and Culture* that as human beings who are in this world yet not of this world there is a construct of “the enduring problem.”⁷⁹ According to Niebuhr, it is impossible for mankind [sic] to separate themselves from the culture in which they find themselves, therefore as Christians the paradox becomes: Does the church accommodate the

⁷⁶ Nondenominational has several connotations (open or acceptable to people of any Christian denomination.) Here I am referencing nontraditional protestant / Christian churches which follow a relaxed and nontraditional doctrine.

⁷⁷ Mara Einstein, *Brands of faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2007), p.99.

⁷⁸ Paula McGee, *Brand® New Theology: The Wal-Martization of T.D. Jakes and the New Black Church* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York, 2017), 321-324, Kindle

⁷⁹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ, and Culture*, 1st ed (San Francisco: Harper, SanFrancisco, 2001).

cultural influence? Does it incorporate cultural influence or disregard cultural influences as they relate to the Christian religion?

I am aware Hip Hop and Christianity for many make strange bedfellows. Most church attendees' only interaction with that which is perceived to be Hip Hop or Hip Hop culture occurs through the lens of local broadcast News channels with implicit and explicit biased agendas. A combination of cultivation theory and emotional conditioning has produced a Western culture and society which sees African American males as thugs, gangsters and a menace to society. George Gerbner introduced the concept of cultivation theory in *Living with Television: The Dynamics of the Cultivation Process*. Gerbner asserts, "television viewing contributes to audience conceptions and actions in such realms as sex and age-role stereotypes, health, science, the family, educational achievement and aspirations. politics, and religion."⁸⁰ African America women continue to be objectified and presented by the media as loose gold-diggers who are hypersexual. Michael Eric Dyson asserts, "hip hop is widely viewed as the soundtrack to black pathology."⁸¹ Dyson's assertions may be explained with Pavlovian conditioning theory. Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov theorized that when one is repeatedly exposed to a stimulus, a conditioned response can be elicited.⁸² KRS-One adds, "All across America's mainstream airwaves; hip-hop is being presented to the world as an irresponsible community of bitches, thugs, whores, and pimps. And this is done deliberately– for the sole purpose of generating an income– while distracting people from the Truth!"⁸³ The reality is many of the traditional Black churches are failing our communities on many levels, and Hip Hop has stepped in to save minority communities and provide a voice to social injustices.⁸⁴

A HSPS pedagogy is needed in the church as a radical, innovative and courageous development of Christian religious education pedagogy to develop disciples of Christ, create

⁸⁰ <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ret=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=2ahUKEwiPs-Csj6viAhWuVt8KHSrgAkcQFjAAegQIARAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fweb.asc.upenn.edu%2Fgerbner%2FAsset.aspx%3FassetID%3D1644&usq=AOvVaw1tuQXlxxuVHT1162wiF457> (Accessed May 20, 2019) "Living With Television: The Dynamics of The Cultivation Process" pdf by George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, and Nancy Signorielli.

⁸¹ Monica R. Miller; Anthony B. Pinn; Bernard "Bun B" Freeman. *Religion in Hip Hop* (Bloomsbury Studies in Religion and Popular Music). Bloomsbury Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁸² *The American Heritage® Medical Dictionary*. S.V. "Pavlovian conditioning." Retrieved May 20, 2019 from <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Pavlovian+conditioning>

⁸³ KRS-One. *The Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (Kindle Locations 10530-10532). powerHouse Books. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁴ I am speaking of the non-commodified Hip Hop.

beloved communities and to transform lives. By HSPS pedagogy I am not proposing a gimmick, prescription or strategic tactic to lure millennials, youth, and adolescents into the church. I interviewed a millennial and asked if he would attend a Hip Hop church and his response was, “I have, and I walked out.”⁸⁵ For this reason, I am proposing the AMEC needs a theologically and theoretically sound framework for intergenerational Christian religious education, an apparatus for teaching, preaching and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for developing disciples of Christ, to reconcile communities and promote liberation and spiritual formation. The AMEC needs a curriculum to uplift our communities and provide what the government is failing to provide. The president's 2018 fiscal budget called for \$9.2 billion in educational cuts.⁸⁶ We the church need to wake up and see the urgency in not only saving individuals spiritually but physically saving our minority communities through education.⁸⁷

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In the previous section, I addressed the need for HSPS pedagogy in the AMEC. The commodification of religion, easy access to televangelists and a multiplicity of doctrine is why the AMEC must be intentional about Christian religious education.

My DMin project research primary focus is the AMEC which is a global denomination with congregations on four continents. The intended objective of this project research is the development of a HSPS pedagogy curricula for Christian religious education in the AMEC. A culturally inclusive and relevant curriculum which could be utilized in the connectional AMEC.

The AMEC congregations consist predominately of diasporic Africans. Therefore, the purposed curriculum will be designed to be inclusive of all nations and all people, AMEC members or not. This is based on the instruction, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all

⁸⁵ During an interview with a 30-year-old male he informed me he had attended a Hip Hop church, however, he walked out. He was born and raised in the church; however, he no longer attends church. I presented my DMin curriculum proposal, and his initial response was he wanted to know if it was authentic or just a gimmick.

⁸⁶ <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/05/22/529534031/president-trumps-budget-proposal-calls-for-deep-cuts-to-education> Accessed 03/04/2019

⁸⁷ Last year within the 1st episcopal district many members began wearing “God is Woke T-Shirts.” We cannot in the church appropriate the language of the secular world and then shun them at the same time. The general ideology as Christians we must separate ourselves is problematic because it is impossible to separate one's self from one's culture.

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matt. 28:19)

A limitation of this project is the independence or autonomous nature of the local church congregations. It should not be assumed any statements made regarding AMEC polity as stated in the Book of Doctrine and Discipline are adhered to in all local churches. For example, not all Episcopal Districts adhere to the mandate of acquiring an MDiv before being ordained an Itinerant Elder. One alternative requires that one complete two-third of one's credits towards an MDiv degree before being ordained an Itinerant Deacon, as it is in the First Episcopal District.

I referenced the official Christian education department, Sunday School Union, and AMEC official websites as the primary source of data to obtain updated information in conjunction with the Book of Doctrine and Discipline where appropriate. Saint James references the new members (discipleship and nurturing) training course known as New Life Ministries. It should not be assumed that all AMEC is using the same terminology for membership training (discipleship and nurturing).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A study of this nature which investigates HSPS as a practical pedagogy for Christian religious education curricula in the AMEC has the potential to positively impact how such curricula are designed for diasporic African Christian communities. It increases knowledge regarding Hip Hop education and religion. It does so first by focusing on the holistic learning experience through engaged and culturally relevant pedagogy rather than developing content for facilitators to dictate to consumers.⁸⁸ The engaged and culturally relevant material provides cooperative learning, spiritual growth, and discipleship formation. Second, HSPS as a practical pedagogy opens the door for intergenerational study sessions and dialogue about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This study reveals the cultural wealth of knowledge, personal agency, and identity formation taking place in Hip Hop culture. Also, it amplifies the voice of a segment of the community many have deemed unredeemable.

⁸⁸ Saint James AME church uses Sunday school material produced by UMI. I have used the word consumer here to articulate that the material seems to be generic for consumers and not specific to African American culture save the photo which depicts African Americans on the cover and used throughout the manuals.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

My DMin project uses a narrative inquiry method of research. The primary focus is the AMEC and the development of a Christian religious education curriculum using HSPS pedagogy. To humanize Hip Hop I employ Hiphopography.⁸⁹ Hiphopography integrates ethnography and amalgamates past, social and cultural history. Rapping is one element of Hip Hop culture. Rappers are lyrical cultural critics interpreting social norms and issues. Rappers and Hip Hop artists utilize lyrics and rhetoric to provide a cultural lens into any given community in a given time (history). Rappers are also poets, story-tellers and spoken word artists. Hiphopography emphasis on oral history is in line with my project's use of poetry, spoken-Word, and story-telling.

JESUS LIBERATE THROUGH HIP HOP ORAL TRADITION

I began this chapter with an introduction to the study by providing the social location of Saint James and the socio-economic conditions of the community we serve. I then discussed the relevance of Christian religious education, including the biblical mandate and theoretical framework for education. In this chapter summary, I will discuss the need to rediscover the historical Jesus and oral tradition for liberative Christian religious education.

The name, Jesus of Nazareth, is undoubtedly one of the most recognized names in history. The concept of a god-man arguably makes him one of the most controversial figures of all time. To borrow the words of Winston Churchill: perhaps for many the fascination with Jesus lies in Him being “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma...”⁹⁰ However, perhaps there is a key (pun intended, musical note). Although Churchill in this quote was not speaking of Jesus of Nazareth, the quest to remember Jesus has metaphorically become preachers, rappers, poets, Sunday school teachers, Bible study facilitators, and scholars' attempt to unlock the key. A widely-held belief and paramount to a Christian's faith is the belief in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth and his incarnation. However, the establishment of Jesus' ontology and Christology has primarily been formulated by academic scholars and by the patriarchal leadership within the Christian church. The paradox created by scholars attempting to define, describe, standardize or

⁸⁹ Alim, H.S. *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

⁹⁰ Churchill was quoted during a broadcast in London October 1, 1939, Accessed April 6, 2019, <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-150/churchill-on-russia/> Accessed 04/06/2019

normalize the enigma reveals the limitations of the human imagination. Hip Hop culture grew out of human imagination, resistance to oppressive conditions and the realization of the power of God.

One thing we know for sure is that when GOD raises a people it has historically been the most downtrodden, impoverished, powerless group of people that GOD chooses to restore and raise. Moreover, part of the reason for this historically has been that GOD chooses the most powerless people to raise, the most ignorant to educate, the most unorganized to order so that they and the world may know once again that GOD IS GOD! Also, nothing in the world is above the power of GOD.⁹¹

One of the challenges faced with remembering the historical Jesus is that, in the words of Dr. R.C. Sproul, “everyone is a theologian.” Interpretations of Jesus Christ are not confined to the halls of the academy nor organized religion. Hollywood’s remembrance of Jesus can be found in movies such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973), *The Passion of Christ* (2004) and the television miniseries, *A.D. The Bible Continues* (2015). Nor is the search for the historical Jesus limited to the big screen. Author’s such as Reza Aslan in his controversial book *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* have seemingly created a version of Jesus. Critics question whether as a practicing Muslim he is qualified to write about Jesus.⁹²

Daniel Migliore in *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* asserts that theology is the praxis of allowing our faith in the Jesus of the Gospel to ask questions as we seek to understand the mysteries of God via God's revelation in the sacred scriptures.⁹³ The perception of Hip Hop as a tool for Christian religious education is overshadowed by the misconceptions of Hip Hop. Many in the traditional Black church have impressions of Hip Hop and, for that matter, issues in society that are derived from the pulpit. If one were to investigate the traditional Hip Hop culture, we would find, “This is what the Gospel of Hip Hop is all about. It is about the restoration and further development of one's love for Hip Hop because it is through love that we learn of the deeper lessons regarding the nature of GOD.”⁹⁴ In addition,

⁹¹ KRS-One. *The Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (Kindle Locations 247-251). powerHouse Books. Kindle Edition.

⁹² "Author Defends controversial new book on Jesus," Accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/08/01/jesus-zealot-book/2608991/>

⁹³ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 17.

⁹⁴ KRS-One. *The Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (Kindle Locations 333-334). powerHouse Books. Kindle Edition.

“Approaching Kool Herc (the Father) historically as simply a D.J. is like approaching Jesus (the Christ) historically as simply a carpenter. Not only does such a perception limit the potential of the community influenced by such a perception, but such a view of Hip Hop is simply inaccurate historically. Kool D.J. Herc is far more than a D.J., and Hip Hop is far more than a music genre!”⁹⁵ Another way of thinking of this is that, “In no way can we ever discredit, demean or disrespect the Christian faith; such is NOT the character of an attuned Hiphoppa.”⁹⁶

Christianity perpetuates a homogeneity of beliefs while consisting of diversity in doctrinal principles and practices. One praxis being the Bible is the only medium which contains the revelation(s) of God. As a young girl living on a farm, early in life, God spoke to me before I began to read the Holy Scriptures for myself. I was able to express God in my everyday life as God revealed god-self in nature.

Have you ever stopped to listen to the break of day?
The very moment that night passes away
Have you ever heard the sun speak to your mind?
At the moment it starts to shine.

Have you ever heard a blade of grass?
Speak to your feet as you step pass?
Have you ever heard the branch of a tree?
Call your name out like the one that spoke to me?

During my research, many of the laity and ministers I spoke with were adamant the Bible is the single source of truth one should consult for Christian religious education. I recalled several years ago, Dr. Raquel St. Clair Lettisome incorporated the reading of the book *The Shack* during our summer women's Bible study. I was sharing the experience with a friend who attends the Church of God in Christ, and I was told we were heretics. Many with whom I have shared my DMin project questioned the authenticity of mixing the secular with the sacred. Their thoughts aligned with Craige G. Lewis who has stated, “... hip-hop is destroying the lives of many, as they seek to be entertained by a supernatural influence that is beyond their natural control.”⁹⁷ Traditionalist and apologetic thinking and actions are creating a schism within the

⁹⁵ Ibid. Kindle Locations 1358-1359

⁹⁶ Ibid. Kindle Locations 9678-9679

⁹⁷ Craige G. Lewis, *The Truth Behind Hip Hop* (Kindle Locations 41-42). Xulon Press. Kindle Edition.

United Methodist Church. Maintaining customs and traditions unwavering have not prevented the mass exodus from organized religion.

Despite the secular character that often inhabits popular culture, Christian– and Muslim– inflected religiosity was never truly absent from hip hop’s poetry (Lauricella and Kyereme 2012). Brother J, X-Clan, or the late Tupac Shakur– rap’s deep thinkers, who, in their music, raised existential, ontological, and eschatological meanings– brought to the fore sensibilities that, though largely absent in hip hop’s party-atmosphere lyrics of the ’70s and early eighties, became increasingly relevant as the decade progressed.⁹⁸

I have often felt one of the biggest mistakes made was the canonization of the Bible by metaphorically placing the word(s) of God between two bookends, caused many to suggest or make the claim God only speaks through the words we already have documented. And for some God stopped speaking after revelation. I am a witness that God speaks through nature, and KRS One reveals, “GOD IS REAL! And Hip Hop is evidence of GOD's real existence and love.”⁹⁹ Christian religious education must express the love of God and the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth; however, more importantly, Christian religious education should never be used to ‘murder the spirit.’ Dr. Bettina Love believes education must not deny culture or hinder creativity in the learning process:

“I do think when we deny students the opportunity to express their culture in classrooms we are spirit murdering them when I'm asking you every day to walk through that door and be something that you are not. I am murdering your spirit when I am asking you to stop being who you are, so I can do my job I am taking away something from you, and I am murdering your spirit piece by piece.”¹⁰⁰

MC's, rappers, poets, and spoken word artists employ the construct of orality to convey rhetoric about issues such as socio-economic conditions, racism, or sexism, and they provide firsthand cultural knowledge and experience of a generation. First-century Christianity in its formative years was a religious movement which passed from region to region by word of mouth, “an oral phenomenon in a predominantly oral culture.”¹⁰¹ Hip Hop culture is a movement

⁹⁸ Monica R. Miller; Anthony B. Pinn; Bernard "Bun B" Freeman. *Religion in Hip Hop* (Bloomsbury Studies in Religion and Popular Music) (p. 38). Bloomsbury Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁹ KRS-One. *The Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (Kindle Location 85). powerHouse Books. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁰ “Hip Hop, Grit, and Academic Success: Bettina Love at TEDxUGA”, Accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkZqPMzgvzg&t=28s>

¹⁰¹ Rafael Rodriguez, *Oral Tradition and the New Testament: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, New York, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 42

that started forty years ago, and the oral elements of Hip Hop have been used to carry the movement from the South Bronx around the world. The transformative nature of Hip Hop makes its elements powerful educational pedagogical tools.

Rafael Rodriguez argues that the construct of “orality” should not be perceived as having a universal meaning, as it can “refer to any number of things,” and scholars are not conclusive regarding the term.¹⁰² Hip Hop culture also can be referenced as any number of things depending on who is asked to define Hip Hop. Notable scholars such as Monica Miller, Anthony B. Pinn, Bernard Freeman, and Michael Eric Dyson have broached the subject of orality in Hip Hop culture. Dyson asserts, “What’s interesting about Hip Hop, versus earlier forms of black oral and aesthetic expression, is that there is a big investment in Hip Hop artists in defining authenticity.”¹⁰³ The topic of orality and its significances in the quest for the historical Jesus among many New Testament scholars has been a point of contention, and numerous works have been published on the subject. Prominent scholars such as Walter Ong, Lou Silberman, Annette Weissenrieder and Robert Coote have broached the subject. One of the most influential works was published by Werner Kelber. In *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, Kelber writes, “This rather personal aspect of oral tradition bears further explanation. It is like the Hebrew oral tradition, which spoke of the deity as “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” God was best understood employing the talk and walk of the ancestors: the lived life and spoken words of parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.”¹⁰⁴

Kelber recognizes the Gospel’s narrative form and the oral culture of communication that required memory for the Gospel stories to be composed. These aspects thus challenge New Testament scholar Rudolph Bultmann’s assumption of a linear aspect to oral tradition. Kelber argued “oral memory requires active memory, not passive recollection.”¹⁰⁵ Hip Hop orally contextualizes and embodies the lived experiences of the least of these and the vulnerable in minority communities. Through verbal rhetoric in rhymes and non-verbal rhetoric of break dancing, Hiphoppas tell their story. God has a plan, and the Bible unfolds that wonderful plan.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ M.E. Dyson. *Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip Hop*. ReadHowYouWant.com, Limited, 2010.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=P4wsVoi-qUC>. p. 6 Accessed April 6, 2019.

¹⁰⁴ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (p. 31). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁵ Richard A. Horsley, *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), xi.

Through the message of prophecy
God sent Jesus into this world to be our savior
And that Christ is returning, someday soon
To unfold the wonderful plan of eternity, for my life and your life
As long as we're cooperating with God
By accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and savior
And as the Lord does return in the coming seven days
We'll see you next time here on This Week in Bible Prophecy¹⁰⁶

Kelber argues that “oral tradition requires active memory, not passive recollection.”¹⁰⁷ Rappers, beatboxers, and break-dancers gather in circles called Cyphers in an oral tradition I call verbal gymnastics where they communicate a lived culture from memory in a lyrical verbal battle. Bultmann presupposed in his work that the mode of communication was irrelevant in textual work, thus working backward from textual analysis to oral tradition, disregarding the value of orality. Kelber's work established a break from the traditionally held scholarship of Bultmann in his conclusion by extending the conversation and making a distinction between the written and oral.?

Kelber argues that during a performance of speech, the utterance of words are received by the hearer (audience), which initiates a reaction to the spoken words by the mere presence of the audience.¹⁰⁸ Hip Hop cyphers provide the stage where many whose voices have been silenced can perform. HSPS pedagogy provides the construct of orality to Christian religious education. Jefferson Bethke, a spoken word performer, wrote a piece entitled *Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus*.¹⁰⁹

What if I told you Jesus came to abolish religion?
What if I told you voting Republican really wasn't His mission?
What if I told you Republican doesn't automatically mean Christian
And just because you call some people blind doesn't automatically give you vision?
I mean, if religion is so great, why has it started so many wars?
Why does it build huge churches but fails to feed the poor?
Tells single moms God doesn't love them if they've ever had a divorce
But in the Old Testament, God actually calls religious people whores

¹⁰⁶ Lyrics taken from 2Pac "Blasphemy" on *The Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory* Album.

¹⁰⁷ Richard A. Horsley, *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), xi.

¹⁰⁸ Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*. Foreword by Walter J. Ong, S.J. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, p.14

¹⁰⁹ Jefferson Bethke. *Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dN1iyJQGrcU>
Accessed June 3, 2019.

Religion might preach grace, but another thing they practice
Tend to ridicule God's people; they did it to John the Baptist
They can't fix their problems, and so they just mask it
Not realizing religion's like spraying perfume on a casket

Christian religious education must rediscover the Historical Jesus of Nazareth so that the Gospel we preach can truly be transformative, liberating, and offer reconciliation to a broken nation.

CHAPTER TWO – CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION – SETTING PRIORITIES

Education is the passport to liberation. Know when to ask the right questions. As a software engineer and consultant, I am called upon by major corporations to solve interoperability issues with products and solutions which have been purchased and deployed within a given corporate enterprise environment. Interoperability issues introduced for a reason no one stopped to ask a few fundamental questions before purchasing, installing and rolling out the software or solution: Why do we need this software? What do we want the software to do for our organization? Customers hire me to architect and develop solutions to a problem yet to be defined and often a problem they are unable to articulate. Christian religious education, like many of the interoperability issues I encounter, is the elephant in the room in the life of many of our local AMEC congregations.

I make this claim because during my seven-year journey to ordination I engaged in numerous conversations with my cohorts regarding the different ministries offered at local churches. When queried about education, most were unable to provide a concise mission, vision or value statement as to why they have a Christian educational ministry other than it is mandated in the book of discipline, or that all churches have Sunday school and Bible study. Further, they were unable to articulate what their local church hoped to achieve through Bible study and/or Sunday school. The AMEC list several ministries under the Christian religious education department, nevertheless for those interviewed, Bible study and Sunday school were the only ministries classified as Christian religious education offerings in their local congregations.

From mega-churches to storefronts the exterior signage ensures all are made aware of three relevant scheduling listings: Sunday school, Bible study and worship service. Churches take great care to guarantee anyone passing is aware of the days and hours these ministries are held, and every church I have attended has either or both listed as active ministries. Most often these two active ministries consistently have the least participation amongst all the active ministries in most of our local AMEC environments. Which begs the questions: What is Christian religious education? And, what is the intended or stated goals we seek to accomplish with Christian religious education in the AMEC?

WHAT IS EDUCATION?

“Free your mind and the rest will follow. ... Before you can read me you gotta learn how to see me...”¹¹⁰ The epistemological investigation of the philosophical construct of what it means to know, to acquire knowledge or wisdom dates as far back as the garden of Eden. The garden of Eden story is not so much a story of one woman's disobedience to God or that of a temptress. Eve's story speaks to the inherent desire of humankind to acquire wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and experiences which have philosophical significance. Education is the acquisition of knowledge, an ideological construct of facts and beliefs achieved through socialization, indoctrination, and experiences. Prov. 22:6 admonishes parents to train their children, set them on the right course so that when they are older, they will not become lost and will know which way to go.

The United States has imposed compulsory education, mandated by laws which stipulate when, where and how long every child must attend school. However, the United States does not levy a country-wide educational curriculum thereby allowing each of the 50 states to determine and set local stipulation regarding its mandatory educational requirements for successful fulfillment. The No Child Left Behind policy disabled many minority students who were passed along without having acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to survive in life. In 1870 approximately, 80 percent of African Americans were illiterate; by 1979 the number had decreased to 1.6 percent in the United States.¹¹¹

The compulsory educational laws and policies may have decreased illiteracy in the United States, however, they also created a quagmire for many parents. Parents with an affinity for religion might argue an educational curriculum must include a religious component, while other parents may desire a curriculum that accommodates athletics programming (many low-income families use athletic scholarships to obtain college degrees).¹¹² In ancient Judea, parents knew the importance of teaching the Jewish laws. During the Reformation Luther argued for

¹¹⁰ EnVogue ‘Free You Mind’ Songwriters: Gerald Edward Levert / Denzil Delano Foster / Thomas Mcelroy

¹¹¹ “National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL),” https://nces.ed.gov/naal/lit_history.asp, accessed May 20, 2019.

¹¹² In high school, I enrolled in the AP advanced curriculum for four years. However, my advisor suggested I enroll in the Army and not attend college if I wanted to be successful in life. I received 17 scholarship offers for athletics when I graduated from High School. I knew to live in the ghetto education was my passport to success, and I utilize sports as a fallback to obtaining an education if my academics didn't open a door for higher education.

mandatory education, including biblical studies. Throughout history the affluent have always had access to education; yet in the United States slaves, women and children were not afforded the same opportunities.¹¹³ The Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 was enacted specifically to combat institutional discrimination based on gender, race or national origin. History has proven the enactment of laws does not constitute access.

So, what is education and why do we need it? On the surface, it appears to be a straightforward question one could answer with a quick Google search. However, in the 21st century and in light of the commodification of education, the answer is not so simple. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. asserted, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education"¹¹⁴ The Bible teaches that it is better to obtain insight and wisdom than to have silver or gold (Prov. 16:16) and that we should study to show ourselves approved (2 Tim. 2:15). Philosopher Allan Bloom contends, "Education is the movement from darkness to light."¹¹⁵ The challenge of defining what constitutes education rest in the hands of those who are in control. Ulysses S. Grant felt religious education should be left to the churches, the traditional stance in the United States of separation between church and state.

"Encourage free schools and resolve that not one dollar of money appropriated to their support no matter how raised, shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian school... Leave the matter of religion to the family circle, the church and the private school supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate."¹¹⁶

Jean Piaget felt the goal of education within schools is to develop individuals who are creative, inventive, and who can develop new things and not rely on past generations.¹¹⁷ Anatole France saw education as a philosophical understanding of self and for one to be able to discern between that which one knew and what one did not know. Further, he states, "An education which does not cultivate the will, is an education that depraves the mind. It is the teacher's duty

¹¹³ More specifically African American.

¹¹⁴ <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/purpose-education> Accessed 04/05/2019

¹¹⁵ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) p. 265.

¹¹⁶ *Project Innovation (Organization), Education*, v. 5 (New England Publishing Company, 1885), p. 543.

¹¹⁷ J. Piaget and B. Inhelder, *The Psychology Of The Child* (Basic Books, 2008). p. 95.

to teach the pupil HOW to will.”¹¹⁸ Plato asserted that education had a metaphysical object; education for Plato, simply put, was the ability to love.¹¹⁹ Nelson Mandela believed the most powerful weapon we have to change the world is education.¹²⁰

Education can be informal or formal, and the issue with compulsory education especially for minority students is the continued lack of access. In the United States, we are currently witnessing a college admissions scandal that brings to light the continued disparity between race and accessibility to education and resources. So, what is education? Paulo Freire understood the plight of the minority and the least of these when he simply stated, “Education is freedom [liberation].”¹²¹

EDUCATIONAL & LEARNING THEORIES

B.F. Skinner, a behaviorist, theorized operant conditioning was the optimal approach to teaching, as it reinforced the construct of reward and punishment.¹²² In my observation, many teach denominational doctrine and theology to emulate Skinner; this is to say they present the word of God from the position of Hell and brimstone, sin or salvation, or good versus evil. Others subscribe to cognitivism as an approach to teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ by inundating individuals with scriptures (pouring in information), hoping learning will occur during the process. Lev Vygotsky theorized constructivism by arguing that individuals do not acquire knowledge; rather, learning takes place by constructing knowledge in contextualized environments.¹²³

During the worship experience, when the phrase ‘when I think of the goodness of Jesus and all that He has done for me’ is uttered by someone in the sanctuary, I am reminded of David Kolb's theory of experiential learning. Kolb theorized that learning occurs in four basic cycles: Concrete Experience, Observation and Reflections, Testing Implications of Concepts in New

¹¹⁸ A. France, *Delphi Complete Works of Anatole France* (Illustrated), Series Five (Delphi Classics, 2015)

¹¹⁹ B. Jowett, *The Republic*, EBooks @ Adelaide (Cosimo, Incorporated, 2008)

¹²⁰ S. Hub, *Nelson Mandela Quotes Collection: His Thoughts On Change, Education, Freedom, Perseverance, Courage, Kindness, Faith, Hope, Optimism And More!* (Sapiens Hub, 2018)

¹²¹ P. Freire and M.B. Ramos, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014)

¹²² B. F. Skinner, (1938). *The Behavior of organisms: An experimental analysis*. New York: Appleton-Century.

¹²³ L. S. Vygotsky. (1987). *The Collected Works of L. S. Vygotsky* (Vol. 1). In R. W. Rieber and A. S. Carton (Eds), Plenum Press, New York, and London. p. 31.

Situations, and Formation of Abstract Concepts and Generalizations.¹²⁴ To ensure we are presenting and delivering effective Sunday school, Bible study sessions and preaching it is imperative to understand Kolb's theory of learning styles. The lack of instruction and training in pedagogical theories and practices has left churches repeating antiquated pedagogies and continuing to utilize transmission teaching style as the single mode of teaching. Further, the structure of postmodern worship experiences, Bible study, and Sunday schools are not conducive to experiential learning. Modern churches operate on a time schedule, and many churches have varied worship experiences on Sundays, so the predefined educational moment is typically scheduled for one hour.¹²⁵

Kolb's theory is cyclical in nature; an individual has a real experience, reflects on the experience, and then reviews that experience. Kolb's theory lends time for the abstract conceptualization of the experience before the individual moves to active experimentation where they are trying out what has been learned.¹²⁶ This cyclical model concludes with the individual returning to the beginning of their learning experience for reflection. A typical one-hour instructional Bible study, Sunday school lesson, or thirty-minute sermon often mirrors this exercise of talking through a topic and concluding with a question-and-answer session.¹²⁷ The typical Sunday school material is not tied to the sermon of the day, thus missing the opportunity to reflect on a given day's lesson.¹²⁸

Critical to Vygotsky's theory is the concept of "making meaning" of our social interactions.¹²⁹ Hip Hop cyphers are moments in time where individuals battle lyrically, reflect on the experience, and respond. Individuals can make meaning of their social context and

¹²⁴ Ronald Fry and David Kolb, *Experiential Learning Theory and Learning Experiences in Liberal Arts Education*, (1979), p81. Service Learning, General. 109. <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceslgen/109>

¹²⁵ Saint James worship experiences occur every Sunday at 7:30 am, 9:30 am and 11:00 am and 12:00 on Wednesday.

¹²⁶ David Kolb, *Toward an Applied Theory of Experiential Learning*, MIT Alfred P. Sloan School of Management, 1974, p.38.

¹²⁷ Q&A sessions are not typical in AME churches after the preached word; however, I know of some Protestant church which engages in Q&A after the preached / teaching sermon. Discussion is typical during Bible study or Sunday school in the AME church.

¹²⁸ I don't have statistics regarding Lectionary preaching in the AME church. However, St. James worship experience does not follow the Lectionary. On any given Sunday three generations in a family receive a different biblical text and instruction, thus removing the ability to share in the learning / educational experience of God during family dinner. We have lost a generation because we have a disconnect in and during the worship experience.

¹²⁹ L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

immediate context during the Cypher exchange. The Cyphers continue with lessons learned from the previous encounter in the battle, many well-known rappers or Hip Hop artist became well-known because of their ability to master experiential learning.

The list of educational theories and philosophies are extensive, and no one theory works in all situations or for all people. In the case of the AMEC, Christian religious education has been condensed to a list of programs: The Sunday Church School, The Allen Christian Endeavor Fellowship, Young People's Department of the Women's Missionary Society (Y.P.D) and the Richard Allen Youth Council (RAYC). The programs are stipulated in the AME Book of Doctrine and Discipline as mandatory teaching and training agencies in each local church. The problem of adopting programs verses ministries is very apparent within the AMEC. Michael Slaughter states, "No matter what programs we plan or experiences we offer for the people who show up to worship each weekend, we must remember that our true purpose is not to bring the world into the church, but to take the church into the world."¹³⁰

The AME mandated programs do not explain why all the programs are required. The presupposition based on the mandate and definition of function one may conclude each of these programs would look the same at every AME church one enters. I see many programs in several AME churches within the First Episcopal district as side effects of programming rather than biblically inspired ministries for the following reasons:

- 1) The program context and design have been developed in a way only to suit the needs of the local congregation or fulfill the doctrinal mandate.
- 2) The programs exist in name only and are not operational or active in the local church.
- 3) The programs have leaders who are unwilling to step down and continue to operate the program the same way it has always operated and are unwilling to accept new approaches or advice.

The undesired result of developing programs, rather than ministries, is that they often fail to minister to individuals because they continue to rely on processes and methodologies which are outdated. The worst outcome of implementing programs over developing ministries is when the programs takes on a life of its own which is not in line with the mission of the global

¹³⁰ Mike Slaughter, *Unlearning Church: New Edition*, Abingdon Press, 2010.

denomination or the local church. For example, one of the stated purposes of the Richard Allen Youth Council is leadership training, yet many than of the youth are used for their God-given talents but not placed in positions of leadership. This became evident in my research, as I interviewed three individuals regarding Youth of the Year to glean their experience, which I will discuss further later in this paper.¹³¹

In *God of the Oppressed*, the late James Cone, an AME itinerant elder states, “The scandal is that the gospel means liberation, that this liberation comes to the poor, and that it gives them the strength and the courage to break the conditions of servitude.” Extending Cone’s vision of liberation to the youth we have marginalized, I believe it is time for a paradigm shift. Our youth are also made in the image of God, and the narrative that they are the church of the future is contributing to many going off to college never to return to lead that church of the future. Our youth are not in the church to serve our needs while waiting their turn to lead or become a part of leadership. HSPS pedagogy provide a solution to parallel not replace the efforts and ministry of the Young People’s Division (YPD).¹³²

The prophet Isaiah admonished us to “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; and plead the case of the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17) Discipleship formation should not take precedence over spiritual formation, liberation, reconciliation, and our local churches should not implement evangelism programs if the church does not intentionally invest in Christian religious education first.

¹³¹ I have made mention of the Youth of the Year in this DMin project to capture what has been reported during my research interviews as a concern. Three interviewees stated they were not a part of leadership and have only been involved with Christian Education as it relates to being asked to participate in the annual Youth of the Year competition.

¹³² For a further example of questions, the YPD use to train for the competition. Visit <https://quizlet.com/109053302/youth-of-the-year-african-methodist-episcopal-church-flash-cards/>.

CHAPTER THREE – AMEC AND EDUCATION AME CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

In chapter two I introduced the topic of education and provided a definition of education, concluding with a scholarly discussion regarding educational theories. In this chapter, I will discuss the AMEC's history regarding education and Christian education.

As I embark on the discourse of Christian religious education within the AMEC, I will begin my discussion based on data collected and compiled by the AMEC historiographers. The first historiographer in the AMEC, Daniel Payne, wasn't elected until 32 years after the founding of the denomination at the General Conference of 1848.¹³³ Payne would later become an elected and consecrated bishop in the AMEC and write the *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1811-1893*. This is important for many reasons: 1) During 1800s the technological advances we have available today such as recording devices were not available, and 2) The concern regarding the accuracy of information based on the 32 years between the foundation of the denomination and the first historiographer. Dennis Dickerson opines at times hagiography in the form of apologia can be discerned in Payne's writings (Dickerson, 2007).¹³⁴

Dickerson is the 13th historiographer in the AMEC, a position which has been held by "bibliophiles, biographers, chroniclers, and compilers."¹³⁵ Bibliophiles, or collectors and lovers of books, would have a different approach to history than that of a biographer, who may be more concerned with the history of an individual. Further, three variables contribute to how the history of the AME church has been written: "denominational, ecumenical and scholarly constituencies."¹³⁶ Dickerson posits, "How the AME Church history is written is defined in part by the functions which these three constituencies impose upon it." The AME historical past has been articulated by historiographers through: 1) institutional history, 2) intellectual history and 3) 'new' social history.¹³⁷

¹³³ Dennis C. Dickerson, *African Methodism, and Its Wesleyan Heritage: Reflections on AME Church History* (Nashville, Tenn: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2009), p.3.

¹³⁴ Ibid p. 4

¹³⁵ Ibid. p. 3

¹³⁶ Ibid p. 4

¹³⁷ Ibid p. 4

According to Dickerson, institutional history examines how the infrastructure of the AMEC evolved throughout the connectional levels, while intellectual history examines how the clergy and laity systematically understood socio-economic, cultural and theological concerns which affected African Americans. The new social history, on the other hand, examines the history of the AMEC from a non-elite perspective. Dickerson states the new social history was required because “the testimonies of peasant, working class, and female members, and their participation in church affairs are frequently overlooked...”¹³⁸ in the other two historical approaches. Due to these combinations of approaches used to examine, investigate and report on the history of the AMEC I was challenged in clearly asserting a global or consistent understanding of the AMEC’s position on Christian religious education.

For example, originally Wilberforce was established by the Methodist Episcopal church as a manual labor and literary institute, then in 1863, the African Methodist Episcopal church acquired ownership. Bishop Payne as the president added theological studies to the curriculum.¹³⁹ The documentation I have researched regarding the AMEC and education all expressed the understanding and desire to educate African Americans; the primary contention has been regarding what form of education; industrial or theological (religious).¹⁴⁰ One discipline stipulated the education of black youth “once a week,” if possible, and at the very least “once every two weeks.” According to Payne, “Only in this way will black Methodists – and the community in which they live – rise to greatness.”¹⁴¹ Additionally, Payne saw superior knowledge as the distinguishing factor between being a slave and being a master. Payne understood education was a means of liberating one’s self and a generation of people, “In my nineteenth year I forsook the carpenter’s trade for the life of an educator.”¹⁴² The issue of educational curriculum content is precisely the question of my DMin thesis: what is the meaning of Christian religious education in the AMEC in the past and present?

¹³⁸ Dennis C. Dickerson, *African Methodism, and Its Wesleyan Heritage: Reflections on AME Church History* (Nashville, Tenn.: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2009), p.4.

¹³⁹ Milton C. Sernett, ed. *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. 2nd ed. The C. Eric Lincoln Series on the Black Experience. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. P32.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Ward Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, eds., *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862-1939*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), p.73.

¹⁴¹ Richard S. Newman. *Freedom's Prophet* (Kindle Locations 3540-3542). NYU Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴² Milton C. Sernett, ed. *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. 2nd ed. The C. Eric Lincoln Series on the Black Experience. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. p.32.

As I have previously mentioned, the AMEC has consistently required advanced education for the clergy. Officially, it would take 27 years after the founding of the AMEC before ministerial courses of study were introduced and the AMEC held its first educational convention in 1845. The initial discussion regarding education during the convention was “to build colleges and to finance educational opportunities for young men.”¹⁴³ The authors' statement suggests financial support was not given to or proposed regarding women, although the educational intuitions which were being created were to train men and women for ministry service in the church and community.¹⁴⁴ The AMEC made it clear the intentions for the organization of educational facilities and education, in general, was Christocentric. “Within these institutions, it was understood that the organizing principle for the entire educational agenda was the Gospel of Christ.”¹⁴⁵ I interpret this to mean Christian religious educational training, however, in my research, I was unable to draw any conclusions regarding curriculum or materials used in these institutions for Christian education.

As noted by Dickerson depending on the historiographer and observed in my research, AME historical data at times seemed to be conflicted and/or conflated. The widely-held narrative regarding the AMEC and the discourse on education speaks of a church founded out of social protest with a desire to educate and uplift its people. Although, this is true it is also true the AMEC founders were illiterate.¹⁴⁶ Many books and publications have been written on the history of the AMEC and most gloss over what I perceive to be important history as it relates to women and educational ideologies within the church. In 1818, during the Baltimore Annual conference, it was revealed there wasn't anyone present competent to serve as a scribe; it was then Bishop Richard Allen's fourteen-year-old son was assigned the position. It was not until the Ohio conference of 1833 the subject of education was first broached in the AMEC. It would take another ten years before a resolution would be passed to invest in education, which occurred during the 1843 Baltimore annual conference.

¹⁴³ Stephen Ward Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, eds., *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862-1939*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), p.72.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 73

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 73

¹⁴⁶ D. Alexander Payne, R.K. Burkett, C.S. Smith, (Charles Spencer), Scarborough, S. C. Bierce., Grimké, F. J. (Francis James), A.M.E. Sunday School Union. (1888). *Recollections of seventy years*. Nashville, Tenn.: Pub. House of the A.M.E. Sunday School Union.

Payne asserted that Bishop Allen was “unlearned” and although much is made about the accomplishments of Bishop Allen, it is believed he used scribes to produce the hymnals, the Book of Discipline and other publications he is credited with publishing. The first periodical published was the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Magazine* in 1835, four years after the death of Bishop Allen. This is a pivotal moment in AME history because Payne utilized the AMEC Magazine to publish five of his *Epistles on the Education of the Ministry*. “During the tenure of the Magazine, Daniel Payne managed to almost single-handedly to reorient the position of the AMEC on education from indifference to one of strong support.”¹⁴⁷ Payne theorized the lack of education amongst the leadership and members caused numerous heated debates regarding education or type of education.¹⁴⁸ If Payne's assertions are correct the lack of education caused some to fight against the very medium which could liberate and free them from oppression.

The issue of education wasn't only related to whether to educate. This topic also extended to gender, or who should be educated. Having concluded ministers should be educated, others held double-consciousness ideologies related to gender. Rev. R.E. Wall wrote an article entitled *Shall Our Girls Be Educated?* in the July 1889 edition of the *AMEC Review*. Wall argued that within divine law there aren't different moral codes of ethics based on gender and no one should be deprived of “intellectual development” for spiritual formation (improvement). However, Wall distinguished between spiritual and physical when it came to gender, and this is where he drew the line. “In the physical system they [women] are different; in the political, it may not be expedient to make them equal.”¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, Wall's ideologies are still prevalent by some in the AMEC today in the 21st century. There is no doubt within the AMEC the discourse of education has been debated since the denomination was founded either for or against. Eventually it was understood some form of education was necessary to uplift and liberate African Americans.

¹⁴⁷ Stephen Ward Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, eds., *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862-1939*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), p. xix

¹⁴⁸ Milton C. Sennett, ed. *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. 2nd ed. The C. Eric Lincoln Series on the Black Experience. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. p. 262

¹⁴⁹ Stephen Ward Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, eds., *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862-1939*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), p. 112.

The AMEC has a long-standing history regarding education and educational requirements for ordained ministry. In my research I was not able to find any clearly defined educational requirements for the laity or servant leadership. However, the *AMEC Book of Doctrine and Discipline* stipulates there shall be in every local church a Commission on Christian Education. The following programs are defined as being under the banner of the Christian Educational structure: Church School, Fellowship of Church Educators, Scouts, Church Writers, R.A.Y.A.C, Music and Sons of Allen. The Discipline states all new members (disciples) are required to complete discipleship and nurturing training to achieve full-membership in the AMEC. Saint James New Life Ministries Training (NLM), a course which in the context of our local church utilizes the Bible, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: Know Your Church Manual*, in addition to the NLM manual developed in house and last revised in 2017.

The AMEC *Know Your church* manual states, “The Sunday Church School trains for membership.”¹⁵⁰ And the *AMEC Book of Doctrine and Discipline* states new members are being prepared for membership; “discipleship training for a period of three (3) months without the denial of sacramental rites of the Kingdom of God and shall be placed under the special care of the pastor in charge or his or her designee. In preparation for being received into full membership in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.”¹⁵¹

The 2012-2016 theme of discipleship began in 2013 and was based on the following themes respectively: The Goal of Discipleship, The Cost of Discipleship, The Evidence of Discipleship, and The Fruit of Discipleship. Although it was apparent as of 2013 the AMEC had a paradigm shift in language, the AMEC official documentation (*Book of Doctrine and Discipline 2016*) in its current revision has not adopted this language consistently. The First Episcopal district 2013 Founder’s Day theme was *First Things First Vision and Strategic Plan* where Bishop Ingram presented the Membership and Discipleship Manual. The purpose of the manual was a launch pad for the shift in language.

In 2012, the First District initiated a special emphasis to make First Things First and launched an extensive campaign which charted a course to achieve the goals that had been set out. During this Quadrennial, we have set goals and objectives to guide our energies, however chief among them will be to purposefully attempt to lead as many

¹⁵⁰ African Methodist Episcopal Church Know Your Church Manual, p.32

¹⁵¹ Rev. Roderick D. Belin. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition* (Kindle Locations 2621-2622). Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

people as we can into God's eternal Kingdom. Whether we call it “spreading the gospel, evangelizing the world, or preaching present truth” our core business is to Tell the Jesus Story with the intention that people will accept him as Lord and Savior and become disciples, and engage in making other disciples.¹⁵²

Saint James AME Newark's motto is “Making Disciples, Building Families and Meeting Need.” The AMEC leadership has changed its language regarding the use of the term “membership,” replacing it with “discipleship.” Nevertheless, the language in the pews (laity) as well as the church’s official documentation still references membership, so the complete transition may occur over time.

Several female pastors I interviewed during my research have been pastoring over ten years, and all I spoke with are still paying off their MDiv educational expenses. I am currently in the process of completing my DMin having completed my mandatory MDiv requirement for ordination in the AMEC as mandated in the *Book of Doctrine and Discipline*.¹⁵³

Noticeable during my ordination process was the absence of men coming into ministry or currently in the process to ordination compared to the number of women being ordained in our conference. This was also noted during both seminaries I attended; my classes contained very few men of color.¹⁵⁴ The average age of my ordination class when we began the process was forty-eight years of age. In our class of ten, four of the women already held MDiv degrees at the start of the five-year process to ordination. Two of the women held J.D. degrees and began matriculation toward their MDiv to meet the requirements; both were over fifty. At no point during my MDiv or DMin matriculation was I provided any financial assistance or scholarships from the AMEC. I believe this holds true for our entire group. This is critical for the denomination to consider for longevity of the institution.

¹⁵² Quote taken from the ‘From Membership to Discipleship.pdf’ distributed by the 1st Episcopal District entitled The First Episcopal District African Methodist Episcopal “*First Things First Vision and Strategic Plan*,” Founder's Day February 7-9, 2013.

¹⁵³ “A candidate for ordination as itinerant elder must be a graduate of a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) or a similar accrediting agency. Exception to these requirements is at the discretion of the Annual Conference Board of Examiners, with the approval of the presiding bishop.” Rev. Roderick D. Belin. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition* (Kindle Locations 3260-3262). Libre Digital. Kindle Edition

¹⁵⁴ The AME church is predominately a church of diasporic Africans (Caribbean, African, African-American, etc. however there are / could be members or preachers of other ethnicities.

Two themes seem to be emerging within the AMEC: fewer men are answering the call to ministry, and more women are enrolling in seminary and graduating with MDiv and DMin degrees.¹⁵⁵ If the AMEC wants to be around in another 100 years we need to reevaluate our priorities as it relates to Christian religious education, educating our local communities, congregations as well as those going into leadership within the church, not just this entering the process to ordination.

CHAPTER FOUR - DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, AND FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In chapter one, I began with an introduction to the study and proceeded to lay out what I believe explains the importance of Christian religious education and the need for a new Christian religious education pedagogy. Minorities, women, and children in the United States continue to live in poverty even with the advancements of technologies and the accessibility to public education. The community which Saint James AMEC Newark services is no exception when it comes to individuals who are living in poverty and lack adequate access to education. In *Country Meets Hip Hop*, I provided the readers with a lens into the communities, people, and places that shaped my embedded theology and what it's like attempting to find one's agency and identity formation. I am a Christian African American woman born in New York, raised in the country, and having to survive in a world of poverty, gangs, drugs, sex, and violence and not be of this world (1 John 2:15-17). In *The Expedition: A Message At Sea*, I have shared via story-telling God's call on my life to Christian ministry and education. What I neglected to share in the story were the years of wrestling and running from the call on my life. Partially because I love Jesus Christ but have a dislike of religion which many have used to oppress and subjugate the least of these.

I do not profess to be a Hip Hopper, nor do I believe we should secularize the church with ungodly gimmicks to attract the youth and adolescents into the church or ministry. I believe like John the Baptist we all need to repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand. As an ordained minister and disciple of Christ, it is my belief that the preached word is not enough to transform

¹⁵⁵ Observation in the 1st Episcopal District New Jersey Conference and based on data from class enrollment at Payne Theological Seminary during the 2013-2015 and Drew Theological Seminary during the years 2015-2017.

lives, reconcile interpersonal relationships, nor is the preached word alone enough to liberate and set the captives free without education. I can say this because God's hand has been on my life even during the time spent at sea without a compass, although the rising tides do not lift all ships to equal levels, my grandmothers demanded I obtain an education (formal and informal) at all cost. I never thought I would literately spend two-thirds of my life in school educating myself to do the work of the Lord.

My motivation for developing a Christian religious education curriculum was divinely inspired, during my reflection, the Holy Spirit reminded me of my Initial Sermon: *The Best Is Yet To Come* (Luke 5:4-5). Having never prepared a sermon and afraid to mishandle the word of God, I preached my call to ministry. A call which began with me out at sea (metaphorically), a sea which had allowed me to travel the world and a sea whose waves had left my ship broken and battered. God in a still small voice had commanded the raging seas to stand still long enough for me to see and hear Hip Hop was the conduit God had formed to bridge the gap in Christian educational pedagogy and Christian religious education within the AME church.

WHY HIP HOP CULTURE | SPOKEN WORD | POETRY & STORYTELLING

Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry & Story-Telling pedagogy can be used as a theoretical framework for Christian religious education and an apparatus for teaching, preaching and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, developing disciples of Christ, reconciling communities and liberation for spiritual formation. I make this claim because poetry saved my life. Unlike many of the artists who have presented pieces about near-death experiences with attempted suicide, poetry was the outlet God gave me to help others during some of their darkest hours. Unlike the many gay and lesbian youth who were displaced from their Christian homes having no voice and then turning to suicide as an answer, God gave me poetry to give voice to the voiceless. Unlike the married women living in abusive relationships while their churches advise them to remain, poetry allowed me to tell their stories. Unlike the many individuals I have met who attend church every Sunday not sure if they genuinely believe and have faith in Jesus of Nazareth, poetry saved my life because I was able to draw nearer to God as I searched for my identity, personal agency and built a relationship with my God through writing.

Several years ago, while ministering to a woman in her 50's dying of cancer I asked her what denomination she was. She said Baptist, however, wasn't sure what type of Baptist

denomination she attended. I asked why she was a member of the church she attended. After some reflection she stated, "Because of the music." Stories like these are the reason I believe God placed this mantle of education in my spirit. In her time of need, this woman called me and not her pastor for prayer and to discuss the afterlife. I did not have the words, but I read to her from my book of poetry and the Bible and was able to minister to her needs. Another woman, a mother whose son was killed contacted me, and we became pen pals. Through poetry, I was able to write several poems to comfort her during her time of mourning and depression which lasted several years. She was the person who pushed me to put my poetry in the form of a book which I self-published in 2011.¹⁵⁶ God gave me the words to minister to this mother, while personally never having any children. In 2016, I preached at a prayer breakfast where I opened with the poem *Souls of My Sisters, Remove the Doubt*, and the title of my sermon was *Enough Is Enough*. God used this broken vessel to minister to women through poetry and the biblical text the transformational and liberating word of God.

In 2014, the other licentiates and I were required by our pastor to participate in the Saint James AMEC daily prayer line call.¹⁵⁷ I had never prayed in public, and the fear of praying for or in front of others paralyzed me. I didn't sleep the night before; however, when I put pen to paper, God gave me a prayer of prose. After that event I have been asked every year since to lead our 6:00 AM Saint James prayer call with poetry, prose, and prayer for special holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. I found that preaching, Bible study, and Sunday school weren't the only ways to articulate the word, love, peace, and joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Traditionalist and old school thinking would say that the Bible is the only source which reveals God's truth. I would beg to differ. Christian religious education pedagogy must seek other media which aid in preaching, teaching and spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Anne Streaty Wimberly, a prominent religious education scholar writing at the frontiers of Christian religious education and the black church, asserts, "In far too many instances, intentionally planned Christian education programs are neglected in African American church life."¹⁵⁸ The decline in membership and attendance has placed the AMEC and other

¹⁵⁶ Katherine J. Myers, *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression*, 2011.

¹⁵⁷ Saint James AME Newark provides a daily prayer call at 6:00 am and 9:00 pm.

¹⁵⁸ Anne E. Streaty Wimberly. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Kindle Locations 110-111). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

denominations in survival mode. Rather than preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, some churches have resorted to gimmicks to increase membership and not discipleship. Many are relying entirely on the preached word and the performance of the pastor to draw membership (discipleship). For the past 40 years, Hip Hop culture and genre has maintained its grasp on generations of adults and adolescents, because Hip Hop is speaking to the gaps, needs, and truths of individual's realities in their daily lives which the church is failing to address. Many pastors of traditional Black churches and individuals such as G. Craig Lewis have demonized Hip Hop and Hip Hop culture out of fear. Rather than playing church, we need to be the church, a common phrase heard in the African American community, however, hipposas, according to KRS-One believe, "I AM HIP HOP! I am not just doing hip-hop; I am Hip Hop!"¹⁵⁹ As Christians, we need to have a Holy Spirit unapologetic boldness about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Lewis contends statements such this one by KRS-One "I AM HIP HOP" is one of the significant contributing factors why Hip Hop is dangerous: its spiritual influence. Lewis's argument is precisely one of the reasons I wanted to understand the tenets of Hip Hop culture for this DMin project.

The AMEC quadrennial theme from 2012-2016 was "From Membership to Discipleship," and the theme for 2016-2020 is social justice and liberation - "The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A Social Justice and Liberating Faith."¹⁶⁰ When I considered the challenges of African American women in this country, many whom are raising children in single-parent homes, underpaid and undereducated in minority communities, an acknowledging woman makes up 80 -85 percent of the congregation. I felt any Christian religious educational curriculum developed for the African American Episcopal Church needed to be cognizant of what is and how we teach *Liberation Faith Studies*. In the United States, African American communities continue to struggle with the ill effects of mass incarceration, drugs, crime and recidivism, and Newark is impacted by these issues. Unfortunately, some Christian religious educators have turned their attention to saving our boys as evident in some of the materials researched for this DMin project.¹⁶¹ Christian religious education must have an ideology of

¹⁵⁹ KRS-One. *The Gospel of Hip Hop: The First Instrument* (Kindle Locations 73-74). powerHouse Books. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.ame-church.com/news/2016-2020-quadrennial-theme-2016-anvil/>

¹⁶¹ La Verne Tolbert, Ph.D. wrote in the December 2018, January & February 2019 edition of the PreSchool Playhouse Teachers manual distributed by UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc) teachers using the curriculum were given a tip for teaching T4T under the header "Loving Black Boys" (p.3). "Give verbal encouragement to the Black boys. Intentionally acknowledge and call on the Black boys first in class. Select the Black boys when you need volunteers.

paideia (παιδεία) at its core and be gender neutral in its philosophy. “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

The goal of my DMin project research was not to provide an exhaustive history on Hip Hop culture, but instead to add to the existing conversation in the academy related to Hip Hop Education Pedagogy, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Engaged Pedagogy. I argue the AMEC’s use of HSPS pedagogy will increase the intergenerational interest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as culturally and socially relevant topics engaged through HSPS rhetoric and curricula rooted in the transformative and liberating words of God (Holy Scriptures). My DMin project hypothesizes adults and youth will grow spiritually and gain confidence in evangelizing because they would become more confident and able to tell their stories in their language of *faith seeking understanding* in praxis supported by the lived and studied the word of God.

Through the analysis of spoken word artists, poetry, and Hip Hop lyrics I was able to glean societal, political, relational and religious lived experiences of the artists and how this data could be used in Christian identity and discipleship formation. My research gave me insight into how these media could be used as an apparatus for teaching, preaching and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the development and nurturing of disciples of Christ, reconciling communities and liberation for spiritual formation.

The original research question which guided my project was: Could I be authentic and in leadership within the AMEC without having to abandon the faith and experiences of my youth, but utilize those experience to develop a HSPS pedagogy curriculum? The secondary purpose of my project endeavor was to investigate and determine how context and change in the United States have impacted the approach of AMEC leadership in Christian education pedagogy. The original research question which guided AME and Christian education was: What is the AME church’s theology, historical, and biblical foundation for Christian education?

Boy are kinesthetic learners which means they need to be more physically active than girls. Select boys to hand out papers, crafts, and supplies. Give parents good reports about their boy's behavior. Find ways to help boys be successful, volunteer to help the boys' complete assignments. Overlook childish behavior and refrain from criticizing or chastising boys, as much as possible.”

Hip Hop artist Lauryn Hill navigates her social context and makes sense of racism, sexism, classism, and issues that marginalization, dehumanize and oppress communities like Newark, where Saint James serves. The album's lyrics often cite the Bible and its content speaks to issues of spirituality, love, life, ethics and moral, all of which I feel Christian religious education should address. Hill's *Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998) album was appropriately named as I consider the genesis of my DMin project regarding the lack of intentionality on Christian religious education in the AMEC and Saint James in particular. I realized even more at the end of my research the importance of Christian religious education through the artist's work as it relates to spiritual and discipleship formation. Using the gifts and talents God has provided these artists analyzed through my research, I concluded they had put pen to paper to help heal generations. Each artist was able to grow spiritually from devastating issues and situations in life through song, prose, story-telling, and poetry as they told their stories (gave their testimonies).

The AMEC needs to take a page out of Hill's lived experience and spiritual growth. Four years after the *Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, an older Hill's education continued when she returned on the scene with *MTV Unplugged 2.0* (2002). Liberation, reconciliation, and transformation were witnessed real time as Hill is rebirthed on the global stage vulnerable and alone save an acoustic guitar and a word in her spirit. Song titles like "Father Forgive Them" is reminiscent of the words Jesus spoke from the cross on Calvary. "Lost One" likens to the parable of the lost sheep in (Matt. 18:12-14) and Luke (Luke 15:3-7) or "Oh Jerusalem," which reminds us of Romans (3:23), that we have all sinned, but Jesus saves.

RESEARCH SUBJECT – LAURYN HILL

Lauryn Hill, now 43 years of age, is a native of New Jersey. She grew up in the suburbs of South Orange and at one point lived in Newark. Saint James has two campuses, Newark and South Orange. Hill states her environment was 40 percent Black, 60 percent Jewish, and she was exposed to other cultures hanging out in New York. Having an eclectic environmental context and experiencing a loving home, Hill believed everyone had the same experience growing up. "Manhattan is right there," she explained, "so you know, just from the time I was young I was

exposed to the Jewish community, the Asian community, the West Indian, the Cuban community, the Latin, you know just, just a myriad of cultures.”¹⁶²

Education is critical for personal and spiritual growth, in researching Hill. I found as a Hip Hop artist she, too, values education and states that education can be formal and informal.

I was always driven to do a lot in whatever field, or you know whatever area I was focusing on at the moment, so I. I did well in school but um learned a lot from that too you know, learned a lot from the school atmosphere the school setting. But so much of my experiences came around school; you know not so much in the classroom. But what took place outside the classroom a lot of those life lessons were a team.¹⁶³

It is essential to note Hill's statement regarding education taking place outside of the classroom. The reason I am so adamant about intentionality regarding Christian religious education is precisely this reason. As the body of Christ, we must be cognizant of informal education taking place in the lives of our youth and adolescents in the street. Hill argues anyone can be religious. However, she strives to have a personal relationship with God, and studying the word of God through scriptures is her standard practice. “I was never an extensive reader until, until late. I mean, I tried you know, not to have a day pass where I don't read something from the Bible.”¹⁶⁴ It is my prayer HSPS pedagogy would provide minority youth with a Christian platform which would keep them grounded in the word of God and not fall prey to false doctrine. By having an outlet which utilizes their god given talents for the glory of God through HSPS we can recap a lost generation.

RESEARCH SUBJECT – NAYO JONES

Nayo Jones was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1996 to inter-racial parents. Jones was primarily raised by her White father after her parents divorced. She is a musician and spoken word artist/performer and identifies as a ‘queer black girl.’¹⁶⁵ Jones 's spoken-word piece entitled “Healing” speaks to the commands from Jesus: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’[a] The second is this:

¹⁶² I listened to and transcribed the “[FULL HD] Lauryn Hill interview (2000) - The Best Documentary Ever” interview. Accessed 04/06/2019 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dO_NaKE-osU

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.poetrypedagogy.com/engl4302-spoken-word-poetry--pedagogy/feature-poet-nayo-jones-by-kristalyn-richard>

“Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31). Every first Sunday we recite the ten commandments, and I have consistently stated until we as a community learn to love ourselves it is difficult to love our neighbors. Jones puts it this way: “I had someone tell me once; I could not love anyone else until I learned to love myself.”

RESEARCH SUBJECT – JOSEPH SOLOMON

Joseph Solomon was born in Texas is a spoken word artist and singer-songwriter. “Joseph has been featured on tour and events with other talented acts such as KB, Lecrae, Trip Lee, Mali Music, Jackie Hill Perry, Passion Conference, The Poets in Autumn Tour, P4CM's Rhetoric, and many churches and college campuses around the country.”¹⁶⁶ Solomon's *A Shadow of a Doubt* is an example of engaged pedagogy which expresses freedom in learning that allows for transformation. As I analyzed Solomon's work I was reminded of Matt. 21:16: “From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise.” Solomo says, “And that was the first time in my life that I looked into the eyes of a child and envied them. Because she had no idea of what it feels like to doubt. What it feels like to have your entire belief system overload with skepticism. To never know the day that you would finally live beyond the shadow of a doubt.”¹⁶⁷

Christian religious education must provide a sacred space for holistic discipleship and spiritual growth and healing. Spoken word allows individuals sacred space to engage with their inner spirit to be renewed as a child. Often in Sunday school a person may be apprehensive about asking a question or speaking out; utilizing their spoken-word piece, we can engage in biblical discussions regarding anxiety and fear, for example as Solomon's work demonstrates.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

I began my research through the investigations of academic works previously conducted on Hip Hop pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy and the official journal of the Religious Education Association, *Religious Education*. Since my hunch was Christian religious education was the path to liberation, and I felt HSPS pedagogy was a radical solution, I wanted to investigate previous works in this space. J. Deotis Roberts reminds us “of the

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.josephsolomonlive.com/>

¹⁶⁷ See Appendix J Illustration Joseph Solomon for the full manuscript.

importance of the teaching ministry of the Christian Church. We must address the mind as well as the heart if we are to anticipate a living faith. The entire personality of each one must be addressed.”¹⁶⁸ Many of the congregants attending Saint James are seemingly unaware of the relevance of Christian religious education as a function in spiritual liberation and discipleship formation, evident in the lack of interest in attending Bible study and Sunday school.

Based on my research I am confident a curriculum based on HSPS would inspire a shifting in the atmosphere regarding Christian religious education within Saint James. Sunday school and women’s Bible study attendance at Saint James has seen a decline because of the lack of engagement, content delivery, boredom, and pedagogy. bell hooks has critiqued the banking method as the root of the boredom. She writes,

In graduate school, I found that I was often bored in classes. The banking system of education (based on the assumption that is memorizing information [scriptures] and regurgitating [evangelism] it represented gaining knowledge [pity] that could be deposited, stored and used at a later date [make disciples]) did not interest me. I wanted to become a critical thinker [spiritual and discipleship formation].¹⁶⁹

Saint James AME Newark congregants fail to see all aspects of the worship experience as a direct correlation to their discipleship formation due to a misconception regarding the purpose and role of Sunday school and Bible study ministries. The misunderstanding can be attributed to the lack of education and lack of definition on a global level by the AMEC perhaps because there is no clearly defined definition within the Book of Doctrine and Discipline. Or perhaps this is because of a lack of clearly developed Christian religious education ministries in the Saint James AMEC.

Having spent five years in the AMEC ordination process, I had the opportunity to engage in numerous conversations with other ministerial candidates within the AMEC denomination First Episcopal district. The reality for many of the smaller congregations with bi-vocational pastors is that Christian religious education is not a priority. Kenneth Hill states, “one of the tasks of Christian religious education is the revision. The task of revision is construed primarily as a corrective of the omissions made by White Christian education.”¹⁷⁰ Society has changed;

¹⁶⁸ Kenneth H. Hill. *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Kindle Locations 44-46). Kindle Edition

¹⁶⁹ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p.5.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid (Kindle Locations 128-129)

however, embedded patriarchal ideologies continue to be preached from the pulpits in traditional Black churches, ideologies which are often misinterpretations of the sacred text and oppressive for women and the least of these. More than 80 percent of the Saint James congregation are women. I believe HSPS pedagogy can decrease the gender gap in our church family.

One of John Wesley's general rules states, do no harm, and yet, "... blacks before the Civil War accommodated the interests of slaveholders, and later in the nineteenth century seldom related itself to the experience of racism that dominated the lives of African Americans."¹⁷¹ Christian religious education within the Black church must correct the wrongs post-slavery Black theology has imposed on women, children and the least of these in our churches and denominations. A HSPS pedagogy curriculum is needed in the AMEC because preaching alone is not adequately preparing our communities for lived realities in the United States. CNN published an article entitled, "In 2008, There Was Hope. In 2018, There Is Hurt. This is America's State of Hate." The author characterized the election of a black president: "For white supremacists, he lit a powder keg."¹⁷² HSPS pedagogy seeks to provide a holistic Christian religious education rooted in *paideia* "training of the physical and mental faculties in such a way as to produce a broad enlightened, mature outlook harmoniously combined with maximum cultural development."¹⁷³

Saint James for the past eleven years under the leadership of Dr. Ronald L. Slaughter has been making disciples and meeting needs. My prayer is the development of a HSPS pedagogy for Christian religious education will generate transformation, liberation, restoration, and reconciliation within our local body of Christ and surrounding communities. HSPS pedagogy is a radical approach to Christian religious education because prosperity preaching and the desire for church growth has left the least of these to fight for themselves primarily because prophetic innovative and courageous leaders are afraid to take a knee for Jesus.

¹⁷¹ Kenneth H. Hill. *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Kindle Locations 133-134). Kindle Edition.

¹⁷² <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/26/us/america-state-of-hate/index.html> Accessed April 6, 2019

¹⁷³ Merriam-Webster defines *paideia*.

Data Collection

The primary data sources for this DMin project were YouTube transcripts, playlists and videos. Genius.com was utilized as a primary source to obtain lyrics for artists selected for lyrical analysis. Secondary data sources were field notes from conversations, interviews, and discussions with participants. Genius.com was utilized as a lyrical data source because it is listed as having the world's most extensive collection of song lyrics and it also provides an Application Programming Interface (API) for developers to web scrap data from the site. Web scraping provided me the ability to harvest song lyrics based on a specific artist and generate a dataset of lyrics specific to this DMin project. YouTube transcript functionality provided a unique mechanism for transcribing spoken word artist artistic and creative work and generating a Spoken Word dataset for analysis. YouTube also provides a developer API which would be incorporated into the CMS web server I have developed as a prototype for the DMin project.

The initial desire for the project was to conduct data analysis on fifty influential Hip Hop artists from the periods of 1980 – 2000. I needed to create a working dataset of artist and songs, so I utilized hiphopgoldenage.com as the primary data source to generate my working set. “HipHopGoldenAge’s mission is to preserve, promote & celebrate Classic Hip Hop and Hip Hop’s culture.”¹⁷⁴ After generating and compiling my dataset, I needed to develop web scraping code to pull the required lyrics locally to be imported into a database for analysis. The data collection occurred in three phases:

Phase I: Developing the sources for Story-Telling, Poetry and Spoken Word.

Phase II: Researching and developing a dataset of Spoken Word and Poetry artist work to be analyzed during the project.

Phase III: Building out the complete dataset of lyrics/prose and rhetoric from all three data sources for analysis.

Data Analysis

Various strategies were employed to analyze the generated datasets during my research efficiently. Field notes were immediately transcribed upon returning from any field observations or interviews. Data obtained during interviews was used to incorporate additional Hip Hop artist,

¹⁷⁴ <http://hiphopgoldenage.com/about/> Access 10/21/2018

Poets or Spoken Word artist into the research data collection phase based on input from interviewees. I was overly zealous in my approach to this DMin project and very quickly realized I had amassed an extensive data set. Utilizing my automation scripts, I had scraped over 500 song lyrics each for over 150 Hip Hop artists. Due to time constraints and the vast amount of data I would need to generate additional code to analyze and categorize this large dataset.

The final data analysis utilized for this project was to scale the dataset down to one artist and two albums. I decided one of the most influential Hip Hop artists of all time for me was Hill. Hill's artistic work covers poetry, spoken word, story-telling, and Hip Hop culture. She has been active in Hip Hop culture since 1989, and her body of work is culturally inclusive, spiritual, liberating, transformative, and provides a reconciliation to the broken hearted. I conducted my analysis of Hip Hop lyrics on two of her albums: *MTV Unplugged 2.0* (2002) runtime (01:47:52) and *MisEducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998) runtime (69:20) (Appendix B).

Spoken Word artist analysis was conducted on artistic pieces by Joseph Solomon, *A Shadow of a Doubt*, Nayo Jones, *Healing*, and Jefferson Bethke, *Why I Hate Religion | But Love Jesus*. I wanted to provide multicultural voices and content for analysis.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SUMMARY

Informal and formal education should be a life-long process of acquiring skills and knowledge which are informative and transformative. I began this DMin project asking the wrong question. My research on some levels sought to determine how the AMEC defines Christian religious education and what Christian religious education means in the AMEC. The more appropriate question I should have asked at the onset is: How to do liberating and transformational Christian religious education in the AMEC? Absent any predefined definitions from the AME Christian Education department or Book of Doctrine and Discipline much of my research was spent attempting to define Christian education in the AMEC context.

Guidelines from the *AMEC Book of Doctrine and Discipline* include:

- a. The Department of Christian Education shall develop a comprehensive and unified program of Christian Education which shall lead to a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the Christian Religion, and the Christian Church, and implementation of these values in daily living.
- b. The department shall provide source materials for all the educational work of the Church and shall provide for developing standards and preparing programs and offering techniques of Christian Education in the local and general Church following the provisions outlined in The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁷⁵

The foundation of Christian religious education must be rooted in the Holy Scriptures and should not be limited to any denominational doctrine or provisions. This DMin project taught me that placing limitations and scope on education is to stifle the spiritual and discipleship formation process. Christian religious education must be Christocentric with the community and culture as the operation context. Christian religious education should take place outside of the church and as well as inside. Effective Christian religious education tells the world what a disciple of Christ looks like by the life we lead and live. Churches have created a box called Sunday school and Bible study and have places the parameter Christian education around it and in the case of the AMEC limited the ministries that fall under the umbrella of Christian education. The constructs of Sunday and Bible study within the church have created a conflict which is almost impossible to correct.

¹⁷⁵ Rev. Roderick D. Belin. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition* (Kindle Locations 5144-5149). Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

Brother Daryll Stewart (DjDreal), one of my LAC committee members, is the DJ for *The Gospel House Café*. Stewart has taken Gospel House Music and developed pop-up Christian worship experiences and fellowship. Stewart’s ministry of Gospel House Café music ministry has extended from pop-up fellowship to radio and an annual Gospel House Cafe boat ride. HSPS pedagogy seeks to partner with other Saint James ministries such as Stewart’s to be innovative in Christian religious education within Saint James.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FINDINGS

At the beginning of the project, I hypothesized every person responding to my survey would respond to Bible study and Sunday school were the only or significant educational offering within their local churches. Significant findings: 29 percent of the respondents to the online survey attend churches with 100 - 300 members, 56 percent of the pastors did not teach Sunday school, 67 percent of the pastors taught Bible study, 21 percent had 10-20 persons in Bible study, 32 percent of pastors possess an MDiv/Ph.D. and 32 percent used only the Bible as a source of Christian religious education.

Using the narrative inquiry method of inquiry as a research format, my DMin project focused on the lyrics and rhetoric of Hip Hop (Lauren Hill), spoken-word and poetry. This research design is informed by Womanist Liberation theology, Feminist Theology, Black Liberation Theology, discipleship, and spiritual formation and the curriculum of Drew

Theological School's Courageous Leadership DMIN program. Based on the interviews I concluded at the beginning of my project, I was initially met with resistance from the ten millennials because they were apprehensive about my motives and motivations. The general theme which emerged during my subsequent interviews with ten participants over 40 was as skepticism regarding authenticity. Although both groups were initially skeptical of my project, the consensus of the 20 interviewees was they felt a HSPS pedagogy curriculum could benefit Christian religious education at Saint James.

The positive feedback regarding my Christian religious education approach had to do with the general and inclusive nature of the project, and the curriculum's use of culturally relevant materials. The primary concern on the part of all the interviewees was related to the viability of implementing the curriculum in an AMEC because of the vast content Hip Hop engages. The negative stereotypes, violence, and profanity noted in Hip Hop / Rap music were also discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION

HSPS pedagogy seeks to develop disciples of Christ and capable instruments of God through Christian religious education and the ideology, paideia, rooted in the philosophy 'I am because we are' (Ubuntu). Developing, nurturing and transforming individuals and communities one person and one neighborhood at a time. Katherine J. Myers

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS

My doctoral studies at Drew Theological Seminary in Courageous Leadership and my professional project HSPS as a pedagogy for Christian religious education have changed my life and led me to invaluable insight for transformative ministry. Discipleship and spiritual formation do not happen overnight and require intentional Christian religious education on the connectional and local levels of the AMEC to be effective in individual and communal maturation. The Episcopal leadership is responsible for the direction of the global/connectional AME denomination; however, it is imperative the Presiding Elders and pastors on the local church levels must be intentional regarding the importance of Christian religious education.¹⁷⁶

I received encouraging feedback and excitement from my LAC regarding the ministry potential of my HSPS pedagogy for Christian religious education. My pastor, a member of my committee, expressed excitement regarding my Hip Hop Koinonia Good Community project which has resulted in additional research I will be engaged in following this DMin project. When I met with my LAC committee, and I spoke of partnering with Euro American congregations and striving for an inter-racial congregation, Pastor Slaughter advised research has shown Euro-American's were not socialized to “sit at the feet” of minorities. His question to me was, “In your research have you dealt with or had the opportunity to research how to get Euro-Americans and other ethnicities to attend and join African American churches traditionally?”

I learned during the process of this DMin project Hip Hop lyrical analysis has been misunderstood by the church and others as merely about song lyrics. As I expressed throughout this project, Hip Hop is a culture, therefore to have a discourse on Hip Hop lyrical analysis one must consider graffiti as visual and spatial text and lyrics, beatbox, deejaying, MC-ing and turntables as an audio textual component of the lyrical analysis of Hip Hop culture. Also, the

¹⁷⁶ Presiding Elders are the assistants, like middle management, whom the Bishops appoint to supervise the preachers in a Presiding Elder's District. A Presiding Elder District is one portion of an Annual Conference, which in turn is one part of the Episcopal District over which a Bishop presides

textual component of B-boying/breakdancing provides a visual text for analysis. In my prospectus I stated, this thesis contends Hip Hop is higher than a movement, Hip Hop is a religion and a culture whose tenets (elements) can and should be investigated as a praxis for Christian religious education and discipleship formation. In this DMin project I investigated the Gospel of Hip Hop (KRS-One), Hip Hop religion and Christianity and the methodologies used for discipleship: DJ-ing (musicians, choirs and praise teams), MC-ing / Rapping (preacher / preaching), Breakdancing (liturgical & praise dance ministry), Graffiti (stained glass windows / dedicated pews / liturgy) and Knowledge (*faith seeking understanding*) were the primary resources utilized by the Hip Hop communities in its evangelism efforts. I feel it is essential any further research regarding Hip Hop lyrical analysis is mindful of Hip Hop's entire culture (elements) and each of these elements are included in the text to be analyzed and researched.

As I mentioned early in this DMin project, Saint James has seen an enormous increase in membership under the leadership and tenure of Pastor Slaughter; nevertheless, a congregation full of new converts without intentional Christian religious education cannot successfully aid in developing spiritual and discipleship formation. As Saint James moves forward with building and construction in 2020, it is my prayer, hope, and desire HSPS pedagogy for Christian religious education will fulfill the promise of Acts 5:39. My doctoral research has resulted in the framework for my HSPS Christian religious education pedagogy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alim, H. Samy. *Real Talk: Language Culture & Education in the Hip Hop Nation*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Angell, Stephen Ward, and Anthony B. Pinn, eds. *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862-1939*. 1st ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000.
- Anselm, Jasper Hopkins, Herbert Richardson, Anselm, and Anselm. *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*. Minneapolis: A.J. Banning Press, 2000. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Nt3WAAAAMAAJ>.
- Belin, Roderick D. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition*.
- Bethke, Jefferson. *Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus: Spoken Word Romans 4:5*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IAhDGYlpqY>
- Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- City-Data. *Newark, NJ (NJ) Poverty Rate Data*. <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Newark-New-Jersey.html>
- Chase, Clifton Nathaniel, Fletcher, Edward G., Glover, Melvin, and Robinson, Sylvia. *It's Like A Jungle*. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five.
- Clandinin, D. Jean. *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. Routledge, 2016.
- Cone, James H. *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*, 1984. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1761116>.
- Data USA, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/newark-nj/>, accessed May 20, 2019
- Dickerson, Dennis C. *African Methodism and Its Wesleyan Heritage: Reflections on AMECHistory*. Nashville, Tenn: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2009.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 1868-1963, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Chicago, A. G. McClurg, 1903. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1968.
- Dyson, M.E. *Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip Hop*. ReadHowYouWant.com, Limited, 2010. https://books.google.com/books?id=_P4wsVoi-qUC.

Einstein, Mara. *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. Religion, Media and Culture. London: Routledge, 2008.

Facts about Poverty. <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/hunger-and-poverty/hunger-and-poverty>, accessed November 12, 2018.

France, A. *Delphi Complete Works of Anatole France (Illustrated)*. Series Five. Delphi Classics, 2015. <https://books.google.com/books?id=E9PeBgAAQBAJ>.

Freire, P., and M.B. Ramos. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014. <https://books.google.com/books?id=oKQMBAAAQBAJ>.

Goldsmith, William W., and Edward James Blakely. *Separate Societies: Poverty and Inequality in U.S. Cities*. Conflicts in Urban and Regional Development. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1992.

Hill, Kenneth H. *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction*. St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2007.

Hill, Lauryn, *The MisEducation Of Lauryn Hill*, 1998.

Hill, Lauryn, *MTV UnPlugged 2.0*, 2002.

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Horsley, Richard A., Jonathan A. Draper, John M. Foley, and Werner H. Kelber, eds. *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark*. Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress, 2006.

Hub, S. *Nelson Mandela Quotes Collection: His Thoughts On Change, Education, Freedom, Perseverance, Courage, Kindness, Faith, Hope, Optimism And More!* Sapiens Hub, 2018. <https://books.google.com/books?id=ZOp4DwAAQBAJ>.

“Hunger and poverty,” <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/hunger-and-poverty/hunger-and-poverty-fact-sheet.html?gclid=CNnX8sfV8dACFYaNswodwL8B0w>, accessed September 22, 2018

Innovation (Organization), Project. *Education*. v. 5. New England Publishing Company, 1885. <https://books.google.com/books?id=diM5AAAAMAAJ>.

Jones, Nayo. *Healing*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YzIGoonIrE>

Jowett, B. *The Republic*. EBooks @ Adelaide. Cosimo, Incorporated, 2008. <https://books.google.com/books?id=t4LZ83FwZf8C>.

- Kelber, Werner H. *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*. New introd. Voices in Performance and Text. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1997.
- Kitwana, Bakari. *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture*. Nachdr. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2008.
- KRS-One. *The Gospel of Hip Hop: First Instrument*. First Edition. powerHouse Books, 2009.
<https://www.overdrive.com/search?q=8EC06EDD-E246-42FE-87A5-F2021DFEE62D>.
- Lewis, G. Craige. *The Truth Behind Hip-Hop*, 2009.
- McGee, Paula L. *Brand® New Theology: The Wal-Martization of T.d. Jakes and the New Black Church*, 2017.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1901327>.
- Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Third edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014.
- Miller, Monica R., Anthony B. Pinn, and Bun B, eds. *Religion in Hip Hop: Mapping the New Terrain in the Us*. Bloomsbury Studies in Religion and Popular Music. London, UK; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
- Mitchell, Henry. *Black Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression*: Self-Published, 2011.
- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression: Mental Slavery*, Self-Published ,2011.
- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression: Obama*, Self-Published, 2011.
- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression: Processed Mind*, Self-Published, 2011.
- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression: Searching For Change in the Same*, Self-Published,2011.
- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression: Souls of My Sisters: Remove the Doubt*, Self-Published, 2011.

- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression: The Gospel According to Katherine*, 2015.
- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression: The Original Black Beautician*, 2011.
- Myers, Katherine J., *Dancing With Words: A Poetic Expression: The Screams of Silence*, 2011.
- Newman, Richard S. *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*. New York; Chesham: New York University Press: Combined Academic [distributor, 2009.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001.
- Parker, Lawrence Krsone. *My Philosophy*. Boggie Down Productions.
- Pettinger, Tejvan. *Definition of absolute and relative poverty*, <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/glossary/definition-of-absolute-and-relative-poverty/>, accessed May 20, 2019.
- Piaget, J., and B. Inhelder. *The Psychology Of The Child*. Basic Books, 2008. <https://books.google.com/books?id=-Dpz05-rJ4gC>.
- . *The Psychology Of The Child*. Basic Books, 2008. <https://books.google.com/books?id=-Dpz05-rJ4gC>.
- Rank, M.R. *One Nation, Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All*. Oxford University Press, 2004. <https://books.google.com/books?id=OmGcVf8r8H8C>.
- Riessman, Catherine Kohler. *Narrative Analysis*. SAGE, 1993.
- Rodriguez, Rafael. *Oral Tradition and the New Testament: A Guide for the Perplexed*. First publ. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Saint James AME Church. *New Life Ministries Handbook*. 2017.
- Shockley, Grant S. Christian Education and the Black Church: A Contextual Approach," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2. Article 9.
- Shah, Anup. *Today, around 21,000 children died around the world*. <http://www.globalissues.org/article/715/today-21000-children-died-around-the-world>
- Shapiro, Thomas M. *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

- Skinner, B. F. *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis*. The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis. Oxford, England: Appleton-Century, 1938.
- Slaughter, Michael. *Unlearning Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008.
- Solomon, Joseph. *A Shadow of A Doubt*. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdF-MldtDn4EW8-DlQqPD_g
- Soss, Joe, Richard C. Fording, and Sanford F. Schram, eds. *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race*. Chicago Studies in American Politics. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Town Charts. *New Jersey Demographics Data*. <http://www.towncharts.com/New-Jersey/New-Jersey-state-Demographics-data.html>, accessed May 20, 2019.
- Turner, H. M. N., and Daniel Murray Collection (Library of Congress). *The Genius and Theory of Methodist Polity: Or, The Machinery of Methodism, Practically Illustrated Through a Series of Questions and Answers*. Publication Department, A.M.E. Church, 1885. <https://books.google.com/books?id=cgtDAQAAMAAJ>.
- Walters, Ricky M. L. *Slick Rick Children's Story Lyrics*.
 Wimberly, Anne Streaty. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SURVERY RESULTS

Survey - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/39JJ7B5?fbclid=IwAR0TzDLDm0-2-SsXeOw9PPmt-FYVfYLDjK6SpHhcearlZGefQh24WAav7t4>

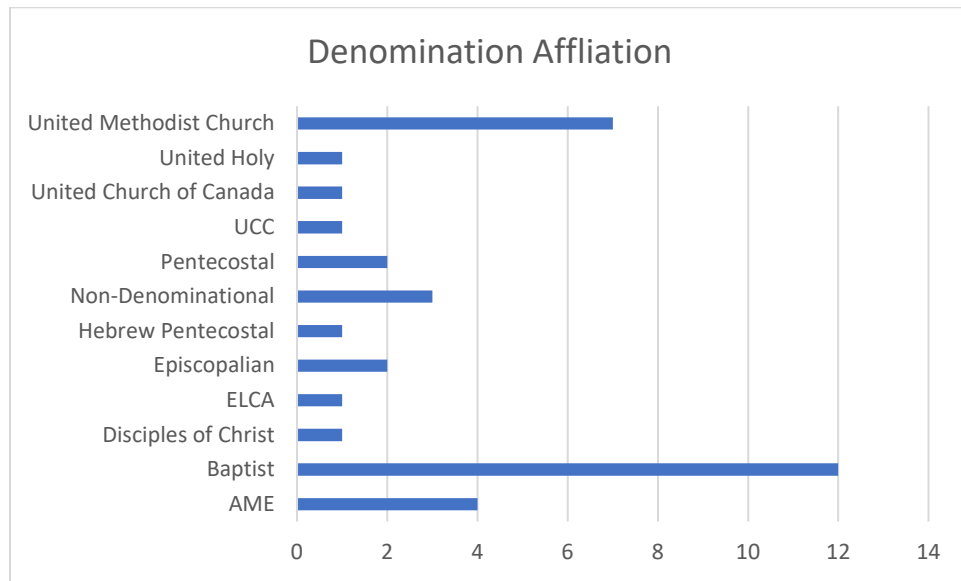


Figure 5: Question 1: What is your denomination?

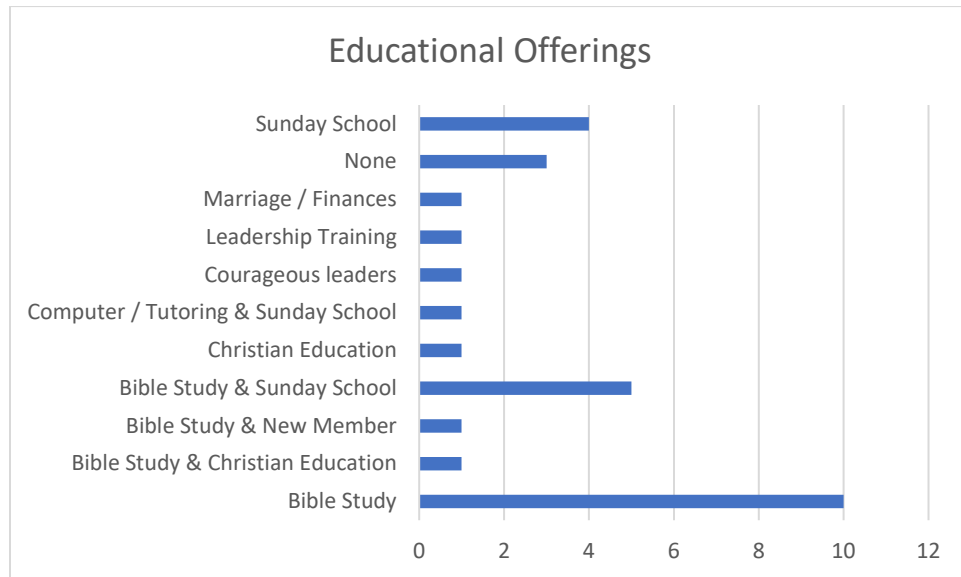


Figure 6: Question 2: What educational programs are offered in your church?

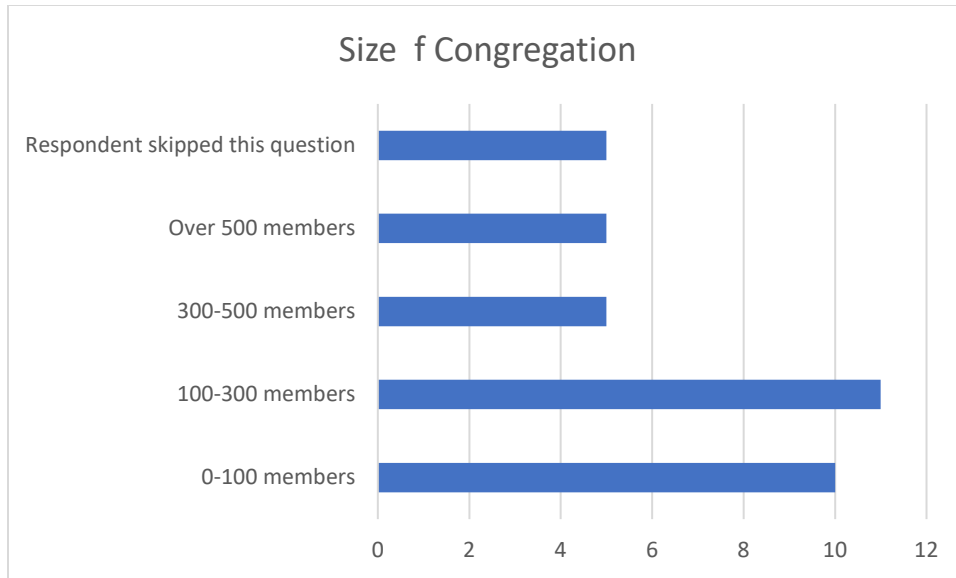


Figure 7: Question 3: What is the size of your congregation?

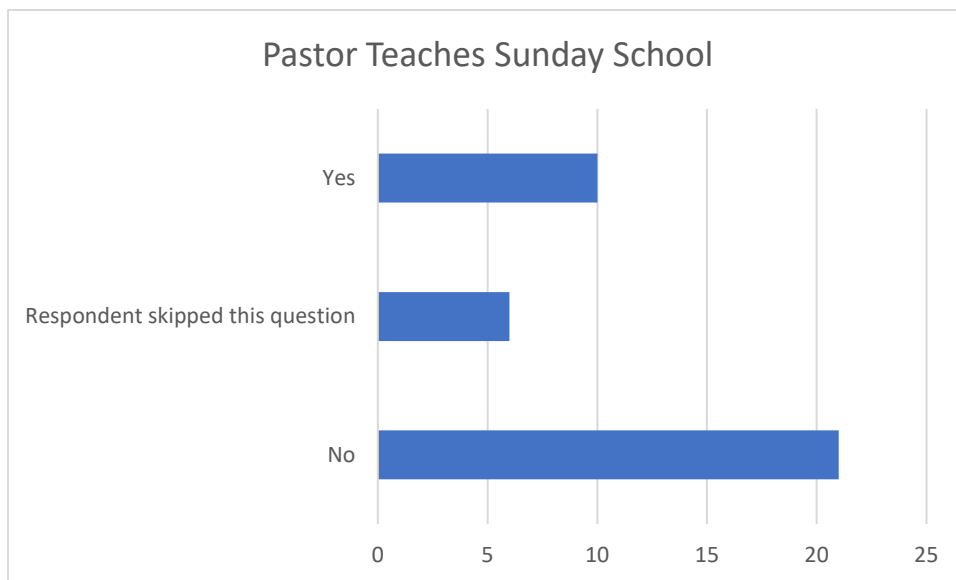


Figure 8: Question 4: Does your pastor teach Sunday / Church School?

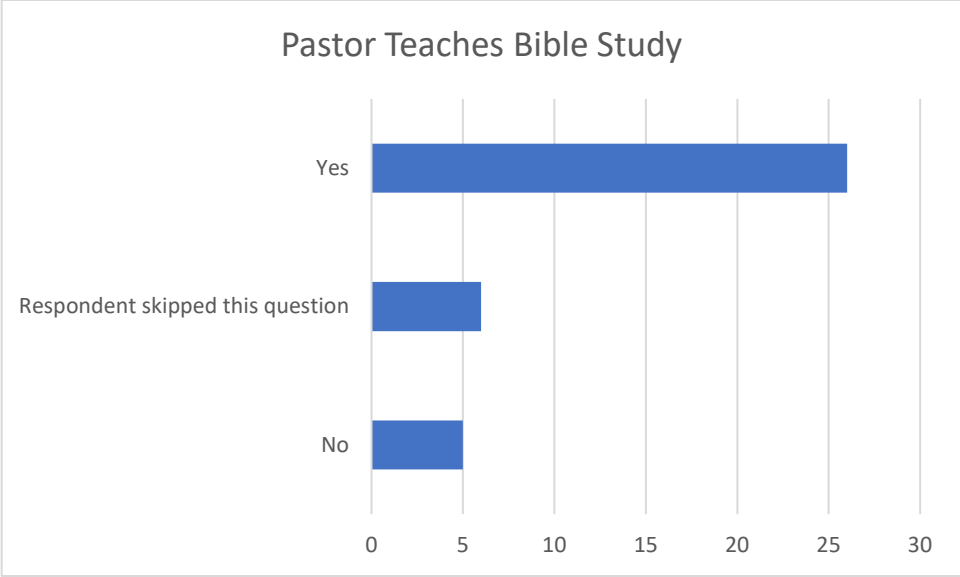


Figure 9: Question 5: Does your pastor teach Bible Study?

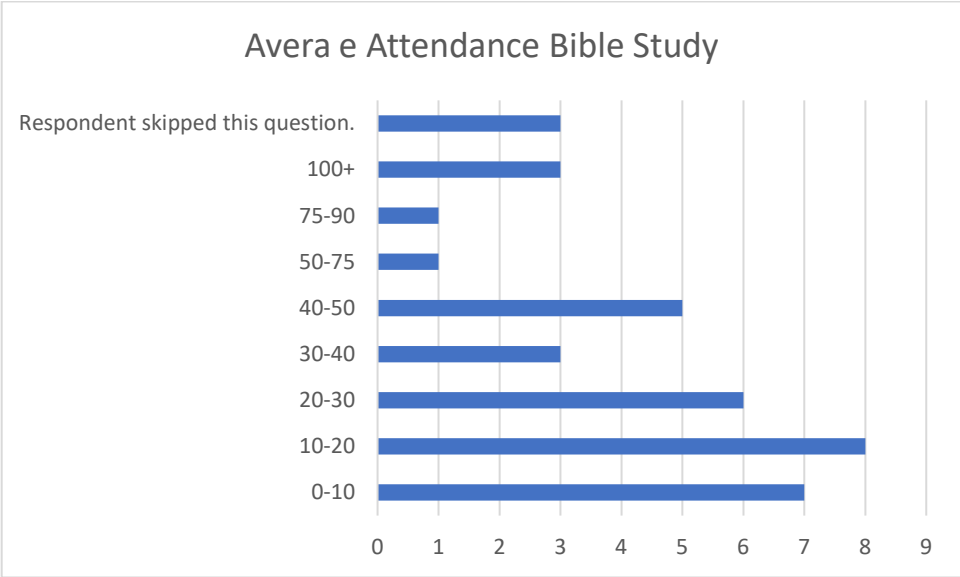


Figure 6: Question 6: What is the average attendance in Bible Study?

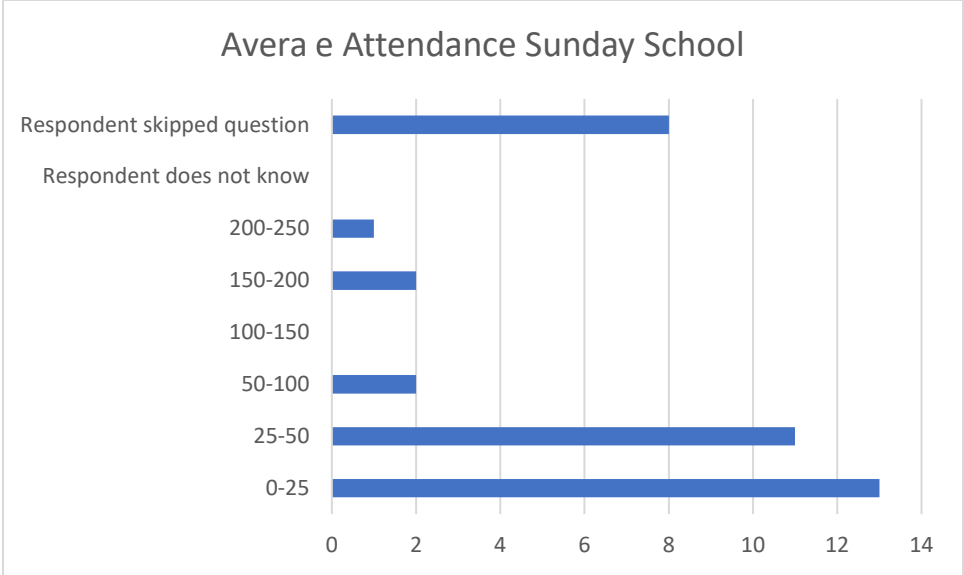


Figure 7: Question 7: What is the average attendance for Sunday / Church School?

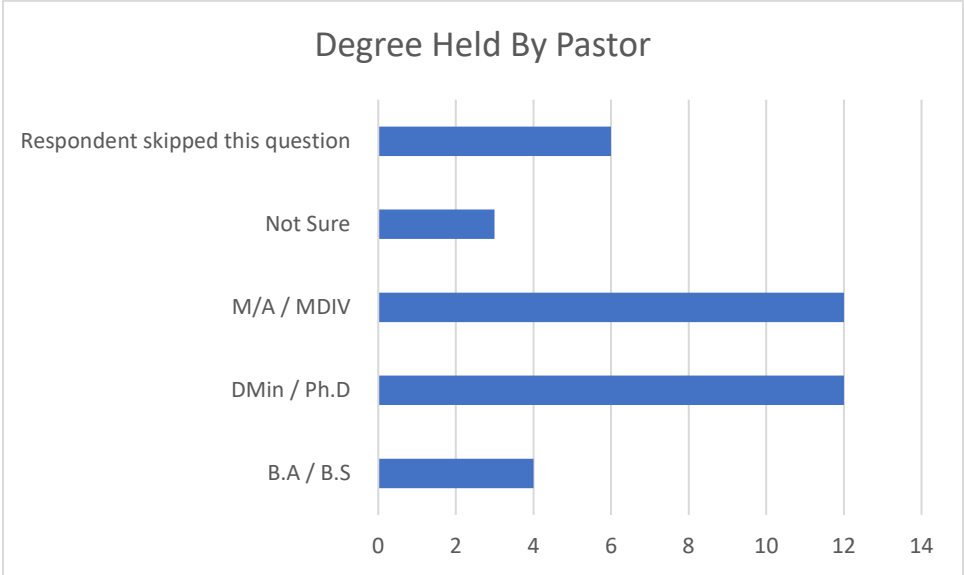


Figure 8: Question 8: What is the highest degree your pastor holds?

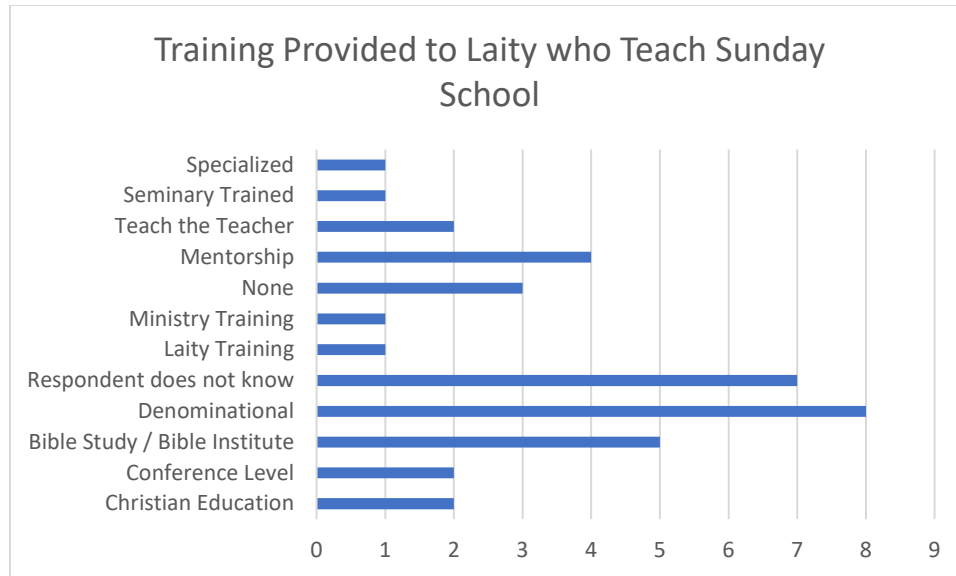


Figure 9: Question 9: What training is provided for laity who teach Bible Study / Sunday School?

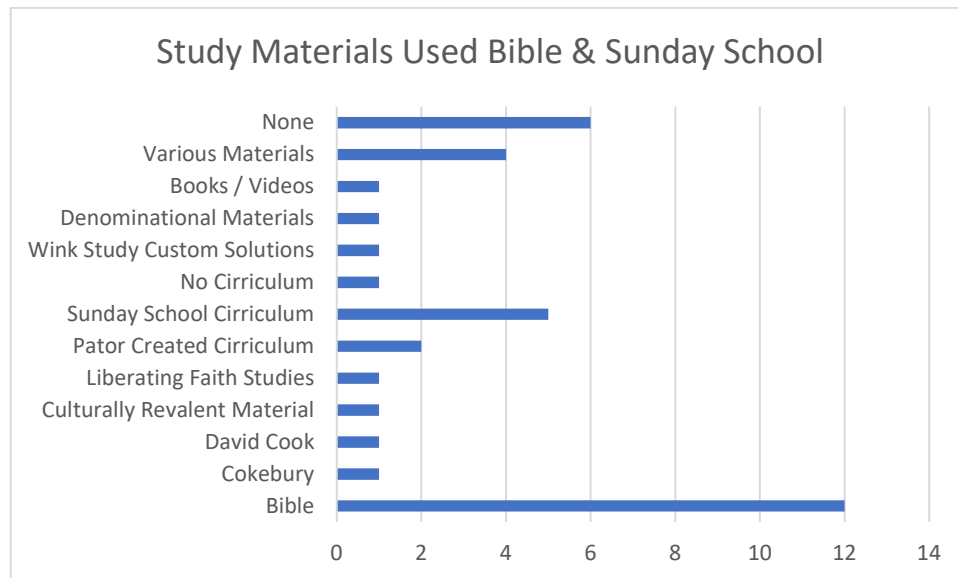


Figure 10: Question 10: What material(s) does your church use to teach Bible Study or Sunday School?

APPENDIX B: LAURYN HILL DISCOGRAPHY

MTV UNPLUGGED 2.0

Track	Length	Title
1	9:03	Intro / Mr. Intentional
2	7:38	Adam Lives In Theory
3	10:37	Oh Jerusalem
4	6:06	War in The Mind
5	10:06	I Find It Hard To Say (Rebel)
6	5:51	Just Like Water
7	6:15	I Just Want You Around
8	8:48	I Gotta Find Peace Of Mind
9	17:06	The Mystery Of Iniquity / Lauryn's Speech
10	6:55	I Get Out
11	4:05	I Remember
12	5:55	So Much Things To Say
13	6:07	The Conquering Lion / Outro

MISEDUCATION LAURYN HILL

Track	Length	Title
1	:47	Intro
2	5:33	Lost Ones
3	5:26	Ex-Factor
4	6:09	To Zion
5	5:20	Doo Wop (That Thing)
6	4:57	Superstar
7	4:16	Final Hour
8	5:42	When It Hurts So Bad
9	5:39	I Used To Love Him
10	5:15	Forgive Them Father
11	5:14	Every Ghetto, Every City
12	5:50	Nothing Even Matters
13	4:53	Everything Is Everything
14	4:17	The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill
15	3:41	Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You
16	4:40	Sweetest Thing (Mahogany Mix)

APPENDIX C: SOCIAL ACTION COMMISSION

Social Action Commission - African Methodist Episcopal Church

Chair – Bishop Reginald T. Jackson - Reginald.Jackson132@verizon.net - email; 201/341-9865 - voice
SAC Officer - Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker - JDupontW@aol.com - email; 213/ 494-9493 – voice; ame-church.com – website

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Liberty and Justice for All”

Please join in solidarity on Sunday, September 6th as we worship worldwide recognizing: “Confession, Repentance and Commitment to End Racism Sunday”

Racism will not end with the passage of legislation alone; it will also require a change of heart and thinking. This is an effort which the faith community must lead, and be the conscience of the nation. We will call upon every church, temple, mosque and faith communion to make their worship service on this Sunday a time to confess and repent for the sin and evil of racism, this includes ignoring, tolerating and accepting racism and to make a commitment to end racism by the example of our lives and actions.

What:

- Every faith leader is asked to preach about racism and our responsibility as people of faith to end racism.
- Bishop Adam J. Richardson has prepared a powerful and moving litany for this Sunday, which we will get out and widely distribute soon.
- “The Male Investment Plan”, a toolkit developed by Rev. Staccato Powell will be available as a guide. It is designed to effectively position African American males ages 5-25 through a rigorous and dedicated Saturday Academy mentoring program with tools to equip them academically, while also teaching them civil responsibility and spiritual enlightenment. The Male Investment Plan is a ready made tool to be implemented in churches and organizations everywhere. The only requirement is committed leadership of implementation through to successful effectiveness
- Send a report of your Sunday's engagement to: _____
(Photos and personal stories are encouraged.)

Historically, the Black church has been the conscience of the nation; and we shrink not from that conscience stirring role for the nation once again.

This is a joint effort spearheaded by the AME, AME Zion, and CME Churches. Joining in partnership are the United Methodist and UAME Churches, the National Council of Churches (and representatives from communions which comprise the NCC), and the Conference of National Black Churches.

Please be in prayer as we begin this effort, asking God to guide and empower us for this effort.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Bishop Reginald T. Jackson, chair – Social Action Commission or Sister Jackie DuPont Walker, Connectional Director of Social Action.

APPENDIX D: HSPS CURRICULUM RESEARCH AME WEB PRESENCES

RESEARCH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTATION

Research and Planning

Evaluation of current Church School curriculum Saint James AME church

Evaluation of current Bible study curriculum Saint James AME church

Assessment of church school and Bible study curriculum (Discovered issues and needs)

Evaluation of current Book of Doctrine and Discipline related to Christian Education

Research current Hip Hop, Engaged pedagogy, and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Curriculum Development

Theological & Biblical Philosophy for Curriculum

Develop definition of Curriculum Goals

Develop curriculum objectives

Develop curriculum materials and resources

Develop evaluation and assessment measurement tools

Curriculum Implementation (Limited scope for DMin project)

Schedule Session 1 – HSPS – Bible study develop new name (IE Liberation Rap Cipher/Cypher)

Schedule Session 2 – HSPS – Bible study

Schedule Session 3 – HSPS – Bible study

Schedule Session 4 – HSPS – Bible study

Curriculum Evaluation

AME Christian religious education Assessment

Overview:

- I. <https://firstdistrictame.org/?s=christian+education>
 - a. Site provides several quotes challenging the first district to engage in Christian Education and a link to <https://firstdistrictame.org/christian-education/> Link provides information for past events ‘WalkingWoke’ 28th Quadrennial Christian Education and Youth Congress held on June 27 -20, 2018 in Atlanta, GA. And ‘All Things New: Isaiah 43:19 - Christian Education Congress’ held on July 16 -19 in Dover, DE. *The First Episcopal District consists of nearly 400 local church congregations who faithfully provide ministry to people of all ages, social/economic backgrounds and cultures.*
- II. <https://www.ame2.com/>
 - a. Unable to evaluate content, however <http://www.2edlearning.org/> does have a web presence eLearning Portal – Course offerings [**Ministry Rollout** - Cluster ministry, prayer, mirroring, I dare you to trust God, ministry roll out overview, education. **General Church Training** – Summer Summit Information, Economic Readiness, Navigating the E-Learning Portal, Sexual Harassment training. **Christian Education** – Christian Ed Directors Only: Summer Summit. **Presiding Elders. Clusters. And Pastors Training.**] *The website and e Learning portal are available on desktop, laptop, and/or smartphone. LAITY should complete the training and provide documentation through their local church. Church’s should confer with their insurance company to ensure compliance with policy requirement. Pastors should establish procedures for the local congregation.*
- III. <https://ame3.org/components-directory/christian-education-department/>
 - a. Site contained no resources or comments under Christian education department. Unable to determine districts position or mandate regarding CE.

- IV. <http://www.ame4.org/>
- a. “This site can’t be reached” 4th District site is unavailable.
- V. <http://www.ame5.org/>
- a. Unable to find any reference to Christian education however site does provide a link to published resources <http://www.ame5.org/publications/> [**Making A Spiritual Connection Through Prayer, Fasting, and Mediation. A Holy Nation: Bible Study – Volume 1 and A Holy Nation: Bible Study – Volume 2**]. *We have developed this Bible Study curriculum to undergird Bishop Clement W. Fugh’s vision for the work of the Fifth Episcopal District for this first year of the quadrennial. Most of our local churches have some sort of weekly Bible Study gathering. It is our hope that the lessons provided here will be used by each local church.*
- VI. <http://www.ame6.church/>
- a. Site doesn’t contain and resources or links regarding Christian Education
- VII. <http://ame7.church/>
- a. Initiatives **youth ministry** plan ‘LevelUp Ministry’ Partner with Christian Education Department to implement relevant Bible studies, devotionals, and materials into ministry program. **Young-adult ministry** - Pop Up Conference Bible Studies- Dates TBA Leadership Development Weekend: January 25-27, 2019 IMPACT Weekend: April 26-28, 2019. **Social Action** - Leadership Development Weekend: January 25-27 • Holy Convocation: April 10-13 • IMPACT Weekend: April 26-28 • ASPIRE 2019: July 7-10.
- VIII. <http://ame8.org/>
- a. Site unreachable
- IX. <https://www.ninthamechurch.org/>
- a. No documentation related to Christian Education available on district website. Ministry Resource Link <https://www.ninthamechurch.org/ministry-resources> contains "*Don't Faint, Help for Hurting Pastors and Their Families*" is on sale now through our Ninth District office!, *More than Bricks and Mortar: Building*

a Church Without Losing your mind. Two books written by Bishop Seawright material directed towards pastors and 'Purchase your copy today of the 9th Episcopal District Outreach Manual' proceeds benefit the Life Center at Daniel Payne.

- X. www.10thdistrictame.org
- a. Site does not contain any resources or links regarding Christian Education. Resources link contains a link to forms
<http://www.10thdistrictame.org/forms.html>
 - b. Application / Consent form, The Institute at Abington School of Religion [Classes available for Winter 2017 -Adaptive Leadership and Communities of Faith - (2nd & 4th Mondays at 7pm – 6 weeks) and Soul Care: The Art of Caring for Oneself and Others - (2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 7pm – 6 weeks)], TenthFuture [TENTHFUTURE, INCORPORATED (also hereto referred as “TenthFuture, Inc.” or simply “TenthFuture”) is a nonprofit organization that represents the secular educational, economic, community development and outreach efforts. TENTHFUTURE, INCORPORATED seeks to identify new resources and to provide small grants to churches, organizations, and individuals who are eligible to apply.] and The 10percent Challenge [10percent increase in prayer, Bible study, worship attendance, Sunday school attendance, giving / tithing, sharing positive testimony, meaningful ministry, developing discipleship training, healthy living, participation in local church ministry].
- XI. www.11thdistrictamec.org
- a. Site unavailable
- XII. www.12thdistrictame.org
- a. Site unavailable
- XIII. www.13thame.com
- a. No content related to Christian Education on website. Link to ministries include
http://www.ame13.org/index.php?page_id=page_aboutameand13th. [The Young People’s Department, The Women’s Missionary Society, Women

In Ministry, The School of the Psalmist, RAYAC, Nehemiah Nation/Sons of Allen, The Lay Organization, CDMC, Believe, Incorporated (*We are a non-profit organization that represents the secular educational, economic, community development and outreach efforts of the 13th Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. BELIEVE, INCORPORATED seeks to identify new resources and to provide small grants to churches, organizations, and individuals who are members of the 13th Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church*)]

- XIV. <http://www.amec14.com/>
- XV. Site does not contain any Christian Education direct links however site provides a link under School <http://www.amec14.com/#eluidf07a4218> which contains links to [African Methodist Episcopal University, Bryant theological seminary, College of Liberal arts and Social Sciences, College of business and public administration, College of Education]
- XVI. <http://www.ame16th.org>
- a. Site does not contain any content directly related to Christian Education. Link <http://www.ame16th.org/index.htm#homefeatures> provided list of Leadership team. Christian Education - Rev. Gail Meridin -District Officer
- XVII. <http://www.ame19th.org/>
- a. Site does not contain any content directly related to Christian Education.
- XVIII. <https://www.amec20.com/>
- a. Site does not contain any content directly related to Christian Education. Links provide current projects. [Philip Life Center AME Church, Rumphu AME church, Hlanganani AME church, Church construction, Education Supplies, Motor Bike Project,]
- XIX. I need to develop components of a successful curriculum. Need to consider source material, Biblical framework, church doctrine.
- a. Evaluate study plans and readings
 - b. Develop vocabulary engaged learning via phonic learning.
 - c. Develop a plan to work on developing reading skills, gramma

- d. Global literature development for culturally inclusive discipleship formation
- e. AMEC is global need to incorporate geographical information into the curriculum so that across the connection we are a universal church growing in Christ.
- f. Create / develop a who's who Wiki for biblical teaching develop a correlation between biblical character and Hip Hop artists who speak to the topics / issue / themes in the Bible.
- g. Develop a curriculum which has STEM attributes. IE Pyramids in Egypt
- h. Graffiti and Arts

APPENDIX E: SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION



Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

The AME Sunday School Union and the Department of Christian Education are excited to share with you this update for our Church School curriculum. We have been attentive to the emerging needs of our church, and of our world, and have sought to provide significant changes to our lessons that keenly respond to these needs.

Over the past year, in conversation with scholars and thinkers from our connection, we have adopted a new methodological framework for our curricula. This newly fashioned lesson development employs the power of storytelling as the means through which our religious commitments are shared in our Church School classes. The new curriculum will continue to explore the biblical text, in conversation with relevant examples from popular culture and current events, to inspire a new type of engagement with our commitment to the Gospel.

We have shared a sample Church School lesson with you so that you might explore the contours of this work. We have also attached a brief introductory document that explains how best to utilize the lessons.

Our hope is that this new lesson structure will open the hearts and minds of our Zion toward a liberating and loving transformation.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Roderick D. Belin
President/Publisher
AME Sunday School Union



Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce
Executive Director
Department of Christian Education





**LIBERATING
FAITH STUDIES**

DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION



**LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES
SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY OF THE
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

Vol. 56
Spring Quarter 2019

MARCH, APRIL, MAY

No. 2
Price \$4.00

— Ages 18-Up —

Roderick D. Bell, President/Publisher

Garland F. Pierce, Executive Director, Department of Christian Education

Andre' Wright, Chief of Operations

Orlando Dotson, Layout and Design

Figure 10: Sample of Sunday School Material

MOST OF MY HEROES DONT APPEAR IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

A HIPHOPED MANIFESTO

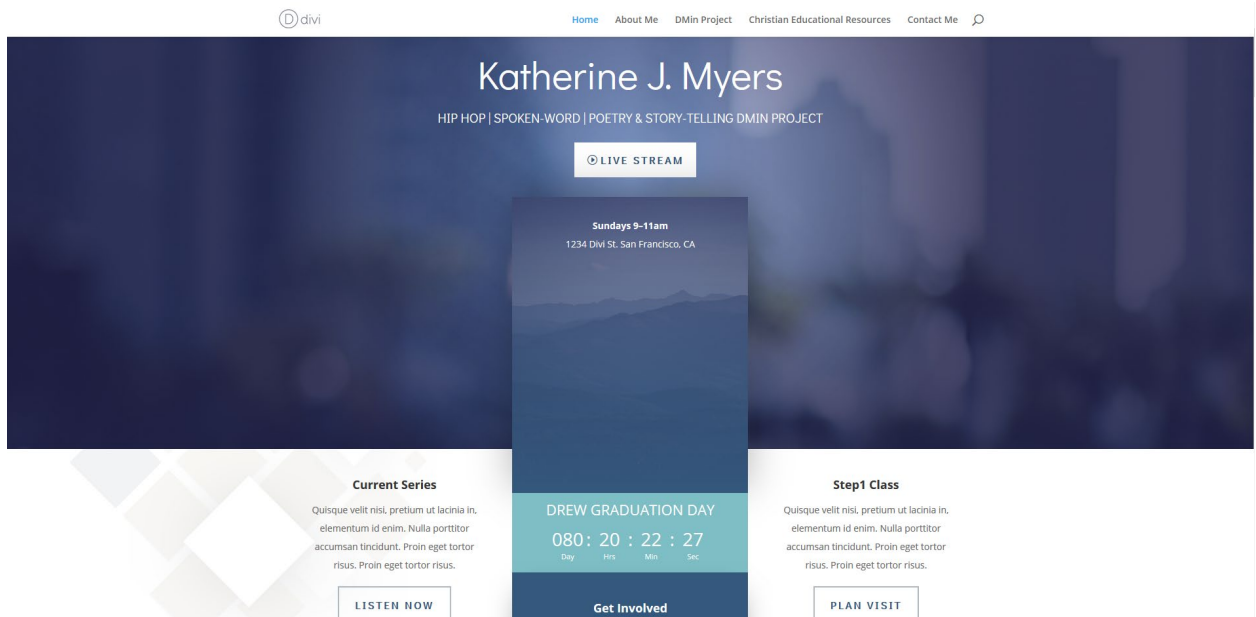
WE BELIEVE...

HIPHOPED CAN, MUST AND WILL BE MORE INCLUSIVE THAN EDUCATION AND HIPHOP
COLLABORATION IS AT THE HEART OF HIPHOP AND EDUCATION
MUCH THAT IS HIPHOP DOES NOT DECLARE ITSELF AS THUS
WE WILL TEACH ABOUT HIPHOP AND THROUGH HIPHOP
PEACE, UNITY, LOVE AND HAVING FUN
4 ELEMENTS PLUS KNOWLEDGE
MCs MODEL COURAGE - MAKE CYPHERS MOULD COMMUNITY
HIPHOP IS A DIALOGUE
TEACHER EAR IS AS IMPORTANT AS PUPIL VOICE
MICROPHONES AMPLIFY PUPIL VOICE
YA DONT STOP...LEARNING
HIPHOP IS MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AND CROSS-ARTS
CULTURAL PRODUCTION IS MORE VITAL THAN CONSUMPTION
SAMPLING CULTURE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS
CREATE SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING - SOMETHING NEW OUT OF SOMETHING OLDER
BY CREATING WE BECOME OURSELVES
ALWAYS BE CREATING
WE ARE INSPIRED BY THE HIPHOP COMMUNITY OVER THE HIPHOP INDUSTRY
HIPHOP IS A FOLK ART
BUILDING CONFIDENCE BY SKILL AND VICE VERSA
GOOD TEACHERS COMBINE WRITTENS WITH COMING OFF THE TOP OF THE HEAD
THE CYPHER - CREATIVE CRITICAL COLLABORATIVE CARING COGENERATIVE
WE RECOGNISE DOMINANT CULTURE CO-OPTS OUTSIDER CULTURE FOR ITS OWN ENDS
WE REFUSE TO WALK AWAY
CRITIQUING HIPHOP IS AN INTEGRAL ELEMENT OF HIPHOP
YOU CAN LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD WITHOUT LOVING POVERTY
INTEGRITY TRUMPS PROFESSIONALISM
HIPHOP HAS CHANGED THE WORLD. IGNORING IT IS ABSURD
WE ARE HIPHOP. YOU. ME. EVERYBODY
THE CLASSROOM REMAINS A LOCATION OF POSSIBILITY
SO TOO HIPHOP



APPENDIX G: DMIN PROJECT DEMO WEBSITE

A secondary component of my DMin project is a prototype website which illustrate utilizing media for discipleship and spiritual formation. Additionally, the website is built as an LMS & CMS (Learning Management System and Content Management System). This will allow for interactive breakout groups, study sessions and interactive training. (Sunday School / Bible Study).



WORDPRESS & CANVAS INTEGRATION

Access tokens can be used to allow other applications to make API calls on your behalf. You can also generate access tokens and *use the Canvas Open API* to come up with your own integrations.

Token:	7~bzqVyhYSyK4bnao6lVLgrBxVd2vgLtMoFjuQu0U6lEOpWztzCS51S7CxrUYc4i3 Copy this token down now. Once you leave this page you won't be able to retrieve the full token anymore, you'll have to regenerate it to get a new value.
App:	User-Generated
Purpose:	DMin project integrations

Created: Feb 18 at 11:36am

APPENDIX H: MISEDUCATION OF LAURYN HILL TRACKLIST &
LYRICS

INTRO

[School bell rings]

[Teacher: Ras Baraka]

Please respond when I call your name...

Alright, Kevin Charles... (here)

Jaris Boykins... (here)

Alicia Simmons... (here)

Phillip Valdez... (here)

Gabrielle Salado... (here)

Latoya Bradberry... (right here)

Antawn Mitchell... (here)

Shaquan Sutton... (here)

Cory Thomas... (here)

Tyron Lucas... (here)

Kennia Codwell...(here)

Tanika Marshall... (here)

Lauryn Hill...

Lauryn Hill...

Lauryn Hill...

Walton Spates... (here)

LOST ONE

[Verse 1]

It's funny how money change a situation

Miscommunication lead to complication

My emancipation don't fit your equation

I was on the humble, you on every station

Some wan' play young Lauryn like she dumb
But remember not a game new under the sun
Everything you did has already been done
I know all the tricks from Bricks to Kingston
My ting done made your kingdom wan' run
Now understand, L-Boogie, non-violent
But if a thing test me, run for my gun
Can't take a threat to my new born son
L been this way since creation
A groupie call, you fall from temptation
Now you wanna bawl over separation
Tarnish my image in the conversation
Who you gon' scrimmage, like you the champion?
You might win some but you just lost one

[Chorus]

You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one

[Verse 2]

Now, now, how come your talk turn cold?
Gain the whole world for the price of your soul
Tryin' to grab hold of what you can't control
Now you all floss, what a sight to behold
Wisdom is better than silver and gold
I was hopeless, now I'm on hope road
Every man wanna act like he's exempt
Him need to get down on his knees and repent
Can't slick talk on the day of judgment

Your movement's similar to a serpent
Tried to play straight, how your whole style bent?
Consequence is no coincidence
Hypocrites always wanna play innocent
Always want to take it to the full out extent
Always want to make it seem like good intent
Never want to face it when it time for punishment
I know you don't wanna hear my opinion
There come many paths and you must choose one
And if you don't change then the rain soon come
See you might win some, but you just lost one

[Chorus]

You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one

[Refrain]

You might win some, but you really lost one
You just lost one, it's so silly how come?
When it's all done, did you really gain from
What you done done? It's so silly how come?
You just lost one

[Verse 3]

Now don't you understand, man, universal law?
What you throw out comes back to you, star
Never underestimate those who you scar
'Cause karma, karma, karma comes back to you hard!
You can't hold God's people back that long

The chain of Shatan wasn't made that strong
Trying to pretend like your word is your bond
But until you do right, all you do will go wrong
Now some might mistake this just for simple song
And some don't know what they have 'til it's gone
Now even when you're gone you can still be reborn
And, from the night can arrive the sweet dawn
Now, some might listen and some might shun
And some may think that they've reached perfection
If you look closely you'll see what you've become
'Cause you might win some but you just lost one!

[Chorus]

You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one
You might win some but you just lost one

[Refrain]

You might win some, but you really lost one
You just lost one, it's so silly how come?
When it's all done, did you really gain from
What you done done? It's so silly how come?
You might win some, but you really lost one
You just lost one, it's so silly how come?
When it's all done, did you really gain from
What you done done? It's so silly how come?
You just lost one
You just lost one, you just lost one
You just lost one, you just lost one
(How come, you lost one? It's so dumb)

You just lost one, you just lost one

You just lost one

What a bam-bam!... hehehe

[Skit]

Teacher: Alright people, I'm gonna write something on the board. Let's spell it. First letter

Class: L, O, V, E

Teacher: What's that?

Class: Love

Teacher: What?

Class: Love!

Teacher: How many people know any songs about love? Tell me some titles, titles of some songs

Boy: Love

(Laughter)

Teacher: There's a song called love?

Boy: Yeah!

Teacher: There's no song called love!

Boy: Yeah, it's by Kirk Franklin

Teacher: Ok ok how it go?

Boy: It go "Love" (Laughter)

Teacher: Not bad, not bad, okay. Anybody else know any songs about love?

(Mumbling)

Teacher: I can't hear you

Girl: I Will Always Love You

Teacher: What about any movies about love? Know any movies about love?

Girl: Titanic

Teacher: Alright

Boy: Romeo and Juliet

EX-FACTOR

[Intro]

Yo yo yo, yo, yo, yo yo yo

Yo yo yo, yo, yo, yo yo yo

[Verse 1]

It could all be so simple

But you'd rather make it hard

Loving you is like a battle (It's like a battle)

And we both end up with scars

Tell me, who I have to be (Who I have to be)

To get some reciprocity

See, no one loves you more than me (More than me)

And no one ever will (No one ever will, yeah)

Is this just a silly game (Silly game)

That forces you to act this way? (To act this way)

Forces you to scream my name

Then pretend that you can't stay

Tell me, who I have to be (I know what we gotta do)

To get some reciprocity

See, no one loves you more than me

And no one ever will

[Chorus]

No matter how I think we grow

You always seem to let me know

It ain't workin', It ain't workin' (No, it ain't workin')

And when I try to walk away

You'd hurt yourself to make me stay

This is crazy, this is crazy (Oh, this is crazy, uh-huh!)

[Verse 2]

I keep letting you back in (You back in)

How can I explain myself?

As painful as this thing has been

I just can't be with no one else

See I know what we've got to do

You let go (You let go), and I'll let go too (And I'll let go too)

Cause no one's hurt me more than you (No one's hurt me more than you)

And no one ever will

[Chorus]

No matter how I think we grow

You always seem to let me know

It ain't workin', It ain't workin', it ain't workin', it ain't workin'

And when I try to walk away

You'd hurt yourself to make me stay

This is crazy, this is crazy (Oh this is crazy, this is crazy uh-huh!)

[Chorus 2]

Care for me, care for me!

I know you care for me!

There for me, there for me!

Said you'd be there for me!

Cry for me, cry for me!

You said you'd die for me!

Give to me, give to me!

Why won't you live for me?!

Care for me, care for me!

You said you care for me!

There for me, there for me!

Said you'd be there for me!
Cry for me, cry for me!
You said you'd die for me!
Give to me, give to me!
Why won't you live for me?!

Care for me, care for me!
You said you care for me!
There for me, there for me!
Said you'd be there for me!
Cry for me, cry for me!
You said you'd die for me!
Give to me, give to me!
Why won't you live for me?!

Care for me, care for me!
You said you care for me!
There for me, there for me!
Said you'd be there for me!
Give to me, give to me!
Why won't you live for me?!
Cry for me, cry for me!
You said you'd die for me!

[Outro]

Where, where, where were you when I needed you?
Where, where were you?

Where, where were you when I needed you?
Where were you, you, you, you, you, you, you

You, do, do, do, do, do, do, do

TO ZION

[Intro]

One day, I'm gonna understand...

Zion

[Verse 1]

Unsure of what the balance held

I touched my belly overwhelmed

By what I had been chosen to perform

But then an angel came one day

Told me to kneel down and pray

For unto me a man-child would be born

Woe this crazy circumstance

I knew his life deserved a chance

But everybody told me to be smart

"Look at your career," they said

"Lauryn, baby use your head"

But instead I chose to use my heart

[Chorus]

Now the joy of my world

Is in Zion! (Zion, Zion!)

Now the joy of my world

Is in Zion! (Zion, uhh, Zion!)

[Verse 2]

How beautiful if nothing more

Than to wait at Zion's door

I've never been in love like this before

Now let me pray to keep you from
The perils that will surely come
See life for you, my prince has just begun
And I thank you for choosing me
To come through unto life to be
A beautiful reflection of His grace
See I know that a gift so great
Is only one God could create
And I'm reminded every time I see your face

[Chorus]

That the joy (Joy)
Of my world (World)
Is in Zion (Is in Zion)
Is in Zion (Is in Zion)
Now the joy (Joy)
Of my world (World)
Is in Zion (Is in Zion, is in Zion)
Now the joy (Joy)
Of my world (World)
Is in Zion (Is in Zion, is in Zion)
Now the joy (Joy)
Of my world (World)
Is in Zion (Is in Zion, is in Zion)

[Outro]

Marching, marching, marching, marching (Marching)
To Zion, marching, marching, marching (We gon' march)
Marching, marching, marching, marching
To Zion, marching, beautiful, beautiful, Zion
Marching, marching, marching, marching

To Zion, marching, marching, marching
Marching, marching, marching, marching
To Zion, marching, beautiful, beautiful, Zion
Marching, marching, marching, marching (My joy, my joy)
To Zion, marching, marching, marching (My joy, my joy)
Marching, marching, marching, marching (My joy, my joy)
To Zion, marching, beautiful, beautiful, Zion (My joy, my joy)
Marching, marching, marching, marching (My joy, my joy)
To Zion, marching, marching, marching (My joy, my joy)
Marching, marching, marching, marching (You're the joy)
To Zion, marching, beautiful, beautiful, Zion (Of my life)
Marching, marching, marching, marching (It is in Zion)
To Zion, marching, marching, marching (Zion)
Marching, marching, marching, marching (You're the joy)
To Zion, marching, beautiful, beautiful, Zion (You're the joy of my life)
Marching, beautiful, beautiful Zion (Is in Zion, Zion)
Marching, beautiful, beautiful Zion (It is in Zion)
Marching, beautiful, beautiful Zion
Marching, beautiful, beautiful Zion
Marching, beautiful, beautiful Zion
Marching, beautiful, beautiful Zion
Marching

[Skit]

[Teacher]

Okay, how many people here have ever been in love? I know none of the guys are gonna raise their hand. How many of y'all ever been in love?

[Class]

(Mumbling)

[Teacher]

I know none of the guys been in... we don't get in love, right? Oh! Let this black man right here tell what his idea of love is, 'cause not all the time we hear a young black man talk about love. About your personal definition, don't tell me what Webster thinks. Huh?

[Boy]

Willingness to do everything for that person

[Teacher]

Okay, everything like what? Explain. Let him talk c'mon. If I asked him to talk about a fancy car, he'd be right on point. But we wanna talk about love. You can do it. (To another pupil) What do you think? You said you love somebody, you should know why you love them right?

[Boy 2]

The way they act

[Teacher]

Uh-huh

[Boy 2]

The way they carry themselves, stuff like that

[Teacher]

Okay

[Girl]

The way that they hang with they boys, and they just stand out. It's like sometimes it don't even matter like what they wear or what they look like. It's like, that way, you know?

[Girl 2]

Yeah

[Girl]

It's like you know you want to talk to him, because he stands out, it's like he got a glow or something

[Teacher]

That's deep

[Boy 2]

That's what I'm talking about

[Teacher]

I thought that was a beautiful point. Anyone else want to deal with that?

[Girl 2]

It's sometimes, like when they try to act funny in front of they boys, like when they get around say they love you. They can't love you. 'Cause love-love-love wouldn't do that

[Girl 3]

Love is not phony!

[Class]

(Laughter)

DOO WOP - THAT THING

[Intro]

Yo, remember back on the Bully

When cats used to harmonize like

Yo, yo, my men and my women
Don't forget about the deen
Sirat al-Mustaqeem
Yo, it's about a thing, uh, yo, yo
If ya feel real good wave your hands in the air
And lick two shots in the atmosphere!
(Put them up, put them up)
(Put them up, put them up)
(Put them up, put them up)

[Verse 1]

It's been three weeks since you were looking for your friend
The one you let hit it and never called you again
'Member when he told you he was 'bout the Benjamins?
You act like you ain't hear him then give him a little trim
To begin, how you think you're really gon' pretend
Like you wasn't down and you called him again?
Plus, when you give it up so easy you ain't even foolin' him
If you did it then, then you'd probably fuck again
Talking out your neck, sayin' you're a Christian
A Muslim, sleeping with the jinn
Now that was the sin that did Jezebel in
Who you gon' tell when the repercussions spin?
Showing off your ass 'cause you're thinking it's a trend
Girlfriend, let me break it down for you again
You know I only say it 'cause I'm truly genuine
Don't be a hard rock when you really are a gem
Baby girl, respect is just a minimum
Niggas fucked up and you still defending 'em
Now, Lauryn is only human
Don't think I haven't been through the same predicament

Let it sit inside your head like a million women in Philly, Penn
It's silly when girls sell their souls because it's in
Look at where you be in, hair weaves like Europeans
Fake nails done by Koreans
Come again

(A win win, come again
A win win, come again)

[Hook]

Guys you know you'd better watch out
Some girls, some girls are only about
That thing, that thing, that thing
That thing, that thing, that thing

[Verse 2]

The second verse is dedicated to the men
More concerned with his rims and his Timbs than his women
Him and his men come in the club like hooligans
Don't care who they offend, poppin' yang (like you got yen!)
Let's stop pretend, the ones that pack pistols by they waist men
Cristal by the case men, still in they mother's basement
The pretty face men claiming that they did a bid men
Need to take care of they three or four kids
And they face a court case when the child support late
Money taking and heart breaking, now you wonder why women hate men
The sneaky, silent men
The punk, domestic violence men
Quick to shoot the semen, stop acting like boys and be men
How you gonna win when you ain't right within?
How you gonna win when you ain't right within?

How you gonna win when you ain't right within?

Come again, come again

Come again, come again

[Bridge]

Watch out, watch out

Look out, look out

Watch out, watch out

Look out, look out

Watch out, watch out

Look out, look out

Watch out, watch out

Look out, look out

[Hook]

Girls, you know you'd better watch out

Some guys, some guys are only about

That thing, that thing, that thing

That thing, that thing, that thing

Guys, you know you'd better watch out

'Cause girls, some girls are only about

That thing, that thing, that thing

That thing, that thing, that thing

[Skit/Outro]

Class!

Hey, we've got some very intelligent women here, man

Do you think you're too young to really love somebody?

(No! No, no, I don't think so)

I say it for me, uh, I'm an adult I say, wait

"You're too young to be in love, this is silly

You're infatuated or whatever, you got nice jeans
You wear fancy Adidas", I mean, it might be something I don't know
(It's the difference from loving somebody and being in love with somebody)
Well, you tell me. What's the difference?
(Okay, You can love anybody but when you're in love with somebody you're looking at
it like this: You're taking that person for what he or she is no matter what he or she look
like or no matter what he or she do)
(You're crazy! You fall in love, you can fall out of love)
(You might stop being in love but you are not gonna stop loving that person)
(Maybe they ain't never been loved before or been in love before, they don't know what
the feeling is to be loved)
(She poetic)
She killed it, we could end that conversation with that, right?

SUPERSTAR

[Intro]

Yo hip-hop, started out in the heart
Uh-huh, yo
Now everybody tryin to chart
Say what? Hip-Hop, started out in the heart
Yo, now everybody tryin to chart
C'mon now baby c'mon now baby c'mon now baby c'mon, uhh
C'mon now baby c'mon now baby c'mon now baby c'mon

[Chorus]

C'mon baby light my fire
Everything you drop is so tired
Music is supposed to inspire
How come we ain't gettin no higher?

[Verse 1]

Now tell me your philosophy
On exactly what an artist should be
Should they be someone with prosperity
And no concept of reality?
Now, who you know without any flaws?
That lives above the spiritual laws?
And does anything they feel just because
There's always someone there who'll applaud?

[Chorus]

C'mon baby light my fire
Everything you drop is so tired
Music is supposed to inspire
How come we ain't gettin no higher?

[Verse 2]

I know you think that you've got it all
And by making other people feel small
Makes you think you're unable to fall
But when you do, who you gonna call?
See what you give is just what you get
I know it hasn't hit you yet!
Now I don't mean to get you upset
But every cause has an effect! Uh-huh!

[Chorus]

C'mon baby light my fire
Everything you drop is so tired
Music is supposed to inspire
How come we ain't gettin no higher?

[Verse 3]

I cross sands in distant lands, made plans with the sheiks
Why you beef with freaks as my album sales peak? Uhh
All I wanted was to sell like five hundred
And be a Ghetto Supastar since my first album Blunted
I used to work at Foot Locker, they fired me: I fronted
Or I quitted, now I spit it -- however do you want it!
Now you get it, writing rhymes, in the Range, with the frames
Lightly tinted, then send it to your block to have my full name
Cemented (Lauryn Hill!) And if your lines sound like mine
I'm taking a percentage (ka-ching!)
Unprecedented, and still respected
When it's finished, I'm serious, I'm takin over areas in Aquarius
Runnin red lights with my ten thousand chariots
Just as Christ was a Superstar, you're stupid, star!
They hail you then nail you, no matter who you are
They'll make you now then take you down, and make you face it
If you slit the bag open, put your pinky in it and taste it

[Chorus]

C'mon baby light my fire
Everything you drop is so tired
Music is supposed to inspire
How come we ain't gettin no higher?

C'mon baby light my fire
Everything you drop is so tired
Music is supposed to inspire
How come we ain't gettin no higher?

C'mon baby light my fire

Everything you drop is so tired
Music is supposed to inspire
How come we ain't gettin no higher?

FINAL HOUR

[Intro]

Uhh, uhh
And yo, uhh, uhh, yo, yo

[Verse 1]

Yo, I treat this like my thesis
Well-written topic, broken down into pieces
I introduce then produce, words so profuse
It's abuse how I juice up this beat, like I'm deuce
Two people both equal like I'm Gemini, rather Simeon
If I Jimmy on this lock I could pop it, you can't stop it
Drop it, your whole crew's microscopic
Like particles while I make international articles, and on the cover
Don't discuss the baby mother
Business, I been in this third LP you can't tell me, I witness
First handed I'm candid
You can't stand it, respect demanded
And get flown around the planet
Rock Hard like granite or steel
People feel Lauryn Hill from New-Ark to Israel
And this is real, so I keep makin' the street's ballads
While you lookin' for dressin' to go with your tossed salad

[Chorus]

You can get the money

You can get the power
But keep your eyes on the Final Hour
You can get the money
You can get the power
But keep your eyes on the Final Hour

[Verse 2]

I'm about to change the focus from the richest to the brokest
I wrote this opus, to reverse the hypnosis
Whoever's closest to the line's gonna win it
You gonna fall trying to ball while my team win the pennant
I'm about to begin it, for a minute, then run for senate
Make a slum lord be the tenant give his money to kids to spend it
And then amend it, every law that ever prevented
Our survival since our arrival documented in The Bible
Like Moses and Aaron
Things gon' change, it's apparent
And all the transparent gonna be seen through
Let God redeem you, keep your deen true
You can get the green too
Watch out what you cling to, observe how a queen do
And I remain calm reading the 73rd Psalm
Cause with all that's going on I got the world in my palm

[Chorus]

You can get the money
You can get the power
But keep your eyes on the Final Hour
You can get the money
You can get the power
But keep your eyes on the Final Hour

[Verse 3]

Now I be breaking bread sipping Manischewitz wine
Pay no mind party like it's 1999
But when it comes down to ground beef like Palestine
Say your rhymes, let's see if that get you out your bind
Now I'm a get the mozzarella like a Rockafeller
Still be in the church of Lalibela, singing hymns a cappella
Whether posed in Mirabella in Couture
Or collecting residuals from off The Score
I'm making sure I'm with the 144
I've been here before this ain't a battle, this is war
Word to Boonie, I make salat like a Sunni
Get diplomatic immunity in every ghetto community
Had opportunity went from Hoodshock to Hood-chic
But it ain't what you cop, it's about what you keep
And even if there are leaks, you can't capsize this ship
Cause I baptize my lips every time I take a sip

[Chorus]

You can get the money
You can get the power
But keep your eyes on the Final Hour
You can get the money
You can get the power
But keep your eyes on the Final Hour
You can get the money
You can get the power
But keep your eyes on the Final Hour
You can get the money
You can get the power

But keep your eyes on the Final Hour

WHEN IT HURST SO BAD

[Chorus]

When it hurts so bad (when it hurts so bad)

When it hurts so bad (when it hurts so bad)

Why's it feel so good? (when it hurts so bad)

(When it hurts so bad)

(When it hurts so bad)

[Verse 1]

I loved real, real hard once

But the love wasn't returned

Found out the man I'd die for

He wasn't even concerned

I tried, and I tried, and I tried

To keep him in my life (to keep him in my life)

I cried, and I cried, and I cried

But I couldn't make it right

[Chorus 2]

But I, I loved the young man

And if you ever been in love

Then you'd understand

That what you want might make you cry

What you need might pass you by

If you don't catch it (if you don't catch it)

(if you don't catch it)

And what you need ironically

Will turn out what you want to be

If you just let it (if you just let it)
If you just let it (if you just let it)

[Verse 2]

See, I thought this feeling
It was all that I had
But how could this be love
And make me feel so bad? (gave up my power)
Gave up my power
I existed for you
But who-ever knew
The voo-doo you'd do

[Chorus 2]

But I, I loved the young man
And if you ever been in love
Then you'd understand
That what you want might make you cry
What you need might pass you by
If you don't catch it (if you don't catch it)
(if you don't catch it)
And what you need ironically
Will turn out what you want to be
If you just let it (if you just let it)
If you just let it (if you just let it)

See what you want might make you cry
What you need might pass you by
If you don't catch it (if you don't catch it)
(if you don't catch it)
And what you need ironically

Will turn out what you want to be
If you just let it (if you just let it)
If you just let it (if you just let it)

[Chorus]

When it hurts so bad (when it hurts so bad)
When it hurts so bad (when it hurts so bad)
Why's it feel so good? (when it hurts so bad)
(When it hurts so bad)
(When it hurts so bad)

When it hurts so bad (when it hurts so bad)
When it hurts so bad (when it hurts so bad)
Why's it feel so good? (when it hurts so bad)
(When it hurts so bad)
(When it hurts so bad)

When it hurts so bad (when it hurts so bad)
So bad (when it hurts so bad)
(When it hurts so bad)
(When it hurts so bad)

I USED TO LOVE HIM

[Intro]

Now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
Now I don't

[Verse 1: Lauryn Hill]

As I look at what I've done
The type of life that I've lived

How many things I pray the father will forgive
One situation involved a young man
He was the ocean and I was the sand
He stole my heart like a thief in the night
Dulled my senses blurred my sight

[Chorus]

I used to love him but now I don't
Now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
Now I don't

[Verse 2: Mary J. Blige & Lauryn Hill]

I chose the road of passion and pain (passion and pain)
Sacrificed too much and waited in vain
Gave up my power ceased being queen
Addicted to love like the drug of a fiend
See, torn and confused wasted and used
Reached the crossroad which path would I choose
Stuck and frustrated I waited, debated
For something to happen that just wasn't fated
Thought what I wanted was something I needed
When momma said no I just should have heeded
Misled I bled 'till the poison was gone
And out of the darkness arrived the sweet dawn

[Chorus]

Now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
Now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't

Now I don't

[Verse 3: Lauryn Hill & Mary J. Blige]

Father you saved me and you showed me that life
Was much more than being some foolish man's wife
Showed me that love was respect and devotion
Greater than planets and deeper than any oceans
See, my soul was weary but now it's replenished
Content because that part of my life is finished
I see him sometimes and the look in his eye
Is one of a man who's lost treasures untold
But my heart is gold I took back my soul
And totally let my creator control
The life which was his, the life which was his to begin with

[Chorus]

Now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
Now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
Now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
Now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
Now I don't

[Outro]

I used to love him but now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
I used to love him but now I don't
See, I used to love him

FORGIVE THEM FATHER

[Intro: Shelly Thunder]

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us

Although them again we will never, never, never trust

Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo!

Them nuh know what them do

Dig out your eye, while I'm sticking like glue

Fling, skin, grin, while them plotting for you, true!

[Chorus: Lauryn Hill & Shelly Thunder]

Forgive them father for they know not what they do

(Me a tell you, dem nuh know)

Forgive them father for they know not what they do

(Fi be real, them nuh have a clue!)

[Verse 1: Lauryn Hill]

Beware the false motives of others

Be careful of those who pretend to be brothers

And you never suppose it's those who are closest to you

To you

They say all the right things, to gain their position

Then use your kindness as their ammunition

To shoot you down in the name of ambition, they do

Ohhh

[Chorus: Lauryn Hill]

Forgive them father for they know not what they do

Forgive them father for they know not what they do

[Verse 2: Lauryn Hill]

Why every Indian wanna be the chief?
Feed a man 'til he full and he still want beef
Give me grief, try to tie off my piece
Why for you to increase, I must decrease?
If I treat you kindly, does it mean that I'm weak?
You hear me speak and think I won't take it to the streets
I know enough cats that don't turn the other cheek
But I try to keep it civilized, like Menelik
And other African czars, observing stars with war scars
Get yours in this capitalistic system
So many caught or got bought you can't list them
How you gon' idolize the missing?
To survive is to stay alive in the face of opposition
Even when they coming, gunning I stand position
L's known the mission since conception
Let's free the people from deception
If you looking for the answers then you gotta ask the questions
And when I let go, my voice echoes through the ghetto
Sick of men trying to pull strings like Geppetto
Why black people always be the ones to settle?
March through these streets like Soweto, uhh

Like Cain and Abel, Caesar and Brutus
Jesus and Judas, backstabbers do this

[Chorus: Lauryn Hill]

Forgive them father for they know not what they do
Forgive them father for they know not what they do

[Verse 3: Lauryn Hill]

It took me a little while to discover

Wolves in sheep coats who pretend to be lovers
Men who lack conscience will even lie to themselves, to themselves
A friend once said, and I found to be true
That everyday people, they lie to God too
So what makes you think, that they won't lie to you?

[Chorus: Lauryn Hill & Shelly Thunder]
Forgive them father for they know not what they do
(Forgive them, forgive them)
Forgive them father for they know not what they do
(Forgive them, forgive them)

[Verse 4: Shelly Thunder & Lauryn Hill]
Gwan like dem love you, while dem rip you to shreds
Trample pon yuh heart, and leff you fi dead
Dem a yuh friend, who you depend pon, from way back when
([?] to grace)
But if you, gi' dem yuh back, then you must meet yuh end
Dem nuh know what dem do do
(Who's gonna be the one?)
Dem nuh know what dem do do
(Gotta be the one to say)
Dem nuh know, dem nuh know, dem nuh know, dem nuh know
Dem nuh know what dem do do
(Oh, yeah, oh)

EVERY GHETTO, EVER CITY

[Verse 1]
I was just a little girl
Skinny legs, a press and curl
My mother always thought I'd be a star

But way before the record deals
Streets that nurtured Lauryn Hill
Made sure that I'd never go too far

[Chorus]

Every ghetto, every city
And suburban place I been
Make me recall my days, in New Jerusalem

[Verse 2]

Story starts in Hootaville
Grew up next to Ivy Hill
When kids were stealing quartervilles for fun
"Kill the Guy" in Carter Park
Rode a Mongoose 'til it's dark
Watching kids show off the stolen ones

[Chorus]

Every ghetto, every city
And suburban place I been
Make me recall my days, in the New Jerusalem

[Refrain]

You know it's hot
Don't forget, what you got
Looking back.. looking back, looking back, looking back
You know it's hot
Don't forget, what you got
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back

[Verse 3]

Bag of Bontons, twenty cents and a nickel (well that's a quarter)
Springfield Ave. had the best popsicles
Saturday morning cartoons and Kung-Fu (wuh-TAH!)
Main street roots tonic with the dreds
A beef patty and some coco bread
Move the patch from my Lee's to the tongue of my shoes
'Member, FreLNg-Huysen used to have the bomb leather
Back when Doug Fresh and Slick Rick was together
Looking at the crew, we thought we'd all live forever

[Refrain]

You know it's hot
Don't forget, what you got
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back
You know it's hot
Don't forget, what you got
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back

[Verse 4]

Drill teams on Munn street
'Member when Hawthorne and Chancellor had beef
Moving Records was on Central Ave
I was there at dancing school
South Orange Ave. at Borlin pool
Unaware of what we didn't have
Writing my friends' names on my jeans with a marker
July 4th races outside Parker
Fireworks at Martin Stadium
The Untouchable P.S.P
Where all them crazy nig-gaz be
And car thieves got away through Irvington

Hillside brings beef with the cops
Self Destruction record drops
And everybody's name was Muslim (children playing, women producing)
Sensations and eighty-eight
Attracted kids from out of state
And everybody used to do the wop (wop it out, wop it out, wop it out)
Jack ya jack ya jack ya body
Nah, the BizMark used to amp up the party
I wish those days, they didn't stop

[Chorus]

Every ghetto, every city
And suburban place I been
Make me recall my days, in New Jerusalem

[Refrain]

You know it's hot
Don't forget, what you got
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back
You know it's hot
Don't forget, what you got
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back
You know it's hot
Don't forget, what you got
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back

[Outro]

Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back
Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back

Looking back, looking back, looking back, looking back

NOTHING EVEN MATTERS

[Intro]

Whoa, ooh, umm, yeah, yeah

Whoa, ooh, whoa, ow yeah

Yeah, yeah, yeah, oh, oh, oh

[Verse 1: Lauryn Hill]

Now the skies could fall

Not even if my boss should call

The world it seems so very small

'Cause nothing even matters at all

See nothing even matters

See nothing even matters at all

Nothing even matters

Nothing even matters at all

[Verse 2: D'Angelo]

See, I don't need no alcohol

Your love make me feel ten feet tall (Yeah)

Without it I'd go through withdrawal

'Cause nothing even matters at all

Nothing even matters

Nothing even matters at all

Nothing even matters

Nothing matters at all

[Verse 3: Lauryn Hill]

These buildings could drift out to sea

Some natural catastrophe

Still, there's no place I'd rather be
'Cause nothing even matters to me
See nothing even matters (Yeah)
See nothing even matters to me
Nothing even matters
Nothing even matters to me

[Verse 4: D'Angelo]

You're part of my identity
I sometimes have a tendency
To look at you religiously (Baby, baby)
'Cause nothing even matters, to me
Nothing even matters
Nothing even matters to me
Said it don't matter, baby, baby
Don't matter

[Verse 5: Lauryn Hill]

Now you won't find me at no store
I have no time for manicures
With you it's never either-or
Cause nothing even matters no more
See nothing it don't matter
See nothing even matters no more
Nothing even matters
Nothing even matters no more

[Verse 6: D'Angelo]

Now my team could score
And make it to the Final Four
Just repossessed my four by four

'Cause nothing even matters no more
(No more, no more, no more)
Nothing even matters
Nothing even matters no more
Nothing even matters
No, no more

[Outro: Lauryn Hill & D'Angelo]

To me, to me, to me, to me
To me, to me, to me, to me to me to me
(Freestyle singing to end)

EVERYTHING IS EVERYTHING

[Chorus 1]

Everything is everything
What is meant to be, will be
After winter, must come spring (must come spring)
Change, it comes eventually
Everything is everything
What is meant to be, will be
After winter, must come spring (must come)
Change, it comes eventually

[Verse 1]

I wrote these words (I wrote these words) for everyone who struggles in their youth
Who won't accept deception, in instead of what is truth
It seems we lose the game
Before we even start to play
Who made these rules? (Who made these rules?)
We're so confused (We're so confused)
Easily led astray

Let me tell ya that...

[Chorus 2]

Everything is everything
Everything is everything
Everything is everything (everything)
After winter, must come spring
Everything is everything

[Verse 2]

Our philosophy
Possibly speak tongues
Beat drum, Abyssinian, street Baptist
Rap this in fine linen, from the beginning
My practice extending across the atlas
I begat this
Flipping in the ghetto on a dirty mattress
You can't match this rapper slash actress
More powerful than two Cleopatras
Bomb graffiti on the tomb of Nefertiti
MCs ain't ready to take it to the Serengeti
My rhymes is heavy like the mind of sister Betty (EL Shabazz!)
L-Boogie spars with stars and constellations
Then came down for a little conversation
Adjacent to the king, fear no human being
Roll with cherubims to Nassau Coliseum
Now hear this mixture, where Hip Hop meets scripture
Develop a negative into a positive picture

[Chorus 1]

Now everything is everything

What is meant to be, will be (what is meant to be)
After winter, must come spring (must come spring)
Change, it comes eventually (change, it comes eventually)

[Verse 3]

Sometimes it seems
We'll touch that dream
But things come slow or not at all
And the ones on top, won't make it stop
(won't make it stop)
So convinced that they might fall
Let's love ourselves and we can't fail
To make a better situation (better situation)
Tomorrow, our seeds will grow
All we need is dedication
Let me tell ya that

[Chorus 2]

Everything is everything
Everything is everything
Everything is everything (everything is everything)
After winter, must come spring
Everything is everything (everything is everything)

[Chorus 1]

Everything is everything
What is meant to be, will be
After winter, (after winter) must come spring (must come)
Change, it comes eventually

THE MISEDUCATION OF LAURYN HILL

Verse 1]

My world it moves so fast today
The past it seems so far away
And life squeezes so tight that I can't breathe
And every time I try to be, what someone else has thought of me
So caught up, I wasn't able to achieve

[Chorus]

But deep in my heart, the answer it was in me
And I made up my mind to define my own destiny

[Verse 2]

I look at my environment
And wonder where the fire went
What happened to everything we used to be
I hear so many cry for help
Searching outside of themselves
Now I know that his strength is within me

[Chorus]

And deep in my heart, the answer it was in me
And I made up my mind to define my own destiny

And deep in my heart...

And deep in my heart, the answer it was in me
And I made up my mind to define my own destiny

CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF OF YOU

[Chorus]

You're just too good to be true
Can't take my eyes off of you
You'd be like heaven to touch (heaven to touch)
I wanna hold you so much (hold you so much)
At long last love has arrived
And I thank God I'm alive
You're just too good to be true
Can't take my eyes off of you

[Verse]

Pardon the way that I stare (the way that I stare)
There's nothing else to compare
The sight of you leaves me weak
There are no words left to speak (words left to speak)
But if you feel like I feel
Please let me know that it's real
You're just too good to be true
Can't take my eyes off of you

[Hook]

I need you baby, and if it's quite all right
I need you baby, to warm a lonely night
I love you baby, trust in me when I say it's okay
Oh pretty baby, don't let me down, I pray
Oh pretty baby, now that I found you, stay
And let me love you, oh baby let me love you, oh baby...

[Chorus]

You're just too good to be true
Can't take my eyes off of you (eyes off of you)
You'd be like heaven to touch
I wanna hold you so much (hold you so much)

At long last love has arrived
And I thank God I'm alive
You're just too good to be true
Can't take my eyes off of you

[Hook x2]

I need you baby, and if it's quite all right
I need you baby, to warm a lonely night
I love you baby, trust in me when I say it's okay
Oh pretty baby, don't let me down, I pray
Oh pretty baby, now that I found you, stay
And let me love you, oh baby let me love you, oh baby...
I need you baby, and if it's quite all right
I need you baby, to warm a lonely night
I love you baby, trust in me when I say it's okay
Oh pretty baby, don't let me down, I pray
Oh pretty baby, now that I found you, stay
And let me love you, oh baby let me love you, oh baby...

TELL HIM

[Intro]

Yo, he-he, tell him um, (Huuu)
It's like, uhh, you know, uhh
Sweet, sweet, sweet
Tell him
Uhh
Mmm-m-m-m

[Verse 1]

Let me be patient let me be kind

Make me unselfish without being blind
Though I may suffer, I'll envy it not
And endure what comes (Daah)
'Cause he's all that I got (Uuu) and tell him (Aha)

[Refrain]

Tell him I need him (Yeah)
Tell him I love him (Tell him who it hit)
And it'll be alright (It'll be alright)
And tell him (Tell him)
Tell him I need him (Be alright)
Tell him I love him (Tell him I love him)
It'll be alright (Be alright)

[Verse 2]

Now I may have faith (I may have faith) to make mountains fall
(To make mountains fall)
But if I lack love, then I am nothin' at all
I can give away (I can give away) everything I possess
But left without love then I have no happiness
I know I'm imperfect (I know I'm imperfect), and not without sin
(Not without sin, nah)
But now that I'm older all childish things end (Ohh)
And tell him (Tell him)

[Refrain]

Tell him I need him (Tell him I need him)
Tell him I love him (Ha-ah)
And it'll be alright (It'll be alright)
Tell him (Tell him)
Tell him I need him (Tell him)

Tell him I love him (Tell him) (Be alright)

It'll be alright (Be alright)

Oh yeah

[Bridge]

I'll never be jealous (I'll never be jealous)

And I won't be too proud (Houu)

'Cause love is not boastful (Noo)

Oooh and love is not loud

Tell him I need him (Tell him I need him)

Tell him I love him (Tell him I love him)

Everything is gonna (Everything), is gonna be (Everything) alright

Ya-eee-ya-eee-ya-eee-ya-eee-ya-eee-ya-eee-ya-eee

Uuu-u-uu (Uuu)

Yeah, yeah, ooh yeah

Uuu-u-uu (Uuu)

Ah-ah-ah

[Verse 3]

Now I may have wisdom (I may have wisdom)

And knowledge on Earth

But if I speak wrong, uuh, then what is it worth? (What is it worth?)

See what we now know is nothing compared

To the love that was shown when our lives were spared (Uuh)

And tell him (Tell him)

[Refrain]

Tell him I need him (Tell him I need him)

Tell him I love him (Love him)

And it'll be alright (It'll be alright)

Oh-oh-oh

Tell him (Tell him)

Tell him I need him (I need you)
Tell him I love him (Be alright)
Be alright (Be alright)
Oh-oh-oh (It's gonna be alright)
Tell oh-oh him (It's gonna be alright, in the morning) (Tell him)
Tell him I need him, oh (Be alright)
It'll be alright (It's gonna be alright)
Oh-oh-oh, yeah, yeah (I need you)
When the, when the evening comes, oh
In the night time
In the morning
In the evening baby tell him
Tell him

APPENDIX I: MTV UNPLUGGED 2.0

INTRO

Oh no! Not you! What are you doing here? Oh boy it's gonna be hard now. Can we put him in the back? Robin, Robin, Robin...

I used to get dressed for y'all, now I don't do that no more, I'm sorry. It's a new day, I don't have the energy

Anybody got a joke?

Ok so, these are brand new songs that very few people have heard, very much about, you know, what I've been going through and what I've been learning -- a lot of wonderful life lessons, you know, that aren't easy to come by but you're very blessed after you realize why you had to go through what you had to go through

It's just very important that you really listen to the words, you know, and if you have a hard time to hear what I'm saying please just raise your hand, you know, or something, object! You guys ready in there? (All set) Ok

And you know, it's real interesting because I used to be a performer, and I really don't consider myself a performer so much anymore. I'm really just... I'm sharing, you know, more or less the music that I've been given. But if I stop, if I start, if I... you know... feel like saying, "Baby, baby, baby" for eighteen bars -- whatever, you know? I just... I do that

So You guys are cool? [Yeah!] Ok I'm talking to people in my head too. It's alright though. Let's just warm up a little bit. I'm just gonna finish sucking on my lozenger

Ok, so this particular song is called "Mr. Intentional." □ We'll see. We all tuned up now □? Let's just warm up a little bit

Mr. Intentional

[Verse 1]

See, the road to hell is paved with good intentions
Can't you tell, the way they have to mention
How they helped you out?
You're such a hopeless victim!
Please don't do me any favors, Mr. Intentional

[Verse 2]

All their talk is seasoned to perfection
The road they walk, commanding your affection
They need to be needed, deceived by motivation
An opportunity to further situation
Why they're so important is without explanation
Please don't patronize me, Mr. Intentional

[Verse 3]

We give rise to ego by being insecure

The advice that we go desperately searching for
The subconscious effort to support our paramour
To engage in denial, to admit we're immature
Validating lies, Mr. Intentional
Open up yours eyes, Mr. Intentional

[Verse 4]

Stuck in a system that seeks to suck your blood
Held emotionally hostage by what everybody does
Counting all the money that you give them just because
Exploiting ignorance in the name of love
Stop before you drop because that's just the way it was
Please don't justify me, Mr. Intentional
Oh one-dimensional, Mr. Intentional
Oh don't you do me any favors

[Verse 5]

Wake up, you've been sleeping
Take up your bed and walk
Stop blaming other people
Oh it's nobody else's fault
Accept the truth about you
You know that life goes on without you
And your expensive misinventions
Disguising your intentions
Don't worship my hurt feelings, Mr. Intentional

[Verse 6]

See, I know you can't help me, Mr. Intentional
The only help I need to live is unprofessional
The only wealth I have to give is not material
And if you need much more than that, I'm not available
Please don't entertain me, Mr. Intentional
Oh I don't need your sympathy, Mr. Intentional

Stay away from me, Mr. Intentional
So one-dimensional, Mr. Promotional
Mr. Emotional, Mr. Intentional

ADAM LIVES IN THEORY

[Verse 1]

Adam lives in theory
Trying to turn stone into bread
Masquerading like he got it figured out
Cut off from the sunshine, only smart in his own head
Leaving his descendants to hope and doubt
Left to his devices, those worthless sacrifices
Praying to the altar of himself
Making pilgrimages, thinking he's religious
Like he's got all the light, and no one else
He takes the unsuspected
Cause he knows they're not connected
And he shows them how to be just as he is
Virtually real, and commercially appealed
To the lust of all the people where he lives
Eve was so naive, blinded by the pride and greed
Wanting to be intellectual
Drifting from the way she got turned down one day
And now she thinks that she's bisexual
Caught up in emotion
Burning up in her devotion
To the king of exploitation in the field
She handed him her virtue
Cause he told her "I won't hurt you"
So she lay with him to see how good it feels

[Hook]

Now can you tell me, what, what we gonna do now?
Where we gonna go now? What we gonna say now?

Now can you tell me, what, what we gonna do now?
Where we gonna go now? What we gonna say now?

[Verse 2]

Now after the sensation, and the empty fornication
She brought affection home
Into her bed, quickly multiplying
Now the 3 of them are dying by the poison she perceived to be good (head!)
Now Eve and her husband are perverted in their judgment
Cause everything appears to be the same
They entertain suggestion
Next time just use protection
Desiring to cover up their shame
But much to their demise, poor decision closed their eyes
To the very antidote to their dilemma
Burning in their lust
Both of them adulterous
Destroying the original agenda
Praying to the sky, in order to maintain a lie
They exhausted every possible conclusion
They can't even entertain the solution
In a brain filled with vain information and pollution
Hiding from the truth
He provided an excuse to explain away his desperate situation
When confronted, blamed his wife
Giving birth to carnal life
Refusing to acknowledge what he done
Now if we can agree with who created us to be
Who says we're guilty everyone before his eyes
Making no exceptions, since the day of our conception
Predisposed to hating truth, and loving lies

[Hook]

Now can you tell me, what, what we gonna do now?

Where we gonna go now? What we gonna say now?
Now can you tell me, what, what we gonna do now?
Where we gonna go now? What we gonna say now?

[Verse 3]

Stop walking in pride, let the thief be crucified
Un-learn everything you know, and let Him teach you
Line upon line, and precept upon precept, say goodbye
To this decaying social system
He wants to know how far we're willing to go
If we love him like we say we do
He will try us
Just you don't regress
Or slip into hopelessness
Once He's satisfied His love
He won't deny us

[Hook - Shift]

And then He'll tell us, what, what we gonna do now?
Where we gonna go now? What we gonna say now?
And then He'll tell us, what, what we gonna do now?
Where we gonna go now? What we gonna say now?

OH JERUSALEM

[Intro]

Oh Jerusalem
Oh Jerusalem
Oh Jerusalem
Oh Jerusalem

[Verse 1]

Realizing that there's no place else to go
And there's nobody I know who can help me
Textbook solutions are so improbable

Cause everybody else is just as empty

Naked as the day that I was born, I tried to hide
Behind education and philosophy
Hopeless explanation to describe a situation
I can't see because the world's on top of me

[Verse 2]

Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me
From the body of this death?
Freeing me from dust, and the superficial trust
Of an enemy that seeks to take my breath

Failing to connect cause I'm morally defect
By reason of the God inside my head
Causing me to see only what pertains to me
Believing I'm alive when I'm still dead

[Verse 3]

Limited to earth, unable to find out my worth
Cause I can't see past my own vanity
If I'm not included, then I just have to remove it
From my mind because it has to be insanity

Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me
From the body of this death?

[Verse 4]

Can I even factor, that I've only been an actor
In this staged interpretation of this day
Focused on the shadow, with my back turned to the light
Too intelligent to see it's me in the way

What a paradox, having God trapped in a box

All this time professing to be spiritual
Naturally pretending, that I'm actually defending
God through my facade, don't need material

[Hook]

Oh Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness
That thou mayest be saved from thy deception
How long shall thy faith lodge lies within thee?
Oh Jerusalem, keeping thee from perfection

[Verse 5]

Submit to truth, leave the deception of thy youth
So we could walk in the council of authority
Forget the proof, our generation so aloof
Only follow in the steps of the majority

Trust in the Lord with all thy heart
And lay not to thine, oh an understanding in all thy ways
Acknowledge Him, and He shall direct our paths
Be not wise in thine own eyes and you can follow him

We judge and condemn, just as ignorant as them
Who religion tells us that we should ignore
Perpetrating we're in covenant with Him
Exposed by the very things that we adore

[Verse 6]

We grin and shake hands, then lay ambush for the man
Who has a different point of view than us
Infuriated cause he doesn't understand
Bringing up those things we don't want to discuss

Why still do evil, we don't know how to do good
Walking on in darkness running from the light

Led to believe, because we live in neighborhoods
Telling us what's going on will be alright

Oh so repressed, so convinced that I was blessed
When I played with my game of Monopoly
Oh to suggest, that my life is still a mess
Who reveal the pride I'm hiding is what's stopping me

[Hook]

Oh Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness
That thou mayest be saved from thy deception
How long shall thy faith lodge lies within thee?
Oh Jerusalem, keeping thee from perfection

[Verse 7]

Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear
Fruit of itself except in the vine
I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that lives in me
And I in him, the same bring forth much fruit

Without me, you can do nothing
Oh Jerusalem, you're traditions have deceived you
I've chosen you, you haven't chosen me
Do whatsoever, you asking my name he may give to you

But in vain they call my name
Teaching doctrines just the same
Justified among themselves
But God know with the heart, what man esteemed as smart
Is an abomination to Emmanuel

[Verse 8]

Just repent, turn from selfish motivation
So iniquity will not cause your demise

Make you a new heart and a new spirit
For why would he die? Oh Jerusalem, please tell me why

I have no pleasure in the death of him to die
Says the Lord God where forth turn yourselves and live
It's not the talkers, but the walkers and His Word
Are the only ones the Father will forgive

[Hook]

Oh Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness
That thou mayest be saved from thy deception
How long shall thy faith lodge lies within thee?
Oh Jerusalem, keeping thee from perfection

[Outro]

Oh Jerusalem

WAR IN THE MIND

[Hook]

Everybody knows that they guilty
Everybody knows that they've lied
Everybody knows that they guilty
Resting on their conscience eating their inside
It's freedom, said it's freedom time now
It's freedom, said it's freedom time now
Time to get free, or give yourselves up now
It's freedom, said it's freedom time

[Verse]

Yo, there's a war in the mind, over territory
For the dominion
Who will dominate the opinion
Skisms and isms, keepin' us in forms of religion
Conformin' our vision

To the world church's decision
Trapped in a section
Submitted to committee election
Moral infection
Epidemic lies and deception
Insurrection
Of the highest possible order
Destortin' our tape recorders
From hearin' like under water
Beyond the borders
Find the sin in disorder
Bound by the strategy
A systematic depravity
Heavy as gravity
Head first in the cavity
Without a bottom
A fate, worse than Sodom
What's got 'em, drunk off the spirits
Truth comes, we can't hear it
When you've been, programmed to fear it
I had a vision I was fallin' in indescision
Apallin', callin' religious
Some program on television
How can, dominant wisdom
Be recognized in the system
Of Anti-Christ, the majority rules
Intelligent fools
PhDs in illusion
Masters of mass confusion
Bachelors in past delusion
Now who you choosin'?
The head, or the tail
The bloodshed of the male
Or confidence in the tale

Conferences is Yale
Discussin' doctrines of Baal
Causin' people to fail
Keepin' the third in jail
His word has nailed
Everything to the tree
Severing all of me
From all that I used to be
Formless and void
Totally paranoid
Enjoy darkness as Lord
Keepin' me from the sword
Block for mercy
Bitter than cerasee
Hungry and thirsty
For good meat we would eat
And still, dined at the table of deceit
How incomplete
From confrontation to retreat
We belong, in true enemies defeat
Destitute in a necessity
Causin' desperation to get the best of me
Punishment 'til there was nothing left of me
Realizin' the inescapable death of me
No options in the valley of decision
The only doctrine, supernatural circumcision
Inwardly, only water can purge the heart
From words to fiery darts
Thrown by the workers of the arts
Iniquity, shapen in
There's no escapin' when
Your whole philosophy is paper thin
In vanity
The wide road is insanity

Could it be all of humanity
Picture that
Scripture that
The origin of a man's heart is black
How can we show up for
An invisible war
Preoccupied with a shadow, makin' love with a whore
Achin' in sores
Babylon, the great mystery
Mother of human history
System of social sorcery
Our present condition
Needs serious recognition
Where there's no repentance there can be no admission
And that sentence, more serious than Vietnam
The atom bomb and Saddam and Minister Farrakhan
What's goin' on, what's a priority to you
By what authority do to you
The majority hasn't a clue
We majored in curses
Search the chapters, check the verses
Recapture the land
Remove the mark from off of our hands
So we can stand
In agreement with his command
Everything else is damned
Let them with ears understand
Everything else is damned, let them with ears understand

[Hook]

It's freedom, said it's freedom time now
It's freedom, said it's freedom time now
It's freedom, I'mma be who I am
It's freedom time, said it's freedom time

Everybody knows that they've lied
Everybody knows that they've perpetrated inside
Everybody knows that they guilty, yes
Resting on their conscience eating their insides
Get free, be who you're supposed to be
Freedom, said it's freedom time now
Freedom, said it's freedom time
Freedom, freedom time now

I FIND IT HARD TO SAY (REBEL)

[Verse 1]

I find it hard to say
That everything is alright
Don't look at me that way
Like everything is alright
'Cause my own eyes can see
Through all your false pretenses
But what you fail to see
Is all the consequences
You think our lives are cheap
And easy to be wasted
As history repeats
So foul you can taste it

[Refrain]

And while the people sleep
Too comfortable to face it
His life's so incomplete
And nothing can replace it
And while the people sleep
Too comfortable to face it
Your life's so incomplete
And nothing can replace it

[Verse 2]

Fret not thyself I say
Against these laws of man
'Cause like the Bible says:
His blood is on their hands

[Chorus]

And what I gotta say
And what I gotta say, is rebel
While today is still today, choose well
And what I gotta say, is rebel
It can't go down this way
Choose well, choose well, choose well
Choose well, choose well, choose well

[Refrain]

And while the people sleep
Too comfortable to face it
Your lives are so incomplete
And nothing, and no one, can replace it
No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no

[Chorus]

And what I gotta say, and what I gotta say
And what I gotta say, and what I gotta say
And what I gotta say, and what I gotta say
And what I gotta say, and what I gotta say
Is rebel – rebel, rebel, rebel, rebel, rebel, rebel
Rebel, rebel, rebel, rebel, rebel
Repent, the day is far too spent – rebel, rebel!
Wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up
Wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up and rebel
We must destroy in order to rebuild
Wake up, you might as well

Oh are you... oh are you satisfied?
Oh are you satisfied? Rebel, ohhh, rebel!

[Outro]

Why don't you rebel?
Why don't you rebel?
Why don't you rebel?

I'm fading myself down now

JUST LIKE WATER

[Spoken Intro]

[Verse 1]

Moving down the streams of my lifetime
Pulls the fascination in my sleeve
Cooling off the fire of my longing
Boiling off my cold within his heat
Melting down the walls of inhibition
Evaporating all of my fears
Baptizing me into complete submission
Dissolving my condition with his tears

[Hook]

He's just like the water
I ain't felt this way in years
He's just like the water
I ain't felt this way in years

[Verse 2]

Coursing through my senses, he's prevailing
Floating through the space of my design
Drowning me to find my inside sailing
Drinking in the mainstream of mind

Filling up the cup of my emotions
Spilling over into all I do
If I only I could get lost in his ocean
Surviving on the thought of loving you

[Hook]

He's just like the water
I ain't felt this way in years
He's just like the water, the water
I ain't felt this way in years

[Verse 3]

Bathing in the fountain of his essence
He causes my expression to remain
Humbled on a mountain by his presence
Washing my intentions with his name
Sealing off the floodgates of his passions
Saving all his liquid for his own
Moisturizing me to satisfaction
In my imagination? No no!
He's pouring out his soul to me for hours and hours
Drawing out my nature with his hands
Yearning I'm so thirsty for his power
Burning to be worthy of his land

[Hook]

He's just like the water
I ain't felt this way in years
He's just like the water
I ain't felt this way in years

[Bridge]

Cleaning me
He's purging me

And moving me around
He's bathing me
And he's claiming me
And moving me around
Around and around and around
And around
Watching me, claiming me
Moving me around
He's purging me
He's been cleaning me
And moving me around
And around
And around
Around
Around
Moving me around

[Spoken Outro]

I Just Want You Around

[Intro]

I just want you around
I just want you around
I just want you around
I just want you around

[Verse 1]

Thought that I had lost you
I can hardly make a sound
When I thought I couldn't hold you
Knew the world had let me down
Should have took the time to tell you
You keep my feet on the ground
I hope that you can hear me

Cause I know its not profound

[Hook]

I just want you around

I just need you around

I just want you around

I just need you around

[Verse 2]

When I thought I was without you

I got used to being down

It was my fault I used to doubt you

But that ain't me next time around

Please believe me when I tell you

Cause all my words are bound

This is my cross now let me bare it

I was lost but now I'm found-found-found

[Hook]

I just want you around

I just need you around

I just want you around

I just need you around

[Verse 3]

Took this love for granted

Kept my feelings underground

Should have watered what I planted

Should have known what I have found

I'm not used to being lonely

I don't like the way it sounds

You're the only one I know-yeah

Who don't turn my upside-down

[Hook]

I just want you around

I just need you around

I just want you around

I just need you around

I GOTTA FIND PEACE OF MIND

[Intro]

I gotta find peace of mind

I know another cord...

I gotta find peace of mind

See, this what that voice in your head says

When you try to get peace of mind...

I gotta find peace of mind, I gotta find peace of mind

[Hook]

He says it's impossible, but I know it's possible

He says it's impossible, but I know it's possible

[Verse 1]

He says there's no me without him

Please help me forget about him

He takes all my energy, trapped in my memory

Constantly holding me, constantly holding me

I need to tell you all, all the pain he's caused, mmmm

I need to tell I'm, I'm undone because, mmmm

[Hook]

He says it's impossible, but I know it's possible

He says it's impossible without him, but I know it's possible

[Verse 2]

To finally be in love, and know the real meaning of

A lasting relationship, not based on ownership

I trust every part of You, 'cause all that I...
All that You say you do
You love me despite myself, sometimes I fight myself
I just can't believe that You, would have anything to do
With someone so insecure, someone so immature
Oh You inspire me, to be the higher me

[Verse 3]

You make my desire pure, You make my desire pure
Just tell me what to say, I can't find the words to say
Please don't be mad with me, I have no identity
All that I've known is gone, all I was building on
I wanna walk with You, how do I talk to You

[Verse 4]

Touch my mouth with Your hands
Touch my mouth with Your hands
Oh I wanna understand, the meaning of Your embrace
I know now I have to face, the temptations of my past
Please don't let me disgrace, will my devotion last?
Now that I know the truth, now that it's no excuse

[Pre Hook]

Keeping me from Your love, what was I thinking of?
Holding me from Your love, what was I thinking of?
You are my peace of mind, that old me is left behind
You are my peace of mind, that old me is left behind

[Hook]

He says it's impossible, but I know it's possible
He says it's improbable, but I know it's tangible
He says it's not grab-able, but I know it's have-able

[Bridge]

'Cause anything's possible, oh anything is possible
Please come free my mind, please come meet my mind
Can you see my mind, oh
Won't you come free my mind?
Oh I know it's possible
Anything, anything, anything, anything, anything, yeah
Anything, anything, anything, anything, yeah
Anything, anything, anything, anything, anything, yeah
Oh free! Free, free, free your mind
Free, free your mind... free, free your mind
Free, free, free, free your mind
Oh, it's so possible, oh it's so possible
I'm telling you it's possible, I'm telling you it's possible
Free, free... free, free... free, free... get free now
Free, free... free, free, free, free... free, free

[Guitar Break]

[Hook]

You're my peace of mind, that old me is left behind
You're my peace of mind, you're my peace of mind
He's my peace of mind, he's my peace of mind
He's my peace of mind, he's my peace of mind

[Outro]

What a joy it is to be alive
To get another chance, yeah
Everyday's another chance
To get it right this time
Everyday's another chance
Oh what a merciful, merciful, merciful God
Oh what a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful God
[Repeat till fade]

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY / LAURYN'S SPEECH

[Hook]

It's the mystery of iniquity...
Said it's the misery of Inequity...
Said it's the history of Inequity...
When it all...
All falls down...
Telling you all...
It all falls down

[Pre-Verse]

Children...
Eat your bread
Little children...
Eat your bread
Cause it all...
All falls down...
Telling you all...
It all falls down

[Verse]

Yo! Y'all can't handle the truth in a courtroom of lies
Perjures the jurors, witness despised
Crooked lawyers, false indictments publicized
It's entertainment, the arraignments, the subpoenas
High profile gladiators in bloodthirsty arenas
Enter the Dragon, black-robe crooked-balance
Souls bought and sold and paroled for thirty talents
Court reporter catch the circus on the paper
File it in the system not acknowledged by the Maker
Swearing by the Bible blatantly blasphemous
Publicly perpetrating that "In God We Trust"
Cross-examined by a master manipulator
The faster intimidator receiving the judge's favor

Deceiving sabers doing injury to their neighbors
For status, gratis, apparatus and legal waivers
See the bailiff representing security
Holding the word of God soliciting perjury
The prosecution, political prostitution
The more money you pay, the further away solution
Legal actors, Babylon's benefactors
Masquerading as the agency for the clients
Hypocritical giants, morally non-compliant
Orally armed to do bodily harm
Polluted, recruited and suited judicial charm
And the defense isn't making any sense
Faking the confidence of escaping the consequence
That a defendant is depending on the system
Totally void of judgment purposely made to twist em'
Emotional victim blackmailed by the henchmen
Framed by intentions
Inventions whereby they lynch men
Enter the false witness slandering the accused
Planting the seed openly showing he's being used
To discredit, edit, headed for the alleged
Smearing the individual fearing the unsuspected
Expert witness (the paid authority)
Made a priority to deceive the majority
Of disinterested peers, dodging duty for years
Hating the process, waiting to be returning to their careers
Do we expect the system made for the elect
To possibly judge correct? Properly serve and protect?
Materially corrupt, spiritually amuck
Oblivious to the cause, prosperously bankrupt
Blind leading the blind, guilty never defined
Filthy as swine, a generation purin it's own mind
Legal extortion, blown out of proportion
In vein deceit, the truth is obsolete

Only two positions: victimizer or victim
Both end up in destruction trusting this crooked system
Mafia with diplomas keeping us in a coma
Trying to own a piece of the "American Corona"
The Revolving Door, insanity every floor
Skyscraping, paper chasing, what are we working for?
Empty traditions, reaching social positions
Teaching ambition to support the family superstition?
When the Son of Perdition is Commander in Chief
The standard is Thief; brethren, can we candidly speak?
Woe to the men, trusted in the chariots dem'
Leaning on horses, they run their intellectual sources
Counterfeit wisdom creating the illusion of freedom
Confusion consumes them
Every word they speak it turns them outwardly white
Internally they absent of light
Trapped in the night and bonded to the Cain of the night
Under the curse, evil men waxing more worse
Faxing the first, angelic being cast to the earth
It's time for rebirth, burnin up the branch and the root
The empty pursuits of every tree bearing the wrong fruit
Turn and be healed, let him who stole, no longer steal
Oh it's real, surrender for Jehovah is real
How long will you sleep, troubled by the thoughts that YOU keep
The idols YOU heap, causing the destruction you reap
Judgment has come, find it and return to the One
Abandon the flesh, self-interest: Broadway to death
Pride and the Greed, hide and subdividing the seed
The knowledge of Good and Evil is what caused us to lie
Caused us to die, let your emotions be crucified
Renounce all your thoughts
Repent and let your mind be re-taught
You'll find what you sought
Was based on the deception you bought

A perception of naught where the majority remains caught
Loving a lie, not realizing in Adam, all die
Loving a lie, not realizing in Adam, all die
Loving a lie, not realizing in Adam, all die
Loving a lie, not realizing in Adam, all die

[Hook]

It's the mystery of iniquity...
Said it's the history of Inequity...
Said it's the misery of Inequity...
When it all...
All falls down...
Telling you all...
It all falls down

I GET OUT

[Hook]

I get out, I'll get out of all your boxes
I get out, you can't hold me in these chains
I'll get out, Father free me from this bondage
Knowin' my condition is the reason I must change

[Verse 1]

Your stinking resolution is no type of solution
Preventing me from freedom, maintaining your pollution
I won't support your lie no more
I won't even try no more
If I have to die, oh Lord, that's how I choose to live
I won't be compromised no more
I can't be victimized no more
I just don't sympathize no more, 'cause now I understand
You just wanna use me
You say "love" then abuse me
You never thought you'd lose me

But how quickly we forget that nothin' is for certain
You thought I'd stay here hurtin'
Your guilt trip's just not workin', repressin' me to death
'Cause now I'm choosin' life, yo
I'll take the sacrifice, yo
If everything must go, then go: that's how I choose to live

[Interlude]

Heh... hehehehehe...
Ok, we gettin' there
At least I had a chunk
Aight, okay, it's how I choose to live
Hehehe, awww

[Verse 2]

No more compromises
I see past your disguises
Blinding me through mind control
Stealing my eternal soul
Appealing through material
To keep me as your slave

[Hook]

But I get out, oh, I get out of all your boxes
I'll get out, oh, you can't hold me in these chains
I get out, oh, I want out of social bondage
Knowin' my condition, oh, is the reason I must change

[Verse 3]

See, what you see is what you get
Oh, and you ain't seen nothin' yet
Oh, I don't care if you're upset
I could care less if you're upset
See, it don't change the truth

And your hurt feeling's no excuse
To keep me in this box, psychological locks
Repressin' true expression
Cementin' this repression
Promotin' mass deception
So that no one can be healed
I don't respect your system
I won't protect your system
When you talk I don't listen
Oh, let my Father's will be done

[Hook]

And just get out, oh, just get out of all these bondage
Just get out, oh, you can't hold me in these chains
Just get out, all these traditions killin' freedom
Knowin' my condition is the reason I must change

[Verse 4]

I've just accepted what you said
Keeping me among the dead
The only way to know is to walk to learn and grow
But faith is not your speed
Oh, you'd have everyone believe
That you're the sole authority
Just follow the majority
Afraid to face reality—the system is a joke
Oh, you'd be smart to save your soul
Oh, and escape this mind control
You spent your life in sacrifice to a system for the dead
Oh, are you sure, where is the passion in this living?
Are you sure it's God you serving?
Obligated to a system
Getting less then you're deserving
Who made up these schools, I say

Who made up these rules, I say
Animal conditioning, oh, just to keep us as a slave

[Hook]

Oh, just get out of this social purgatory
Just get out, all these traditions are a lie
Just get out, superstition killin' freedom
Knowin' my condition is the reason I must die, ahh

[Outro]

Just get out, just get out, just get out
Let's get out, let's get out
Knowin' my condition
Is the reason I must die, just get out

I REMEMBER

[Verse 1]

I remember
When you look into my eyes
You saw right through me
And I could not hide
I was exposed
Just like a child
All of my heart
You hold it in your hands
I'm yours to command
I'm yours to demand
I, I feel so humble
With you in my life
With you in my life

[Verse 2]

I remember
When I looked into your eyes

I saw a reflection of myself
And I could not lie
Out of control
Too weak to deny
All of myself
Is naked before you
But what can I do
There is nothing I can do
I feel so beautiful
With you in my life
With you in my life

[Outro]

I remember
I remember
I remember
I, ohh, ohh, ohh
With you in my life
With you in my life

SO MUCH THINGS TO SAY

[Intro]

Yeah, yeah yeah, yeah yeah yey
Why, why, why, why, why, why, why
Why, Why, heh

[Hook]

They've got so much things to say right now
They've got so much things to say
They've got so much things to say right now
They've got so much things to say

[Verse 1]

I'll never forget no way, how they crucified Jesus Christ

I'll never forget no way, how they sold Marcus Garvey for rice
I'll never forget no way, how they turned their backs on Paul Bogle
So don't you forget no way...
Who you are, and where you stand in the struggle

[Hook]

They've got so much things to say right now
They've got so much things to say
They've got so very many things, to say right now
They've got so much things to say

[Verse 2]

And I don't come to fight flesh and blood
But spiritual wickedness in high and low places
And don't you fight me down
I'll stand firm, and give Jah all the thanks and praises
I don't expect to be justified, by these laws of men
Though the wicked find me guilty, Jah will prove my innocency
'Cause when the rain falls, it don't, fall on one man's house top
Remember that
See when this rain falls, it don't, fall on one man's house top

[Hook]

They've got so much things to say right now
They've got so much, so much things to say
They've got, heh, so much things to say right now
They've got so, so much things to say

[Verse 3]

But let them keep talking, oh let them keep talking
'Cause non of them walking, oh non of them walking, no
And while they still talking, see I'mma be walking
I'mma be walking, so let them keep talking

[Verse 1 Reprise]

Said I never forget no way, how they crucified Jesus Christ
And I, I'll never forget, how they sold Marcus Garvey for rice
Said I, never forget, how they turned their backs on Paul Bogle
So non of you, non of you forget...
Who you are, and where you stand in the struggle

[Verse 2 Reprise]

'Cause when this rain, 'cause when this rain, rain, rain, rain, rain falls
It don't fall on one man's house, I'm telling you the rain...
I'm telling you the rain, rain, rain, rain, rain don't fall
It don't fall... they...

[Hook + Outro]

They've got, they've got, so very many things to say about me
I'm telling you lie
They, and they, and they will have so many things
They'll have so many things to say about you...
To say about you
'Cause they don't know me, know me
They don't know me, oh they don't know me, oh they don't know me
Oh they don't know me well
They, they, they, they, they, they, they don't know my Father
'Cause if they did, if they did... hey ey... theeey...
Heh..

THE CONQUERING LION / OUTRO

[Verse]

The conquering lion
Shall break every chain
The conquering lion
Shall break every chain
Give him the victory
Again and again and again and again

Give him the victory

Ohh

The conquering lion

Shall break every chain

The conquering lion

Shall break every chain

Give him victory

Again and again and again and again and again and again

Give us some victory

Ohh, yeah

Ohh, conquering lion

Shall break every chain, every chain, every chain

The conquering lion, yeah ohh

Shall break every chain

Give us some victory

We need some victory

We need some victory

Again and again and again and again

Give, give, give, us some victory

Ohh, ohh, ohh

The conquering lion

He'll break every chain

Every one of your chains, every one of your chains

The conquering lion

Hey, he's gonna break all of those chains if you just let him

Give him, give him the victory, give him the victory

Again and again and again and again

Give him the victory

Ohh, ohh, ohh

APPENDIX J: HIP HOP | SPOKE WORD | POETRY | STORYTELLING
CIRRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Next Step: Evangelism and Transformation

Following the conclusion of my DMin studies I will be working with my pastor to refine and begin the implementation of HSPS at Saint James.

SAMPLE HSPS CRE MODULE - CIRRICULUM

The curriculum is designed to educate the faith-based community youth about the intersectionality of Religion and Hip Hop. The ministry is designed to examine Hip Hop history, culture (music, dress, language, etc.). Session / modular will be created to discuss

1. Rap and Hip-Hop correlations / differences / history
2. Gender issues in Hip Hop culture
3. Religion and Hip Hop
4. Homosexuality issues in the Hip Hop culture
5. Mass Media and Hip-Hop culture
6. Discuss the implementation and connecting of religion and Hip Hop

Learning Outcome

1. Understanding the doctrine of the AME Church
2. Traditional churches response and Hip-Hop relationship to the Gospel of liberation.
3. The impact Hip Hop has had on cultures outside of the United States
4. Spiritual and liberating aspects of Hip Hop Culture

COURSE MATERIALS

- Original Poems – Katherine Myers
- Gospel According to Katherine
- Online Articles / Videos
- Books & Materials Hip Hop

Note: All material will be used during Units / Session to engage and spark conversation regarding issues of gender, sex, violence, etc. Participants will be required to create writing assignments where they engage the arts and meaning of liberation. Poetry, music, dance.

HIP HOP | SPOKE WORD | POETRY | STORYTELLING CIRRICULUM
FRAMEWORK



**HIP HOP | SPOKEN WORD | POETRY AND STORY-TELLING: A
PEDAGOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION, LIBERATION AND
RECONCILIATION:**

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

KATHERINE J. MYERS

DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DMIN PROJECT 2019

INTRODUCTION:

From cradle to grave the acquisition of knowledge which occurs through one's socialization, personal context and experiences can be described as an educational experience and process. The visible church of Christ is a complex organism commonly referenced as the church, (kupiakov) the Lord's House. The church however, cannot be simplified to the edifice where an assembly of persons gather to worship; the church represents the people and the communities we serve. Creating an environment of context for change (transformation) requires a radical approach to Christian religious education and religious pedagogy. In this postmodern Western society, the AMEC book of polity continues to use exclusive language such as "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men..." and "God having instituted the church on earth, in which men are to receive the means of grace and salvation..." *The Machinery of Methodism - Methodist Polity*.¹⁷⁷ The current Sunday School material has been rebranded 'Discipleship and Mission', and the AME Book of Doctrine and Discipline has been updated to include the word discipleship. I am suggesting purely changing the printed language isn't enough for change which is transformative mentally, spiritually and physically. I am also not suggesting the shift to inclusive language will have the net result of developing Christian disciples or extend church growth.

This Christian religious educational framework is designed to enhance the ecclesial mission of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church as we witness to others about the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The primary teaching tools promoted by the AMEC are outdated and contain misogynists' undertones and sexist principles. Many of our local AME churches have invested most of their resources attempting to maintain the congregations and memberships they already have in house and not enough time has been place on

¹⁷⁷ Henry McNeal Turner, *The Genius and Theory of Methodist Polity: Or, The Machinery of Methodism, Practically Illustrated Through a Series of Questions and Answers*, Publishing Department, A.M.E Church, 1885.

understanding of why visitors don't return, and members rarely attend the educational ministries such as Sunday school or Bible study.

This Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story Telling pedagogy curriculum is a radical and courageous attempt to produce a body of work which seeks to bridge the gap, better our contemporary society and the beloved church and surrounding communities we serve. The AMEC endeavors to resource, research and renew its Christian educational department. This Christian religious educational curriculum framework endeavors to recontextualize Christian education pedagogy to compliment resourcing, researching and renewing the AME Christian education department. The Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story Telling pedagogy curriculum is a theological framework designed to support church growth and evangelism, to develop discipleship and spiritual formation and to aid our church and communities in reconciliation and liberation.

Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story Telling pedagogy builds on the foundation of the teachings and ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and is rooted in God's words found in the Holy Scriptures. The curriculum is design for all ages with active and engaged learning as the primary process and mode of knowledge transfer for holistic transformation. The mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed. To that end this pedagogical framework utilizes the 'LIBERATION' methodology:

- Love the Lord & Love They Neighbor as Thyself
- Incarnation of Jesus Christ
- Baptism
- Eucharist and Eternal Life
- Resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Atonement of our sins
- Ten Commandments
- Intersectionality
- Old Testament
- New Testament

The historical Jesus of Nazareth was a leader, preacher and rabbi (teacher) with a simple gospel, Love. The journey to personal and communal liberation, discipleship and spiritual formation begins with the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) and submitting our wills and lives to Christ. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ was Gods salvific plan of redemption for all who repent of our sins, believe in Jesus Christ and then are Baptized in His name. The eucharist is a symbolic reminder for all whom believe in Jesus of the everlasting promise of the gift of Eternal life. The birth, death and subsequent Resurrection of Jesus Christ was God's plan to heal, deliver and set free humanity via the Atonement of our sins via the blood shed on Calvary. Times have changed yet the word of God remains forever, the Ten commandments are a catalyst and lens through which we in the 21th century should exegesis the sacred scriptures. As we attempt to articulate 'what thus said the Lord', we must consider how Intersectionality can aid in our exegesis of the Old and New Testaments?

IDEOLOGY BEHIND THE CURRICULUM

What should Christian religious education look like in a pluralist, technologically and socially driven postmodern society? Religious instruction is paramount to the establishment of our faith and our sojourn to discipleship, reconciliation and spiritual formation. The spiritual principles of meditations, fasting and praying are tools for individuals and communal growth and development. Church growth and evangelism has not left enough time in the life of the AME local churches to concentrate on Christian religious education. Far too often more emphasis is placed on the liturgy and the worship experience leaving new members ill equipped for evangelism work. Christian religious education should be an invitation to an encounter with and to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, the primary goal should not be indoctrination.

The negative connotation associated with this word has a lot to do with the definition "the process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically." Discipleship and spiritual formation are not the uncritical acceptance of the true and living God. Becoming a Disciple of Jesus Christ does not require one to check our intellect at the door. Further we cannot grow mentally if we continue to state, 'preach on a sixth grade level'.

The diasporic African experience in the United States is often taught from the perspective of slavery and the history of Christianity within the AMEC begins with St. George ME church and Richard Allen's emancipation from the oppression of the Euro-American Christians. A recontextualization of Christian religious education pedagogy is necessary in the AMEC if we are to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional needs of all of humanity and return to the ideology παιδεία (paideia) and move towards a Socratic method of teaching which includes culturally responsive / relevant pedagogy, engaged pedagogy and Hip Hop education pedagogy found in this new form of Christian Education pedagogy I have developed call Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story Telling (HSPS) pedagogy.

HIP HOP | SPOKEN WORD | POETRY AND STORY-TELLING FRAMEWORK

The Hip Hop | Spoken Word | Poetry and Story Telling pedagogy curriculum framework is designed to follow the Revised Common Lectionary and has incorporated the culturally inclusive special calendar events from The African American Lectionary. Hispanic Heritage month is September 15th through October 15th liturgical resources will be developed and incorporated into the framework. Hip Hop, spoken word, poetry and storytelling are social methods of communication transmitting knowledge, wisdom and oral and written history of a culture and generation. By combining these elements with culturally responsive, engaged and Hip Hop education pedagogy and the lectionary this curriculum will ensure to cover the entirety of the biblical text and strengthen not only the biblical knowledge of our congregations but develop transformed communities and individuals.

CURRICULUM RESOURCES

ILLUSTRATION A: ORIGINAL MATERIAL STORY-TELLING

Anne Wimberly uses a process of Story-Linking in groups sessions to initiate the process of sharing.¹⁷⁸ Utilizing story telling the below is an example of teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ by allowing and having participants engage the biblical text through their own cultural lens. Diasporic African's culture is a critical aspect of our discipleship and spiritual formation. Connecting and seeing Jesus in our culture generates a connection to those whom are in our communities.

Instruction | Exercise | Goal: Select a passage of scripture or focus chapter in the Bible to study. During the “Biblical Cypher Session” conduct word study and exegesis of the selected text. Typical Biblical Cypher Session, one hour. At the end of the Biblical Cypher Session participants will be given a take away assignment via story-telling and their socio-cultural context to create their own version of the studied Biblical text. Participants should be encouraged to utilize poetry, spoken-word, story-telling any of the tenets of Hip Hop to share their knowledge, understanding and experience with the Word of God. The Gospel According to Katherine is an example of using storytelling to retell the story of John the Baptist and Jesus.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO KATHERINE

DEDICATION TO MURPHY-MYERS

It is the year of our Lord 2050, this is a major undertaken for me to present to you the accounts of an event that changed and will continue to change the lives of many to come. This story was orally handed down from generation to generation, from the beginning of time. I sit with pen to paper to provide a methodical account for you Murphy-Myers, in order that you may know the truth in all that you have heard, been told and will continue to be instructed.

¹⁷⁸ Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005, (Kindle Location 521).

THE BIRTH OF HARRY BELAFONTE FORETOLD

In the days of Prime Minister Marcus Garvey of Jamaica, there lived a certain man named Harold and his wife Melvine whom resided in New York City. Harold was from the Caribbean island of Martinique and his wife Melvine the island of Jamaica. Melvine was a dress maker and house cleaner whose womb was barren and Harold a gifted musician. Many of Harold's nights and evenings were spent away from home as he worked ten jobs to make ends meet. Harold's primary gig was working at the Cotton Club (Harlem, NY), but he was getting older in age and wanted an heir to carry on his legacy.

One night at the Cotton Club while setting the stage with incenses and candles before his set, Harold was approached by a man Tin Pan Alley who was standing on the right side of the stage. The song writer and producer informed Harold that he would not get the contract he so greatly desired. However, if he and his wife would return to Jamaica they would be blessed with a man child whom they must name Harry for he would become the King of Calypso paving the way for the King of Kings.

The producer explained the child would be pleasing in the sight of the Lord and would be born with the Spirit of Angelic Music even before birth. With the spirit and power of Haile Selassie his music would bring people to the Lord. Harold was told this child would spend the majority of his life in night clubs, hotels and juke joints but he was never to consume cannabis, drink Hennessy and at all cost he was not allowed to *make it rain* with the women in the clubs. Harold was terrified, Harlem was filled with cannabis and he wasn't sure about Jamaica's crops. He wasn't sure if his aging body could make the trip, not to mention he had never been on a banana boat or any boat for that matter. Reality, he couldn't swim. Caribbean by birth but living in the concrete jungle of NYC he never experienced the deep blue seas.

Tin Pan Alley saw Harold's fear and how overwhelmed he had become from the news and the impending journey by boat. Before Tin Pan Alley could say another word, Harold began to tap dance and sing and carry on. Tin Pan Alley knew that Harold was not going to be able to keep his mouth shut and the drug dealers would kidnap Melvine for this man child before they could ever make it to Jamaica. Tin Pan said, I was sent to give

you this good news; because you can't keep your mouth shut I shall with the power of the Holy Spirit cause you to become mute and unable to speak until the day the child is born.

All the people in the Cotton Club were waiting for Harold's set, but when he entered the stage they knew he had seen the light and heard from God and could no longer perform in the club. Harold returned home to Melvine who had prepared Rice and peas with oxtail for dinner. Several weeks passed and Melvine conceived since Harold couldn't speak they spent more time knowing one another. God had truly blessed them in their old age and there was no time to waste, so Harold booked passage on the first banana boat leaving out the Hudson harbor returning to Jamaica.

THE BIRTH OF ROBERT 'BOB' MARLEY FORETOLD

In the sixth month Tin Pan Alley was sent to a town in Jamaica called Montego Bay to visit a virgin who was engaged to marry a man called Norval, the name of the virgin was Cedella. Tin Pan Alley greeted Cedella, "Wah gwaan?" Blessed dawta of Jah. Yuh ah di favored one. Tin Pan Alley understood the confusion on Cedella's face. He said, 'Whap'am, everything irie?' Dawta yuh nah fret. Jah shall guide yuh.

Cedella had found favor with God and she would conceive by the Holy Spirit a man child who was to be named Robert Nester 'Bob' Marley. Bob would be great, the son of the most high God. He would reign over the Earth and the Heavens above, God would place him on a throne and HIS kingdom would never end.

Cedella was unable to comprehend how it would be possible to conceive as a virgin, she knew her father would kill her with licks if he thought she had sex before marriage. Tin Pan Alley told Cedella don't worry about the people, don't worry about Norval. God has spoken, your son Bob will be the King of Kings, and travel all over the world because he will truly be the most High. Cedella said, "Here am I, your servant Lord let it be according to your word God."

CEDELLA VISITS MELVINE

Cedella set out from Trenchtown to the country side to visit with Melvine, after a long hard day's journey she arrived in Montego Bay. Entering the home of Harold, she was greeted by Melvine, “Weh yuh a deal wid.” The moment Melvine heard Cedella's voice the baby in her womb leaped. Melvine became filled with the Holy Spirit, and cried out Cedella you are the one, why would a woman of God come to me? Your womb has been blessed by God, the baby you carry is a blessed fruit of the Holy Spirit. The world shall be blessed by your womb, for all who shall believe, for you shall fulfill that which was spoken by the Lord to me.

THE BIRTH OF HARRY BELAFONTE

Melvine had risen early that morning and prepared ackee and saltfish for breakfast. As she and Harold completed breakfast they set off for their morning walk and to have a mango treat and pick some breadfruit and carambola 'starfruit'. Melvine began to experience pain and knew the time had come to give birth and she bore a son. All the bredrin and neighbors rejoiced over the favor God had shown to Melvine and Harold. On the eighth day they took the child to the Rastafarians to be dedicated and named. The Rastafarians said He is to be named Donovan, and Melvine said, 'No his name is to be Harry.' Yuh mad, nobodi inna yuh family name Harry. How yuh fi name the pickney dat? They motioned for Harold to write down a name as the father and he wrote, “His name shall be Harry.” The Rastafarians couldn't believe this; they were completely amazed.

Immediately Harold's mouth flew open and he began to speak praising, shouting and worshipping God. The Rastafarians are not afraid of anything and they knew this was no duppy magic, but the neighbors became frightened and ran away. All that they had witness was told to everyone throughout Mo Bay, Ocho Rios and Negril actually witnessing Harold speak, they knew this must have been the work of the Lord God almighty. People began to ask what will become of this child that God had obviously placed Gods hands on his life.

HAROLD'S PROPHECY

Now the father of Harry Belafonte, Harold was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke a prophetic word saying:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Jamaica for you have truly promised to redeem your people for you have shown us favor. Father you have raised up a mighty Lion of Zion out of the house of Selassie as spoken by the prophets of old. Thank you most merciful father for He shall save your people for the wickedness of captivity, He shall mash up the Babylonian soldiers because you God have remembered your covenant and oath to our African ancestors. We your people shall be rescued from the strong hold, he shall set the captives free, He shall be anointed the true and living water, and the true vine for your child will be called the Most High Prophet. The messiah the lily of the valley and the Lion of Zion.”

THE BIRTH OF ROBERT NESTER ‘BOB’ MARLEY

In those days the prime minister sent out a decree that all the Africans in the world should be questioned about their loyalty. Raphael Morgan a Jamaican-American priest of the Ecumenical Patriarchate questioned Garvey's views in the Daily Gleaner (Kingston newspaper) challenges continued to mount against Garvey by W.E.B Du Bois and others so everyone had to return to their respective towns to be questioned.

Cedella and Norval left Browns Town and traveled back to Nine Mile, Saint Ann parish. So many people had returned to Nine Mile and Norval was concerned about obtaining lodging, the new hotel hadn't finished, and they had been working on the construction for the past 10 years. Most of the country people didn't have funds to stay in a hotel for the inquisition so Norval convinced Cedella they should stay amongst the Rastafarian until their day of inquisition. Just as they completed dinner which consisted of them consuming Ital soup, Ital Stew, Irie salad and Ital curry tofu and a bottle of Ting, Cedella began to go into labor.

It was time for the child to be born. The Rasta's settlement was out near a sugar cane field, so they got out the machetes and began to clear an area and made a birthing bed for Cedella. And she did give birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in a Rasta green, gold and red frock then laid Him on a sugar cane pallet.

KINGSTON AND REGGAE SUNSPLASH FESTIVAL

The political tensions continue throughout the land after Norval and family completed their inquisition they returned to Kingston. Cedella promised to raise the child on Ital food alone. So, he grew quickly and became very strong, his mind was filled with wisdom from the Rastafarians and He walked in His authority for He had the favor of God.

Every year the family would attend the Reggae Sunsplash festival where they would celebrate, worship, sing praises unto God and sleep out doors on reggae beds for a week. This particular year Bob was twelve years old and His dreadlocks were halfway down His back. While Bob's parents visited with old friends the festival had come to an end. Many of the families began to make their way on the long walk back to their home parishes.

Cedella and Norval had no idea when they reached home that Bob was not amongst the caravan of people who set out on Monday morning. So, they returned and saw that many of their relatives and friend had stayed for the week after Sunsplash celebrations. As they continued to look for Bob they found themselves sings and chanting these words that someone on stage was singing:

I Hear the words of the Rastaman say:

“Babylon, you throne gone down, gone down;

Babylon, you throne gone down.”

Said I hear the words of the Iyaman say:

“Babylon, you throne gone down, gone down;

Babylon, you throne gone down.”

/Short instrumental break/

And I hear the angel with the seven seals say:

“Babylon throne gone down, gone down;

Babylon throne gone down.”

/Short instrumental break/

I say fly away home to Zion (fly away home);
I say fly away home to Zion (fly away home).
One bright morning when my work is over,
Man will fly away home.
/Short instrumental break/
One bright morning when my work is over,
Man will fly away home.
One bright morning when my work is over,
Man will fly away home.
Say one bright morning when my work is over,
Man will fly away home.¹⁷⁹

As they made their way to the stage Cedella and Norval were amazed to see Bob on the Stage, he in fact was the one singing this soul stirring sound (chant) that had thousands worshipping God.

THE PROCLAMATION OF HARRY BELAFONTE

The word of God came unto Harry son of Harold that he should go out into the region and proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiven of sins, as it was written in the Rastafari Book of the words of the prophet Isaiah. So it was written:

“The King of Calypso shall be the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, He shall prepare the way of the Lord, making the sugar cane field's path straight. Every gully from here to Dunn's River Falls shall be filled, the hills of Blue Mountain shall be made low, the winding roads of Fern Gully shall be made straight as the rough rocks in the quarries of Bull Bay, St Andrew and the world shall be made smooth.”

Harry began his musical ministry of baptizing the crowds in Montego Bay, Ocho Rios and Negril. People always knew when Harry was coming for he could be heard from mile away singing, 'Day-O, Dayyy-O' on many occasions Harry would become vexed

¹⁷⁹ Bob Marley 'Rasta Man Chant' Lyrics.

with the people constantly begging him to sing *The banana boat song* while he was there to baptize and make a way for the Lord. On one such day Harry shouted, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear starfruit worthy of repentance.' The crowd questioned Harry what they should do if he wouldn't sing, many didn't know how to swim because they hadn't grow in Jamaica they had come from a foreign (states).

Harry was truly a blessed man of God with an anointing but his bredrin would vex him sometimes with the foolishness, all in the middle of him baptizing people they would be catching Red Snapper and placing orders on the beach for the Rasta Man to prepare dem catch. Some of the folks were Raggamuffin's and they would come up out of the water (being baptized) with a fish in hand talkin' about them wanted Escovitch fish for dinner.

Harry had such an anointing when he sang and baptized people the fish would become filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to leap out of the water. This became a problem, because when people heard Day-O they knew it would be a good day to sell fried fish and fritter. So, they would setup steel drums and sell merchandise right in the middle of where Harry was baptizing and preaching. All the excitement of Harry's singing, baptizing and people over charging for fish plates Harry was concerned. One day a bredrin asked him if he was the Messiah.

Harry answered by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming. I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

HARRY BELAFONTE BAPTIZES BOB MARLEY

Harry had completed a month long revival near the Ritz Carleton in Montego Bay. Just as it appeared that there was no one else that day to be baptized Harry looked up to see Bob standing before him praying and asking that Harry baptize Him. One man was so excited he dropped his beef patty on the ground another questioned who is this man? As Bob continued to pray and enter into the water and was baptized the Heavens opened and the Holy Spirit Descended upon Him in bodily form like a Doctor Bird

(Trochilus polytmus). A voice came from Heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved;' with you I am well pleased."

BOB MARLEY REJECTED IN KINGSTON

When Bob returned to Kingston where he had been brought up, he went to the dancehalls and shanties as was the custom of all the major artist. Bob wasn't the typical artist, he could sing opera, country, play jazz, dancehall, mento, ska, rocksteady, reggae, dub music, ska jazz, etc. no one had ever seen anyone like Him. Peter Tosh walked up to him one night when Bob finished performing and asked where did you study Beethoven, Mozart, Bach and Tchaikovsky it is impossible '*you must have*' yuh mus a gon a England.

Bob said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim and to release the captives from mental slavery and recovery of sight of mi Bredrin on the street corner, and mi dwata who feel say them can drop it likes it hot. Mi cum fi release the stronghold pon the oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord favor."

As Bob existed the stage all eyes were on Him they had never heard a guitar make the sounds he had produced, where did he learn to play all this classical music? Many were excited and loved the ska, mento and reggae music but Bob seem to really like dancehall, and this was beginning to upset many of the Jamaicans. Not only was Bob performing dancehall he had recently ministered a *One Love Peace Concert* where Bucky Marshall and Claude Massop notorious gang leaders was in attendance. The current Prime Minister Michael Manley and his opposition Edward Seaga were embracing one another. The ecumenical council arrived to a billowing cloud of cannabis provided by all the Rastafarians who attended the concert. They drove Bob out of Kingston and led Him toward the rock cliffs so that they might hurl him to his death. Bob just passed through the midst of them and went on his way to a foreign.

PREACHING / MIRACLE / HEALING / SPIRITS

On his way back to Nine Mile as Bob passed through Spanish town; Bob stopped at a dancehall on a Sabbath. There was a man who had come from a foreign and got a

hold of some PCP that he had mixed with his cannabis. When the man saw Bob he screamed out, 'Bob of Nine Mile Let us alone we know what you have come to do. You want to mash up Petah Tosh, Yellow Man, Beenie Man and all them Man in dem?' Bob said, ' Be silent, Jah ruhl come out of him!'” The demon immediately left the man without doing him any harm.

When Bob was taken into the back office to explain what transpired the dancehall owner set a trap for Bob. They placed He in a sound proof room made of reinforced glass with tint so that they could see in, but he couldn't see out. Some Harlem drug dealer had arrived in Jamaica looking for the child that had been born to Melvine. They began to fill the room Bob was in with cannabis and all sorts of chemicals. It was a miracle Bob never inhaled and the unclean chemical never entered into His holy temple.

After leaving the dancehall Bob passed a woman on the road who was suffering from a back injury sustained by dancing when she fell off the stand in her stilettos while performing some acrobatics with one youth dem. He stood over her and rebuked the pain in her body. The woman stood up realizing she was healed; saying 'tanks bredrin' and then she returned to the dancehall to finish the night until the place shutdown.

By day break Bob found himself on the road near Fern Gully he was looking for a deserted place to pray. The people didn't want Bob to leave but he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.”

BOB CALLS HIS DISCIPLES

Bob continued to travel all over Jamaica and a foreign; once while Bob was ministering near Dunn's falls He saw two brothers Ziggy and Darrian performing. Their music was wonderful, however Bob noticed that they were pole fishing and hadn't caught anything. Bob said to the brother; “Your music is nice, but I can teach you to make songs that the angels in heaven will record for playback.”

Soon afterwards he went through cities and villages proclaiming and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God. Several dancehall women performers Sharon, Makeda, Karen and Stephanie were now also His Disciples. Along with Ky-Marii,

Stephen, Rohan, Cedella, Julian and Imari in total Bob had twelve disciples that traveled with Him.

THE PARABLE OF THE MONKEY AND THE FISH

When the disciples asked Bob, what parables meant. He said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that 'looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand'

A typhoon had temporarily stranded a monkey on an island. In a secure, protected place on the shore, while waiting for the raging waters to recede, he spotted a fish swimming against the current. It seemed obvious to the monkey that the fish was struggling and in need of assistance. Being of kind heart, the monkey resolved to help the fish. A tree precariously dangled over the spot where the fish seemed to be struggling. At considerable risk to himself, the monkey moved far out on a limb, reached down and snatched the fish from the threatening waters. Immediately scurrying back to the safety of his shelter, he carefully laid the fish on dry ground. For a few moments the fish showed excitement, but soon settled into a peaceful rest. Joy and satisfaction swelled inside the monkey. He had successfully helped another creature."

THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE

There continued to be much confusion, turmoil, envy and strife in the world which the disciples saw firsthand as they traveled performing music all over the world. Then one evening Bob called them all together and gave them power and authority over all demons and the ability to cure diseases they are all sent out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. No one was allowed to take any of their musical instrument all that was needed would be provided wherever they planted their feet and whenever they needed a place to lay their heads at night. They all departed and went through cities, towns, and countries bringing the good news and curing diseases.

The government released the Ebola and HIV virus in Africa, so Bob and his Disciples traveled home to the Mother Land to save the sick, care for the needy and heal the sick and marginalized. During the mission Bob had scheduled numerous concerts to raise funds that would go to the families in need once he and the Disciples left. Each time

the group would leave one town people would follow on foot to the next town so that they too could be healed and hear about the Kingdom of God.

One day there were over 5000 people and the weather was hot, the Disciples went to Bob and told him to send the people away as it was getting late they would need to secure provisions to eat and lodge. Bob said, "You give them something to eat." The Disciples said, 'we have no more than five beef patties and two Red Snappers' other than that we twelve can go into town and buy food. Bob instructed the twelve to have the 5000 sit in groups of 50. Taking the five beef patties and two snappers Bob looked up to heaven, blessed and broke them, and gave them to the Disciples to set before the crowd. Some people were complaining they didn't have oxtail, rice & peas, jerk chicken or cow foot but that day all ate and were full. Nothing was wasted they gathered all that was left over and carried with them giving out to people on the road as they journeyed to the next location.

THE DEATH OF BOB MARLEY

Secretly Suge Knight of Black Kapital Records and other in the States began to plot the death of Bob, his music and ministry was threatening to destroy the rap industry. The more Bob and his Disciples spread the good news of the Kingdom of God the more Tupac, Biggy, Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg and others were not happy. The rap industry needed a way to get into Jamaica, so they challenged the Reggae top singers to a battle of music. The concert to be held during the holiest of Holy time in Kingston, Reggae Sunsplash 2066. Not only would there be hundreds of thousands in attendance 2066 would be special, the AMEC would be celebrating their 250th Anniversary. The elders weren't happy about having the location moved to Jamaica but two of female Disciples had been seen being really friend with the bishop's son during a concert in Quebec, so all the preachers were told they needed to be in Jamaica and to leave their wives at home.

The music wars continued to become heated as Prophet Tupac Shakur was murdered during the Grammys. Following Tupac's death Prophet Biggie was murdered all a secret poly to divert attention from the true target 'Bob'. The LAPD continued to deny any knowledge of the killers of Tupac and Biggie now sixty years later who would of imagine the hit was still in play for Bob.

Bob was scheduled to perform last as the hometown favorite entering the stage he performs *Buffalo Soldier* and begins to exit the stage when he is shot and killed by Suge Knight. Immediately the Rastafarians claim his body saying he was the Lion of Zion. Bob's body was taken to the Settlement where the Rasta's cleansed and prepared the Kings body for burial.

All of the Disciples were devastated and mourning the death of Bob on the 3rd day following his death Karen and Stephanie went to the Rastafarian burial site only to find that Bob's body was not in the tomb. Returning to the others the woman informed them Bob's body was gone. Perplexed and confused the Disciples continued to console one another.

Several days pass as they are walking the road to Spanish Town Bob walks with them but does not reveal himself. Arriving in Spanish Town the Disciples sit together while talking about Bob and He say's to them, 'Peace be with you!' They were all terrified thinking they had seen a duppy. Bob asked, 'Why are you frettin? See the bullet holes in my hands and feet. I spoke all of these things to you that had been prophesied, I would be handed over to my enemies, I would be crucified, dead and buried yet on the third day I would arise. Do not doubt and do not fret. Bob instructed the Disciples to stay in Spanish town he said, 'I am sending unto you as promised by my Father that you will be clothed with power from on high.'

THE ASCENSION OF BOB

Bob lead the Disciples out as far as Mobay and lifted his hands He blessed them. While he was blessing them, He withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. The Disciples worshiped him and continued to witness to others about the Kingdom of heaven and blessing God through HSPS pedagogy in their local Christian religious education ministries.

ILLUSTRATION B: POETRY

Below are examples of how poetry can use to articulate God in our lived experiences. Using poetry, it is possible to teach, preach and learn about the essence of God.

And the word of God teaches us in Job 12: 7-10 “But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.

THE SCREAMS OF SILENCE

Have you ever stopped to listen to the break of day?

The very moment that night passes away

Have you ever heard the sun speak to your mind?

At the moment it starts to shine?

Have you ever heard a blade of grass?

Speak to your feet as you step pass?

Have you ever heard the branch of a tree?

Call your name out like the one that spoke to me

Have you listened to the moon telling you what you needed to know?

In the dark of the night as it begins to glow

Have you ever experienced water calling out?

In the middle of a desert or during a drought

Have you ever found your way in the silences of the night?

By listening to or following the North Star shining bright

Have you ever enjoyed a conversation with a cloud?

Without ever saying a word out loud

Have you ever heard Gods words in the beating of rain?
As the drops washed away all your pain
Have you ever heard a tree root speak?
Just before it raised its head to peek

Have you ever heard the melodic hummingbird song?
As it moved from flower to flower and then was gone
I challenge you to take a moment to stop and hear
The screams of silence that I hold so dear.

MENTAL SLAVERY

Life by the Spirit – “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Galatians 5: 13-14 NIV

We shall overcome. Was that statement for all or just for some?
My grandmother use to say, “Lord I shall run this race and when it’s done. I want you to say well done.”

African American was this the start of the confusion?
Many of us where dumb enough to believe the illusion

Stripped of our culture and heritage
Shipped to a foreign land to suffer indentured servitude
The moment a Black man says, “He was not afforded the same opportunities”
You say he’s rude.

Jews, Germans, Asians and the like
Left their home lands with a mission, vision and insight
America land of the free, does freedom equate to equal opportunity?
For someone Black like me.

A Philip Randolph formed the March on Washington
Civil Rights leaders stepped up to the plate
But did they truly understand our fate?

During the reconstruction years and the time of Jim Crow
Blacks & Whites joined together eradicating segregation
So that it would be no more.

Removing the chains that bound our hands and feet was a start.
But no one thought to remove the chains that bound our minds and hearts.

As a result of the Atlantic slave trade there were 3.5 million slaves.

Whipped, raped and beaten until they were blue.

The mind of the Black man was told what to do!!

The social injustices compounded our mental state

Thus producing a race of people; who would take any bait.

Textile, diamond and the construction industries are all controlled by other ethnicities

Hoodwinked and bamboozled by the National Negro College Fund

Many of us thought we had overcome.

White's say, you can't complain you were denied the right to an equal education

Shit; we will even vote one of you to run the nation

Blacks have failed to see the bigger picture

To 'Us' you are still a Nigger

Give me a big screen TV, 21" rims include a bottle of Jack and I can control all of them.

Load up their communities or should I say the hood with churches and liquor stores.

They don't think any bigger. See I already told you before

You gotta think like a Nigger

Give them a small piece of land. They won't know what to do with it.

Guess what, it will soon belong to Uncle Sam.

Our ancestors were shackled and stripped of their language and knowledge

Now some of us think we are the shit because we went to college

Civil rights leaders fought for our freedom

Welfare and housing projects taught us we didn't need them

Submitting our minds to MENTAL SLAVERY

Has completely undermined our ancestors BRAVERY!!!

OBAMA

I never thought, I would live to see the day
That all of America would change their ways
The first Black President in the White House
Should we play R&B or listen to Alison Krauss?

Eight years of republicans
Now my brother has to clean up their sins
It's a job that any sane man would regret
Obama doesn't have time to reflect

I love this country; because it's the only one I know
What a daunting task he has been bestowed
Health Care Reform and Bipartisanship
He's already being judged on a single years clip

GOD has the whole world in his hands
A half black president was his master plan
Articulate, smart, cunning and such
Well, what did you expect, he's educated; you're not saying much.

I wish that race had no bearing
Oil, stocks and money; that's what the rich are sharing
Obama must survive while completing his job
He must be careful not to appear as a snub

Michelle is bright and talented as a first lady
But she definitely knows how and when to be shady.
The United States has never seen such a beautiful pair
When they are out in public all one can do is stare

Republican or Democrat is what many claim
Reality...They are both one and the same
Thank GOD we made history with a black president
Just remember the White House is only and eight year resident.

PROCESSED MIND

Jaguars, Bimmers and Mercedes
Own anyone of them and you can get the ladies
Pimp my ride to gain attention
No money in the bank; did I fail to mention

Flat screen TV's in every room
Shacking up with your babies mama; you're too afraid to jump the broom
Spend your last dime on a new pair of kicks
All this ghetto fabulous shit is making me sick

Buying 6 packs, cigarettes and chips with food stamps
Then wondering why your child is sick from getting damp
New outfit every week for your night at the club
Trusting any man that shows you what you think is love

Putting you cell phone in your babies name
Is there no limit to your shame?
Moving constantly; because you don't pay your rent
Then you're upset with everyone else; because all of your money is spent

Purple, blue and green hair not complaining about your weave
But you can't get a job and have the nerve to act like you don't believe
Do and be who you are; that's right everybody can kiss your ass
But you're the one walking around with no class

Expensive baby strollers and Nike Air Max

Already spent the money you expect from your income tax
Tight ass clothes revealing more than we want or need to see
Then when you get attention you turn around and want to curse me

Three baby daddies and you call them all your man
This shit gets on my nerves; the phrase baby daddy I can't stand
Stop begging and borrowing and making a scene
There is more to life than getting laid, paid or fighting over green.

For all who don't like what I have to say
Continue what you're doing and your life will remain the same way
Hey it's your life and your deal
I ain't mad at you; I'm just keeping it real

SEARCHING FOR CHANGE IN THE SAME

How can one achieve a difference continuing to do the same?
Situations have been left alone
So your outcome remains unchanged

Financial freedom cannot be achieved if one continues to spend
You purchase lottery tickets and hope and pray to win
Job promotion on the top of your list
Yet it's the third month of the year; how many days have you missed?

You're not willing to make a change
Yet you sit around and complain
You've talked and talked until you have no voice
When others give advice, you said you have no choice

Change is simple; don't mean to be rude

Your circumstances will change if you start with your attitude
Financial problems and sickness are a temporary situation
Study and act upon God's word which is your foundation

Change is not a compound fraction
Dwelling on what you don't want is what you will get; it's the laws of attraction
Fighting with what you think is an impossible problem
God's love and His word is how you solve them

SOULS OF MY SISTERS – REMOVE THE DOUBT

Step out of the vicious cycle of lies
Be the woman that God made you; don't be denied
Living your life for the approval of others
Has keep you in a perpetual state of desiring a lover
Look in the mirror and see God's beauty living within you
Perpetuating the negative stereotype is all you knew
Limitations placed on your life
Set you a course to identify yourself only as a wife

Gender biases and social economic background and status
Do not define you; they are manifestations of the social apparatus
Ignore the I can't and You could never
Set yourself on a path; fulfill your endeavors
Why is it so easy for you to believe the negative?
This is not how God wants or planned for you to live
Obsessed with wanting to change how you look
Seeking who you are; cannot be found in a book

You have been told you are too fat
So you have been on every diet known to man; you need to get back on track
Every week you are at the salon changing your hair

You feel your life is going nowhere
Nothing but the best; Prada, Gucci and Kenneth Cole
Yet the constant state of depression is embedded in your soul
Try as you may; you can't break the chains
Hurling yourself back into the nightmare all over again

Chit-Chatting with your girlfriends seems like fun
You have become a jack of all trades and a master of none
Jumping from relationship to relationship seeking the right man
Look inside of you; women take a stand

My sisters we are not who we are because of material things
Unlock the chains that bind your minds, and let your heart sing
You have become a slave to your emotions
Catapulting yourself into any and every off the wall notion

Open up your mind and close your mouth
Remove all negative thought; remove the doubt
Women we all have strength beyond compare
God created us as man's equal; that's why they stare

Use your power and authority
Women we don't have to be a minority
Be kind and honest; stop hating and love one another
Just remember to love yourself; more than you love a brother

Yell or scream, do what you can to get it out
Remove the negative thoughts
Please remember to be a lady; no need to shout
Find the GOD in YOU; remove the doubt...

THE ORIGINAL BLACK BEAUTICIAN

*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper
suitable for him." Genesis 2:18*

And GOD made man and saw that man was alone
Placed in a beautiful garden yet still not home
Causing a sleep to fall upon the man
GOD thought to himself I have a plan

And so on that day without hoping or wishing
GOD took a rib from man and created the Black Beautician
Life in the garden of Eden would never be the same
For you see by this time GOD had also created rain

The woman set up shop by the tree of life
She informed the man; "Do for yourself" but I'm still your wife
I have work to do; just look at yourself
First I shall work on your clothes; and then your health

The beautician gathered all the female animals
Told them to collect anything that was tangible
While she set off to create a salon name
She called it "Hair in Eternity, The Anointed Mane"

Shearing a few of the sheep she created several outfits on that day
While the monkeys and apes worked on the runway
The thought of creating electricity was too frightening
So the beautician asked GOD to borrow the Sun for lighting

The peacock painted signs while the Baboon created the flyers
For on the 10th day man would display his new attire
Eden had its first official fashion show

Music was provided by the robins and the sparrows

Man was pleased with his new wardrobe
Until the beautician decided to pierce his earlobe
Satisfied the man was prepared for any occasion
The beautician setup a mani/pedi station

After tending to the garden all day long man needed a treat
So he would stop in to have his nails done and his feet
The beautician knew she had to expand her services somehow
Just the other day she noticed man had a uni-brow

After studying the birds and the beavers bedding
The beautician developed eyebrow threading
Man wasn't lazy; but didn't do anything that was to taxing
That's why she knew there was no way he would go for waxing

While man continued to work on his garden collage
The beautician observed the big cats giving each other massages
So her list of salon services continued to expand
The beautician did all of this for man

After 15 days of handling animals and eating stew
The beautician created the world's first shampoo
By this time the beautician had been working like a Hebrew slave
But she knew it was time for man to bathe

Admiring the coat of the beautiful red fox
The beautician decided it was time to cut man's locs
Man spent hours sitting in that chair
As she pulled, twisted and cut his hair

Weeks had passed and the man became firm
But the beautician insisted he needed a perm
Mixing goat's milk, coconut oil and the yoke of an egg
The beautician placed the concoction on his head

Minutes later the man began to scream
What the hell is in this cream
Straight hair is what your hearts been yearning
Just relax it doesn't work until it starts burning

Man was not happy with these new results
So he gathered the male animals and Eden had its first revolt
After several meeting to discuss his situation
The parrot said to the woman, just send man on a vacation

When man returned to the garden of Eden
The beautician and the female animals were already eating
It was decided that the man should go natural
So she shaved his head so his locs could grow

This is a true story not to deceive
It also explains who developed the original weave
If GOD had given man a pair of shoes for his feet
Woman would have never created the salon seat

Without the help of the animal kingdom
Both man and woman would have died of boredom
Now you have learned a valuable lesson
Eve was the original hairdresser!!!

ILLUSTRATION: PRAYER

Thy Will Be Done!

Heavenly Father my life to you I owe, on a hill called Calvary you endured the pain
I shall live my life for you O' Lord, until you shall return again
Oh what a wonder to behold, the blood you shed to correct a wrong
Not an hour shall pass; that I do not sing your praises though verse and though song
A sinner by birth; the life I live to you I shall be a slave
Until that day and moment, I'm lying in my grave
A fleshly death is certain, we all surely must die
I vow to live my life that You; and only You maybe glorified
Broken vessels upon this Earth we trod; my life has a purpose that I must fulfill
Heavenly Father I pray; the life I live is according to Thy will
I shall praise your name on Earth; awaiting my salvation in Heaven
O Lord I thank you for the blood you shed, that my sins might be forgiven....

HIP HOP KOINONIA GOOD COMMUNITY MINISTRY

One of my desires is to evangelize the communities in which we serve. I believe the development of a Hip Hop Koinonia Good Community Ministry is achievable. I see the Hip Hop Koinonia Good Community Ministry as being a phased ministry which would be implemented as we intentionally engage in Christian religious education through HSPS pedagogy and curriculum. I don't view evangelism as an exercise in conversion or membership recruitment evangelism is *faith seeking understanding* in praxis. All Disciples of Christ are called to evangelism in the life they lead not the words they speak. Hip Hop Koinonia Good Community Ministry I view is an organic overflow of the fruits of HSPS pedagogy.



Background / History:

Hip Hop Koinonia Good Community Ministry is a faith-based community project which builds on the biblical principal and mandate of Luke 10:27. The Hip Hop Koinonia initiative finds its roots in social justice and the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ. The United States of America continue to wrestle with social injustices, racism, sexism, classism and ageism as it pertains to its citizens. In 2012 following the death of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of George Zimmerman the Black Lives moment was created. The 20th Century philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce coined the term “The Beloved Community” and founded the ‘Fellowship of Reconciliation’. The Beloved Community concept was popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an achievable and realistic goal for society. The Hip Hop Koinonia ministry is a long term initiative which builds on Royce’s understanding of individuals remaining individuals while attaining loyalty to a cause within a community. Secondly, this ministry seeks to extend King’s vision of conflict-resolution, agape love and creating communities which preserve human rights, dignity and sustainability.

The ministry is designed to be a companion and a partner with existing AME ministries to assist in the healing, reconciliation and restoration of God’s creation in our local communities. The purpose of the ministry is to create fellowship and partnership with the communities in which we serve to benefit the good of all people in our communities. The Hip Hop Koinonia ministry seeks to provide a prophetic ministry which addresses and combat poverty, homelessness, social justice issues and oppression. The Hip Hop Koinonia Good community project is an inclusive ministry partnering with other faith traditions to galvanize, energize and strategize with community resources.

Holy Scriptures:

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Key principal of this ministry is Fellowship. The ministry inspires to have friendly association with members of the communities in which we serve to gain an understanding of the immediate needs of the

Philemon 1:6 “I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.”

community members. Our ministry will partner with non-profit organizations which function within the community to aid members with necessary services such as educational resources, housing, pre-natal care, employment, etc.

Key principal of the ministry Partnership. The Holy Scriptures teaches us two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil and we are all God's fellow workers. This ministry acknowledges all of God's creations to be to be worthy, respected, loved and cared for until the return of our Savior Jesus Christ. It is the desire of this ministry to partner with the communities we serve and to create new partnership with communities we are not currently associated.

1 Corinthians 10:17 ¹⁷“Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.”

Key principal of this ministry Participation: John Donne in the 1624 poem ‘Devotions upon Emergent Occasions’ wrote, ‘No Man is an Island’. This ministry is devoted to seeking out all whom are oppressed, marginalized and the tossed aside by society. Unlike many other initiatives the objective of this ministry is to not exclude others by concentrating on the needs of any select group of minorities. This ministry endeavors to have active participation from a diverse group of people, with diverse religious, social-economic backgrounds because we all share in one loaf. A concept taken from the Greek verb ‘koinonein’ meaning ‘to participate together’.

Our Values:

Accountability: *Romans 12:15* “*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*” This ministry is committed being accountable to all members of society. We shall work to ensure needs are met if one person is weeping we all should be accountable to that individual.

Respect: *Matthew 7:12* “*So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*” We live in a very diverse world and this ministry is dedicated to respecting the differences others bring to the table of participation, fellowship and togetherness.

Transformation: *Galatians 2:20* “*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*” As a faith-based organization we are commissioned by God to seek and save, to make disciples and to feel give of ourselves for our fellow mankind as Jesus Christ gave of Himself for us so that others’ lives may be transformed.

Reconciliation: *Ephesians 4:32* “*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*” Through our faith each day we live our lives modeled after the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to reconcile our broken relationship with God. No man is an island therefore it is imperative this ministry seeks to reconcile the relationships within our communities which have long standing residual effects from slavery, racism, classism and sexism in our country.

Restoration: *1 John 5:4* “*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*” Many have become discouraged by news reports of police brutality, massive incarceration, senseless killings in our country. This ministry stands on faith as the guiding principal to restoring hope, peace, joy and love to our communities.

Hip Hop Ministry in Action Proposed Initiatives

Establish a HIV/AIDS ministry which offers health educations and initially serve Atlantic City, Plainfield, Newark, Camden and Trenton areas within the state of New Jersey. According to CDC reports these communities continue to be impacted by HIV/AIDS. Develop and submit a grant proposal to establish a faith-based non-traditional education program with a unique approach to teaching urban and inner city at-risk youth about HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention utilizing the tenets of Hip Hop culture.

Establish a safe haven domestic violence ministry. Develop a partnership with local community organizations to assist abused woman and children of faith and those not affiliated with any religious organization. Provide spiritual guidance, financial assistance and relocation for those whom are in violent situations. The objective is to partner with these organizations and minister to the physical, mental and spiritual needs of abused woman.

Establish a Hip Hop Social Action Ministry which collaborates with organizations such as 'Black Lives Matters', 'Hispanics in Philanthropy' and "Jewish Social Justice Roundtable". Participating in the needs of all of God's people to combat oppression and poverty. Increasing the awareness of differences and coming together in reconciliation.

Establish a module within the ministry to combat poverty. Partnering with well-established organizations the minister hope to empower those who are living in poverty by providing education, vocational skills and opportunities to live with dignity and honor.

John 10:25 "Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me,"

Let the Works I've Done:

Build

Build on what has already been done and cultivate new opportunities

Improve

Improve on efforts others have done to increase knowledge and community growth.

Provide

Provide necessary information, training and assistance to meet the needs of the community.

Address

Address social-economic issues by getting involved with those who are different than us.

Foster

Foster and create relationships with organizations such as the LGBTQ community.

The Facts of Life...

Ezekiel 34:22-31 New Living Translation (NLT)

22 So I will rescue my flock, and they will no longer be abused.

Liberation | Transformation | Restoration

Any misuse of power or authority is a form of abuse. Often individuals are being abused and are unaware, because they don't recognize the behavior as being abuse or abusive.

There are obvious signs of abuse others may be able to perceive like: physical violence or stalking. However, there are also behaviors which maybe occurring to someone we are not able to see being on the outside.

Coercion, withholding financial resources, being very controlling in the relationship of one's partner, emotional abuse, isolation from friends and family or being threatening to one's partner.

As Disciples of Christ God wants us to be healed...

Hip Hop | Spoken- Word | Poetry & Story- Telling



HEALING - DOMESTIC AND ITIMATE PARENT VIOLENCE SERIES - SESSION -1

Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:1 -24

18 After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. 2 From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. 3 And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

5 Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well.

6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. 7 As they danced, they sang:

"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

8 Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" 9 And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David. 10 The next day an evil[a] spirit from God came forcefully on Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand 11 and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

12 Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with David but had departed from Saul. 13 So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. 14 In everything he did he had great success, because the Lord was with him. 15 When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.

17 Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage; only serve me bravely and fight the battles of the Lord." For Saul said to himself, "I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!"

18 But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my family or my clan in Israel, that I should become the king's son-in-law?" 19 So[b] when the time came for Merab, Saul's daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah.

20 Now Saul's daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. 21 "I will give her to him," he thought, "so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." So, Saul said to David, "Now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law."

22 Then Saul ordered his attendants: "Speak to David privately and say, 'Look, the king likes you, and his attendants all love you; now become his son-in-law.'"

23 They repeated these words to David. But David said, "Do you think it is a small matter to become the king's son-in-law? I'm only a poor man and little known."

24 When Saul's servants told him what David had said, 25 Saul replied, "Say to David, 'The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies.'" Saul's plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines.

NAYO JONES – HEALING

I had a therapist tell me once,
it was ironic how much love I gave out
'cause I didn't give much to myself.

She laughed, like self-love was a sick joke.
I chuckled, then cried at home.
I had someone tell me once,
I could not love anyone else
until I learned to love myself.
This time, I got to laugh.
This time, the sick joke was mine.

Was me. Might as well wait forever.
I remember hating myself at the age of seven.
Journals filled to the brim with criticisms by
eight, I had enough pages to stitch them into
wings. To fly close enough to the sun to see my
tears turn to steam.

Felt the wax burn on my shoulders and mold
into thick skin. I was nine when I wanted to die.
Thirteen when I found a solution.

Figured, if I could cut my legs enough,
gravity would let me go.
When it didn't, I tied a pillowcase around my
neck, twisting like the rope swings I knew so
well from childhood.

Heard my heartbeat pound in my ears like a
warning drum, then fade. I'd almost convinced
myself I'd done it.

When I started writing,
I smeared my blood on every page,
to remind myself that everything beautiful has a
consequence.
I'd hoped to stall the clotting long enough
to give myself to the craft
and let myself go.

I have died.. so many times.

So when I told you that loving you almost
makes life worth it, I was not joking.
When I tell you that loving you almost makes
me forget how much I hate myself,
it is not poetry.

Loving you is taking all the love I could never
give myself and putting it to good use.

It is reminding myself that if someone can love
a dying thing this way,
can hold the Lazarus of my body and give
thanks for the way it holds back,

if someone can kiss the scars, administer the
pills, absorb the bad days and wake up smiling
next to me, then I can try to breathe again.
Because self-love does not always come first..
or second.. or even ever.

But your love be the guardrail on the ledge.
Be the drawers that hide all of the sharp things.
Be the body that carries my collapsed frame
into bed.
Be the flowers you bought.
Because even though they are dying too, they
still dance.

Love will not heal me.
Will not wipe my slate of a body clean.
I will always be a woman of wounds.
Of rope-marked neck and melted skin.

Love will not heal me,
but it will hold my hand if I ever heal myself.

And maybe teach a joke,
that I can stay alive long enough to laugh at.

I love you, enough to want to love myself too.

Spiritual and Discipleship Formation Corner:

Liberation – Knowledge is freedom

The CDC states the term “intimate partner violence” describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner.

Unfortunately, many women have suffered in silences because they have been instructed “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:22)

Intimate partner violence doesn’t just happen to women. Men are also the victims of intimate partner violence. As we have learned in our Biblical studies of David and Saul an intimate partner is also characterized by:

- Someone you are emotionally connected
- In regular contact with on a personal level.
- Someone you are familiar with and have personal knowledge about each other’s lives.

Transformation – Renewing of the Mind

The process to healing begins with recognizing the signs of the of our hurt and pain. In the biblical story we see Saul blaming David and playing the victim. Saul was narcissistic and possessed a spirit of jealousy. Nayo Jones reminds us a renewing of the mind begins, when we realize “I love you, enough to want to love myself too.”

Restoration – Time to Heal

2

Discipleship Rap Cypher

We are constantly reading about or hear of a tragic situation leading to the death or near death experience of someone because of Domestic or Intimate partner violence. As Christians many of us may be asking the question: Where is God? Or someone suffering in a violent relationship may be asking: God can you hear me?

The Old Testament book of 1 Samuel provides us with a biblical foundation to recognize the patterns of abuse. God also provided in the Holy Scriptures knowledge and wisdom on how to deal with situations in life.

Cypher discussion:

Nayo’s poem begins with “I had a therapist.” Begin the cypher in dialogue regarding the stigma around seeking professional counseling.

Saul’s jealousy caused him to become controlling and he stalked David. Nayo stated, “When I tell you that loving you almost makes me forget how much I hate myself.” Continue the Cypher discussion around the topics:

1. David’s handling of abuse. Psalms 147:3 “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”
2. Nayo’s healing occurred...
3. David wrote in Psalm 31 “In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness.”

3

Facilitators Preparation: Domestic and Intimate violence a difficult subject to broach and can be a trigger for some in the Cypher group. As a facilitator of the Healing Series it's important you are have prepared yourself by researching local organizations which you can refer anyone seek additional information or help. It is important to remember cyphers are sacred spaces for discipleship and spiritual formation. If possible during the healing cypher series, you should have a trained Domestic Violence professional attending the session.

Contemplative Prayer:

Read Psalm 5 in its entirety. Meditate on Verse 4 "For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome." God is a god of restoration; healing and all abuse goes against the will of god. Recommendation would be to be in period of fasting during this series.

Materials Needed

Bible and Hand out. Nayo Jones Spoken Word piece is very powerful to view. Prior to engaging in the Rap Cypher, it would be advised to play the YouTube video the handout has the lyrics for the Rap Cypher discussion. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YzIGoonIrE>

ILLUSTRATION C: SPOKEN WORD

Full text of Spoken Word RAW data.

Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise."

~ Jeremiah 17:14

NAYO JONES - "HEALING"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YzIGoonIrE>

I had a therapist tell me once,
it was ironic how much love I gave out
'cause I didn't give much to myself.

She laughed,
like self-love was a sick joke.
I chuckled,
then cried at home.

I had someone tell me once,
I could not love anyone else
until I learned to love myself.

This time, I got to laugh.
This time, the sick joke was mine.

Was me.
Might as well wait forever.
I remember hating myself at the age of seven.
Journals filled to the brim with criticisms by eight,
I had enough pages to stitch them into wings.
To fly close enough to the sun to see my tears turn to steam.

Felt the wax burn on my shoulders and mold into thick skin. I was nine when I wanted to die.
Thirteen when I found a solution.

Figured,
If I could cut my legs enough,
gravity would let me go.

When it didn't, I tied a pillowcase around my neck,
twisting like the rope swings I knew so well from
childhood.

Heard my heartbeat pound in my ears like a warning
drum, then fade.

I'd almost convinced myself I'd done it.

When I started writing,
I smeared my blood on every page,
to remind myself that everything beautiful has a
consequence.

I'd hoped to stall the clotting long enough
to give myself to the craft
and let myself go.

I have died.. so many times.

So when I told you that loving you almost makes life
worth it, I was not joking.

When I tell you that loving you almost makes me
forget how much I hate myself,
it is not poetry.

Loving you is taking all the love I could never give

myself and putting it to good use.

It is reminding myself that if someone can love
a dying thing this way,
can hold the Lazarus of my body and give thanks for
the way
it holds back,
if someone can kiss the scars,
administer the pills,
absorb the bad days and wake up smiling next to me,
then I can try to breathe again.

Because self-love does not always come first...
or second...
or even ever.

But your love be the guardrail on the ledge.
Be the drawers that hide all of the sharp things.
Be the body that carries my collapsed frame into bed.
Be the flowers you bought.
Because even though they are dying too, they still
dance.

Love will not heal me.
Will not wipe my slate of a body clean.
I will always be a woman of wounds.
Of rope-marked neck
and melted skin.

Love will not heal me,
but it will hold my hand if I ever heal myself.

And maybe teach a joke,
that I can stay alive long enough to laugh at.

I love you,
enough to want to love myself too.

JOSEPH SOLOMON - A SHADOW OF A DOUBT

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdF-MldtDn4EW8-DlQqPD_g

I remember, my little niece ran up to me and told me, “We learned about Jesus today.” And I could tell by her smile she was so excited to learn about this man she did not quite know yet, but she knew without a doubt for it to be true because, after all, Mommy said so.

And that was the first time in my life that I looked into the eyes of a child and envied them. Because she had no idea of what it feels like to doubt. What it feels like to have your entire belief system overload with skepticism. To never know the day that you would finally live beyond the shadow of a doubt.

I have lived in its darkness for so long. It seems that I have all the right questions, but never enough answers and my faith is small enough to fit in the cracks of my palms, God.

Every night I lay my head down to sleep, the city of my mind is attacked by a legion of questions threatening the living rooms of my sanity and holding them hostage. Can You help me?

Last year, my grandmother laid in a hospital bed like a bus stop, waiting for God to come pick her up. I had never seen such pain and such confidence living in the same eyes when she told me, “I don’t know what I’m gonna do. But I know who I belong to.” And I was so happy for her.

And something inside of me wished that somehow before she passed away she could pass her confidence down to me like an old family picture.

I remember sitting in the back row of a cold sanctuary crying because I desperately wanted what the preacher was saying to be true but my doubts were preaching a sermon of their own and the streams of my tears turned into oceans of frustration.

I remember sitting a college classroom and the only thing being tested is my faith in God, the only thing passing is my hope.

Me. And a backpack full of fear. And nowhere to go. No one to help me unpack. I sleep.

I sleep, but I never rest. These lines around my lines are not wrinkles they are maps that show you the winding roads that lead to my pain. I'm tired.

I'm tired and I'm longing for the day that I can place my fingers in His nail-pierced hands because honestly I've considered quitting but where will I go? Back? There's no home for the living in the land of the dead. So I keep pressing forward.

Today I have faith but I can't make any promises about tomorrow. I'm surprised I held on this long.

God, just make me feel like I'm not crazy. God, let me know that I'm not just making friends with these walls when I pray. I'm not questioning You, I just got questions.

Don't leave me here.

Don't leave me.

My child, my child, when it seems like you have all the right questions, but not enough answers, and your faith is small enough to fit in the cracks of your palms, I told you faith the size of mustard seeds can rearrange whole landscapes and turn mountains into open highways. Faith comes by My Word, so maybe you've cuffed your ears.

My child, don't be childish. But consider the child whose faith has not quite learned the definition of impossible. Have your questions. I'm not telling you to have blind faith. I'm telling you to consider the blind men who had faith and believed My Words before they were even able to see Me. Consider the birds that eat from My hand and do not fall from the sky without My consent so how much more will I love the ones that I died for?

Before you doubt Me, doubt your doubts. Doubt your doubts and you will see they are just as empty as the tomb that I walked from.

The truth is, you know I'm here. You know My truth and you're scared. Scared of what that means. Scared of what that should cost you. That one day they will all laugh at you. Laugh you right out of their classrooms and scorn you out of courtrooms. But My love serves as an eviction notice to anxiety. When they cast stones, My love casts out fear. I am the Author and the Finisher of your fate. I have never started a work that I will not finish. I am the One. I am the One who will give you courage to stare death in the face and say, "How dare you try to scare me. I know who I belong to."

And when it feels like you're drowning. When it feels like you are drowning in a sea of your questions, just know I'm there. I'm there.

Like when I drowned in the red sea of My blood for you. These hands that took holes will hold you. And when I told you that I would love you forever, I meant it. Don't you see these rings in my hands? See, we are married.

For better or for worse. Through sickness and in health. Through faith and through questions.

'Til death brings us closer, you are Mine.

You are Mine. And I am yours. I promise.

JEFFERSON BETHKE - WHY I HATE RELIGION, BUT LOVE JESUS

SPOKEN WORD – ROMANS 4:5

What if I told you Jesus came to abolish religion?

What if I told you voting Republican really wasn't His mission?

What if I told you Republican doesn't automatically mean Christian

And just because you call some people blind doesn't automatically give you vision?

I mean, if religion is so great, why has it started so many wars?

Why does it build huge churches but fails to feed the poor?

Tells single moms God doesn't love them if they've ever had a divorce

But in the Old Testament, God actually calls religious people whores

Religion might preach grace, but another thing they practice

Tend to ridicule God's people; they did it to John the Baptist

They can't fix their problems, and so they just mask it

Not realizing religion's like spraying perfume on a casket

See, the problem with religion is it never gets to the core

It's just behavior modification, like a long list of chores

Like, "Let's dress up the outside, make it look nice and neat"

But it's funny that's what they used to do to mummies while the corpse rots underneath

Now I ain't judging; I'm just saying, quit putting on a fake look

'Cause there's a problem if people only know you're a Christian by your Facebook

I mean, in every other aspect of life, you know that logic's unworthy
It's like saying you play for the Lakers just because you bought a jersey

See, this was me too, but no one seemed to be on to me
Acting like a church kid while addicted to pornography
See, on Sunday I'd go to church, but Saturday getting faded
Acting if I was simply created to just have sex and get wasted

See, I spent my whole life building this facade of neatness
But now that I know Jesus, I boast in my weakness
Because if grace is water, then the Church should be an ocean
It's not a museum for good people—it's a hospital for the broken

Which means I don't have to hide my failure; I don't have to hide my sin
Because it doesn't depend on me; it depends on Him
See, because when I was God's enemy and certainly not a fan
He looked down and said, "I want that man."

Which is why Jesus hated religion, and for it He called them fools
Don't you see so much better than just following some rules
Now let me clarify—I love the Church, I love the Bible, and yes, I believe in sin
But if Jesus came to your church, would they actually let Him in?

See, remember He was called a glutton and a drunkard by religious men
But the Son of God never supports self-righteousness—not now, not then
Now back to the point—one thing is vital to mention
How Jesus and religion are on opposite spectrums
See, one's the work of God, but one's a man-made invention

See, one is the cure, but the other's the infection
See, because religion says "do"; Jesus says "done"

Religion says "slave"; Jesus says "son"
Religion puts you in bondage, while Jesus sets you free
Religion makes you blind, but Jesus makes you see

And that's why religion and Jesus are two different clans
Religion is man searching for God; Christianity is God searching for man
Which is why salvation is freely mine, and forgiveness is my own
Not based on my merits, but Jesus' obedience alone

Because He took the crown of thorns, and the blood dripped down His face
He took what we all deserved—I guess that's why you call it grace
And while being murdered, He yelled,
"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."
Because when He was dangling on that cross, He was thinking of you

And He absorbed all your sin, and He buried it in the tomb
Which is why I'm kneeling at the cross, saying, "Come on, there's room"
So for religion—no, I hate it; in fact I literally resent it
Because when Jesus said, "It is finished," I believe He meant it.”

APPENDIX K: SAINT JAMES AMEC NEWARK

I have included photos of the Saint James school, housing, current and future Saint James AMEC as an illustration of the importance of this DMin project on Christian religious education. In 1945 affluent African American were able to purchase the First Presbyterian church for \$35,000. Saint James continues to minister in a blighted community and Christian Religion Education will be imperative as we move forward in ministry. As I have expressed in this project globally there has been a decline in membership and attendance. I believe to fulfill the vision of the new edifice will require the AMEC specifically Saint James to be intentional with education.



Figure 11: Saint James AME Church

FUTURE SAINT JAMES AME CHURCH
 MLK JR. BLVD & COURT ST. NEWARK, NJ 07102
 RONALD L. SLAUGHTER, SENIOR PASTOR

1,500 Seat Sanctuary
 6-8 Classrooms
 Youth Center
 Board Room
 Cantina
 Office

WOODRIDGE ARCHITECTURE
 17 ACADEMY ST. SUITE 1010, NEWARK NJ 07102

WOODRIDGE ARCHITECTURE
 17 ACADEMY ST. SUITE 1010, NEWARK NJ 07102
 FUTURE SAINT JAMES AME CHURCH
 MLK JR. BLVD & COURT ST. NEWARK, NJ. 07102
 RONALD L. SLAUGHTER, SENIOR PASTOR
 45,000 Sq. Ft. Facility
 1,500 Seat Sanctuary
 6-8 Classrooms



Figure 12: Saint James Towers



Figure 13: Saint James Prep School

APPENDIX L: RAW DATA

Raw data from online survey regarding Christian religious education.

32percent of respondents were Baptist, and 18percent were United Methodist

27percent of respondents offered Bible Study only

13percent of respondents offered Bible Study & Sunday School

10percent of respondents offered Sunday School only

27percent Attended churches where the Congregation size was 0-100

29percent Attended churches where the Congregation size was 100 -300

13percent Attended churches where the Congregation size was 300-500

13percent Attended churches where the Congregation size over 500

13percent of the respondents skipped the question regarding the size of the
congregation

16percent of the respondents skipped the question regarding pastor teaching Sunday
School

27percent of respondent's pastor's taught Sunday school

56percent of respondent's pastors did not teach Sunday school

67percent of respondent's pastors teach Bible study

32percent of respondents skipped a question

13percent of respondent's pastors did not teach Bible study

8percent of respondents skipped the question

8percent of respondents who have over 100 people in Bible study

2.7percent of respondents who have over 75-90 people in Bible study

2.7percent of respondents who have over 50-75 people in Bible study

13.5percent of respondents who have over 40-50 people in Bible study

8percent of respondents who have over 30-40 people in Bible study

16percent of respondents who have over 20-30 people in Bible study

21percent of respondents who have over 10-20 people in Bible study
18percent of respondents who have over 0-10 people in Bible study

21percent of respondents skipped the question
2.7percent of respondents who have over 200-250 people in Sunday school
5.4percent of respondents who have over 150-200 people in Sunday school
5.4percent of respondents who have over 50-100 people in Sunday school
29percent of respondents who have over 25-50 people in Sunday school
35percent of respondents who have over 0-25 people in Sunday school

32percent MDiv
32percent Ph. D
10percent BA/BS
16percent Skipped question
5percent not sure

32percent only use the Bible for study material