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# Renewing a Nation: the Impact of the African Diaspora on the African American Family, Culture and the Black Church

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

RENEWING A NATION:

THE IMPACT OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA ON THE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
FAMILY, CULTURE AND THE BLACK CHURCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

LOLITA R. GILMORE-RANDALL

PORTLAND, OREGON

JANUARY 2023



**PORTLAND  
SEMINARY**

George Fox University



## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Lolita R. Gilmore-Randall

has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on February 22, 2023 for the degree of  
Doctor of Ministry in Spirit-Filled Global Leadership in the African Diaspora.

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## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my babies and tribe of four: Adrione, Charles Jr., Carmise, and Imari, who have always been my main cheerleaders in everything God inspires me to do. I'm so blessed to serve you all in the role of Mother, friend, mentor, and Nana!

Your love and support will always remain forever in my heart.

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the notion the past can never be removed, disassembled or altered, variant versions of African American history continue to serve as a fluid document in time without accountability, acknowledgement, or consciousness of the liabilities associated with the African diaspora. Studies show an estimated 12.5 million African men, women, and children were forcibly transported as part of the transatlantic slave trade, an egregious act that remains impactful to this day. African Americans represent 12% of the American population, but constitute 2.3 million, or 34%, of the total 6.8 million in correctional facilities. Though African American children make up 14% of the child population, they constitute 28% of the children in foster care. There is also a definitive line of debarkation suggesting the Black church's absence has also contributed to the maladies gravely affecting the family unit, culture, and community. To validate this hypothesis, the conflict and structural theory in conjunction with the empowerment/anti-oppressive perspective will establish the dynamic in operation by outlining the four categories: The Great Awakening (The importance of present true facts); The Great Divide (The Western Civilization's single-axis on racism and proposed alternatives); The Thesis (The African diaspora's Lasting Impact); and a viable corrected plan of action (Artifact) reflecting the embodiment of Christian worldviews, African Centered social work practice, and the Family Advocacy Research Project Center (FAPRC). This bridge connector between the community and the church will support the emphatical need for an inspired, global, and spirit-filled educational platform of Africology, a trauma informed church, and an African American Collaborative network of services. It is believed that with this system, the church's engagement will spearhead a platform designed to renew a



nation to a positive level of homeostasis while reducing crime, the high rate of recidivism, child abuse, domestic violence, and a healthy level of spiritual engagement.

## SECTION 1:

### THE PROBLEM

#### **Introduction**

In preparation for this project, a mainstream perspective was generated on the intersectionality of racism, social injustices, the African American Race, and the Black church with emphasis on the latter. Given the religious organization's finite posture, active advocacy for human rights, and African Christianity's historical roots, it seemed only prudent to highlight the church's current silence and quiet disengagement as a major proponent to the systemic and social issues, traumatic experiences, and disproportionality of equality witnessed amongst this nation and its community. What was once considered an anomaly has now blossomed into a perpetual epidemic bounded by an inadequate structural framework that negates supporting the Black community from a socio-economic and socio-political platform.

#### **The Problem**

The hypothesis strongly suggests the current dysfunctionality within the African American culture and family unit stems from the disruptive homeostasis and lack of equilibrium produced from the African diaspora, the Trans-Atlantic African Slave trade, an unjust Western Civilization paradigm, and a lack of ethical leadership and social engagement from the Black church due to its insufficient structural framework of absenteeism. This lack of engagement is denoted as the primary concern in the ability to renew a nation because, historically, the church has served as a refuge against economic

abuse, social disparities, and the building of healthy communities, especially in the area of emotional support when there was no vindication for injustice. The Black church has always served as a beacon of light in building and maintaining education systems, reigning as the family support advisor, and shaping of young creative minds to achieve greater heights from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. She has served the African diaspora well, especially in the area of education as the innovator of Historically Black colleges with financial support and spiritual guidance.<sup>1</sup>

Given the current state of the African American community at large, and this level of absenteeism from the church, it is believed that without an effective presence, the definitive correlation of maladaptive behaviors associated with the culture such as family violence, child abuse, addictions, wrongful imprisonment, the high rate of recidivism, and a skewed child protection agency that often leads to African American children being overwhelmingly misrepresented in the child welfare system (the new segue into the American Prison population), will continue to rise—thus becoming the true catalyst to the nation's problems.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marvin Andrew McMickle, *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage* (Chicago, IL: Judson Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Isha W. Metzger et al., "Healing Interpersonal and Racial Trauma: Integrating Racial Socialization into Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy for African American Youth," *Child Maltreatment* 26 (2021): 17.

## **The Story**

In reviewing the Western Civilization's present functioning ecosystem and exclusive enclave, there is a dire need to integrate a conceptual framework that acknowledges and addresses the current traditional paradigm's continuum of damage while establishing potential solutions hinging on forming a trauma informed methodology of care. This formation of support is comprised of the concepts of being, knowing, and doing, which is examined through the following four categories: History Matters (The Great Awakening); The Western Civilization's single-axis on racism (Great Divide); The African diaspora's Lasting Impact (Thesis), and a viable and soluble corrected action plan (Artifact) that reflects the embodiment of Christian worldviews, African-centered social work practice, and the Family Advocacy Research Project Center, which is the bridge connector between the community and the church.

Now with all things being equal, a viable theoretical approach regarding this study must also include various levels of theoretical perspectives that serve believers, non-believers, those not of African descent, interfaith and interracial relationships, and cultural competency from a global worldview. It is also important to note that this is not critical assault at the Black church, but an attempt to establish an understanding that the Western Civilization's issues continue to affect the culture through societal challenges, racial tensions, economic chaos, and atrophy. While such pragmatics affect other ethnic groups, the impact on this ethnicity has become increasingly alarming as it seeks effective leadership.

According to Samson Fatokum, spirituality, politics, leadership, and anthropological chaos have always led to a societal anomaly that seemingly serves as a

segue to a poorly positioned church, society, and economy that requires a much-needed paradigm shift. The practicalities presented throughout this study strongly infer to America's inability to shift in a healthy and holistic posture that supports empirical data, historical theology, higher education, cultural competency and a balance of natural and spiritual laws to complement one another, as opposed to overt overshadowing.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, a tier theoretical approach consisting of a minor and major perspective of mezzo (group) and macro (community) practice must be considered to understand the views of the group being impacted, the community, and society as a whole. From this posture, one can critically analyze the affected system and work from two contexts. With mezzo the researcher will focus on the group's members and macro will support the community and organizations. Upon the completion of all research and becoming fully engaged in Western Civilization's history, Africology, African Christianity, the story of Christianity, African American history, the making and importance of the Black church, the Conflict and Structural theory in conjunction with the Empowerment/Anti-Oppressive Perspective (Minor) will validate the need, problem, and opportunity to rescue and redirect the dynamic in operation, which is the fallacy attached through shifting a traditional paradigm.

With this mentality at play, Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech may resurface from its proverbial state of limbo to address the massive loads of cultural psychosis that has derived from the lack of vindication to social injustices.<sup>4</sup> With this

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<sup>3</sup> Samson A. Fatokum, "Christianity in Africa: A Historical Appraisal," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 26, no. 2 (October 2005): 357-368.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: The Revised Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

massive dosage of understanding of all systems identified, and restoration to the Black church, this nation of African immigrants can shift from battle fatigue to a thriving mechanism of emotional and spiritual wholeness.<sup>5</sup> Her brilliance can now become cultivated while removing the notion that African Americans have no place in this Western Culture, but, for now, resistance and traditional paradigms remain in place.

Therefore, we must concern ourselves with the narratives of future generations by advocating equality and justice for all and not let them view themselves as disrupted systems plagued by unjust social policies and practices. We must also consider the spiritual sphere of influence when trying to remain biblically centered and ask, “What does the inspired word of God say of such instances?” In order to successfully address such queries, a new level of consciousness, awareness, and understanding must be forged in the direction of education. After all, the late Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, vigorous insight must be provided from a quantitative and qualitative research approach to prove cause and effect among variables from a holistic viewpoint (biological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual). A true Great Awakening!

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<sup>5</sup> Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement*.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson Mandela Foundation, “Education Initiatives,” Nelson Mandela Foundation, <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/nm100-education> (accessed December 2022).

## The Great Awakening

As this document explores the ramifications of the African diaspora, one of the most pervasive questions relevant throughout this study is where is the voice of the Black church, and why has its silence and distance caused so much hurt, pain, desolation and disdain? It is believed by more than 48% of African Americans that the church's dismissive behavior has led to a huge void of hope, self-love, and self-respect according to Dr. Gardner C. Taylor. During a festschrift at the Morehouse School of Religion, Dr. Taylor spoke to an elite group of scholars on the topic of African American Clergy in the 21st century. He posed two questions: how could the Black church turn her back on the continent of their heritage, Mother Africa, and could this egregious act be responsible for some of the problems experienced in America's Christendom?<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Taylor reminded the audience most churches seen today once contained the word African in their designation and discussed why this was needed. He also spoke to the vibrancy of caring for the community, embracing cultural roots, and understanding the true nature of God. The father of Deans peered earnestly at the clergy, and asked his audience if they truly understood the necessity of the Christian Black church. He described her as a beacon for civil rights, justice, and an advocate of social and political equality, health, crime, religion, economic endeavors, and fair and adequate education accommodations for the African American in the absence of a foundation in a foreign nation. He continued to speak of her great accomplishments that led to the established formation of the Niagara movement founded by W.E.B. Dubois, William Monroe, and

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<sup>7</sup> Robert L. Deveau, *From Apathy to Activism: Social Justice in the Black Church* (Chicago, IL: Robert L. Deveau, 2021), 9.

Mary Talbert. This movement gained great momentum in the political arena as it was forged inwardly in a quest for racial wealth, pride, respect, and equality. Rebutted narratives suggested African Americans were inferior to the oppressors, and that African descendants should never let anyone forget that God is the ruler of us all.

Booker T. Washington was also a highlighted voice within the church. Although his message differed in the sense of accommodational propaganda, he, too, made wondrous political strides for the betterment of people of color while vehemently holding dearly to Biblical principles. The Niagara movement reached the pinnacle of success with the church as its platform. However, this success became a threat to a racially motivated mob of 5,000 White citizens who destroyed the land, homes, and property of African Americans which resulted in the Springfield, Illinois Massacre. Communities were destroyed, six Black men were killed, and two others; one being an 84-year-old for being married to a white woman. This destructive act resulted in over 2,000 African Americans fleeing for safety, but that did not hinder the resilience of a God inspired organization, but rather served as the catalyst for the development of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People).<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Taylor went on to inform the African American clergy group that incidents like this only made the church stronger, as she continued to support, shape, and mold people throughout history. These people who grew to understand their purpose in the midst of the Black church included W.E.B Dubois; Booker T. Washington; Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of Bethune-Cookman College; Philip Randolph, who

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<sup>8</sup> Marvin Andrew McMickle, *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage* (Chicago, IL: Judson Press, 2002).



established the first African American Labor Union and successfully demanded desegregation of U.S Armed Forces; and Howard Thurman, the Dean of Howard University's Chapel, who also focused on the guidelines of Ghandi in bridging interfaith and interracial relationships. Pauli Murray was another person who is responsible for coining the term, "Jane Crow" to describe the discrimination faced by Black women and was one of the first female Episcopal priests. This is the power of the Black church and without it, the people of African descent perish. No matter how one tries to separate the notion of church and state, the word of God gently expresses the infectious need of oneness, especially when it comes to an oppressed people. Therefore, achieving an understanding of African culture and Christianity, Western Christianity, and the church's role as suggested by Dr. Taylor is paramount and alludes to why the masses appear lost.

From a micro perspective, psychology and social work practice provides healing to the body, and from a macro viewpoint, healing comes to the environment, but the soul remains in limbo awaiting a spiritual healing that is long overdue for the African American culture.<sup>9</sup> This professional and spiritual dichotomy is often negated or erroneously applied when trying to achieve holistic healing. When faced with such contrast, I'm inspired by the author of 1 Corinthians 15:46 who writes, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (KJV).<sup>10</sup> The method in operation is the belief that in order to effect significant change,

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<sup>9</sup> Joe M. Shriver, *Human Behavior and the Social Environment: Shifting Paradigms in Essential Knowledge for Social Work Practice* (Boston: Pearson, 2011), 27.

<sup>10</sup> King James, *The Holy Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 9,

empirical data, psychology, spirituality, sociology, African history, and social work strength-based models must all operate in concert to achieve the primary objective.

Therefore, we must lay aside our pride and become students who are willing to learn and adhere to the importance of rightfully dividing the Word of God through sound doctrine, historical lineage, and true biblical theology in order to empathize with the struggle of our brethren. Jesus gave many parables and scriptures that give insight on righteousness and equality for all, regardless of race, culture, and ethnicity, yet ignorance prevails. Maybe it's time to succumb to the wisdom of the Word of God!

### **A God Centered Methodology**

When it comes to oppression, the most insightful assertion ever made regarding the need for a righteous paradigm shift is found in the Gospel of Matthew 11:12 where Jesus states, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (KJV). This profound verse is striking when applied to the survival and current state of the African American family as it seeks true liberation and freedom that can only come from our Lord and Savior. Metaphorically speaking, the scripture presents a sense of cogency to take possession of benefactors that serve in the best interest of marginalized communities, the disenfranchised, and underserved populations. Its passive voice is not a physical threat to the well-being of others but is a sincere desire to partake in the true Kingdom of Heaven for all nations of the earth with emphasis being applied to disrupted systems like the African American race, her family, socioeconomics, her culture, ethnicity, and our most beloved Black church. While man has created his/her own distorted viewpoint of God's word, His true nature and Holy Spirit should serve as a connector of love and support between one

another, not a line of division. According to Estrada, the Spirit is a liberator that should empower those who are oppressed.<sup>11</sup> For the Doctors of the church who have been ordained as Christ Ambassadors and administrators of freedom and liberty, this role remains lacking regarding the Black Community. When it comes to displaying love toward one another and humanity at large, we seemingly stop at salvation and sanctification, negating the fact that God so loved the world that He gave His only son—the son who died for all (John 3:16). If we move towards the heart and suffering of Christ and love mankind, meaning all human beings, we learn to allow the Spirit to lead and guide us into all truth. The body of Christ has focused so much on our differences that we forsake the message of achieving the two greatest commandments and the giving of ourselves to accomplish the unobtainable.

The Gospel of Mark describes the church in its current state in Mark 12:28-34:

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him” (ESV).

If Jesus is the very definition of love, howbeit that His redemptive work is misconstrued and only beneficial to the oppressors? Is this not contrary to the scripture Himself?

How does the Black church remain silent through such spiritual atrocities and not have compassion for the marginalized? Is this not the character of Christ or have we

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<sup>11</sup> Rodolfo Galvan Estrada III, *A Pneumatology of Race in the Gospel of John: An Ethnocritical Study* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2020), 18.

become so desensitized to America's structural socialization that a dissociative posture of forgetting who we are in Him has naturally developed, an eerie silence that speaks volumes? Better yet, rather than embracing the character of Christ, have we embraced the characteristics of unforgiveness, hurt, and pain that often produces the fruit of anger which would account for much of the self-deprecating behaviors and societal infractions constantly witnessed throughout society?

### **An Example of Christ**

A great example of embracing Christ's character amid imposed economic struggle and racial turmoil is the Civil Rights' Advocate and spiritual leader, Pastor L.L.M. Macmaster. While visiting Cape Town, South Africa, for my residency, our cohort had the unforgettable opportunity of visiting the University of Western Cape Town. It was a revelatory encounter filled with great wisdom on the importance of forgiveness and how biblical principles, precepts and the spirit of the one living God gave much latitude in the plight of dismantling the spear of Apartheid. Reverend MacMaster spoke fervently on holding his faith as the moral compass and how it kept him balanced as a young student when hatred tried desperately to enter his heart. He expounded on how the ill treatment of people of color caused many trials, tribulations, confusion, confinement, and trauma while fighting for the power of basic humanity and freedom. I recall this statement of forgiveness so vividly during his lecture: "It was my faith that constantly reminded me that they didn't know any better but were doing what the enemy would have them to do: steal, kill, and destroy. It's only through the love and power of Jesus Christ that such

mindsets could ever be changed. Therefore, I stood firm on my faith, on the word of God, and on the rights of all men being equal.”<sup>12</sup>

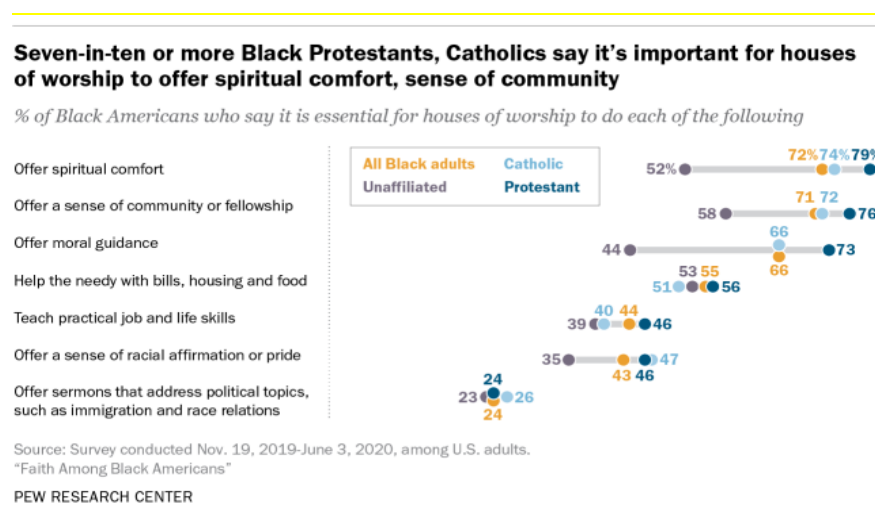
After an awkward pause, he began to reflect on his best friend, Cliffie Brown, who was killed due to his active engagement against Apartheid. This was a brutal and soulful loss, but rather than mourn in silence, the campus, surrounding communities, and the church continued to mobilize and stand firm against such inhumanity. In taking a stand for justice, it was abundantly clear that many lives were lost for the sake of culture, race, and ethnicity. During his recollection of hatred from those threatened by change and motivated by greed and power, he simultaneously pointed to his religious temple near the campus, and exhaled affectionately that it was the strength of God that carried him and others through such perilous times of civil unrest. Could this striking account possibly signify why many Black churches willingly accept the erroneous narrative that politics have no place in the church while adopting a form of quiet advocacy?

This conclusion is drawn from the recent survey conducted by Jeff Diamant on the Black church’s influence in society: four in ten Black Americans believe the Black church’s role is not very impactful, that it has very little influence, and should take a greater stand. One in ten Black adults feel the church has too much influence and that politics is not for the church. However, the same study reports that 47% of Black Americans are inclined to believe Black churches have less influence than fifty years ago, a fact that is also shared by 47% of Generation Z. Another survey conducted by the Pew

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<sup>12</sup> L.L. Macmaster, “Jakes Divinity School, Capetown, South Africa 2022 Residency,” *The African Diaspora on Apartheid*, (October 2022).

Research Center, “Faith Among Black Americans,” suggests the church should be more engaged. See figure 1.0.



*Figure 1.0 — % of Black Americans who say it is essential for houses of worship to do each of the following<sup>13</sup>*

According to Dr. Antipas Harris, the notion of quiet advocacy is referenced in Revelations 2:5, “The community hears three commands: remember from where you have fallen repent and do the first works” (ESV). Dr. Harris says, “That remembering where is a suggestion that the church had a former state where its current activity devoid of love did not exist.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the church does have a responsibility and a voice about politics, social equality, industrial advancement, global partnership, and the suffering of others. Yet, a continuum of neglect in supporting the Black community from a socio-economic and socio-political platform remains a steady constant. This practice is recognized as the insufficient structural framework referred to throughout this document.

<sup>13</sup> Jeff Diamant, “The Black Faith in America,” Pew Center Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/staff/jeff-diamant/> (accessed December 2022).

<sup>14</sup> Antipass L. Harris, *Is Christianity the White Man's Religion? How God is for the People of Color* (Oxford, England: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 15.

However, to bridge the gap lacking between church, the African American community, and the African diaspora, a thorough understanding of the Church's evolution must be provided from an academic and communicable posture which will highlight why these incredulous complexities exist between the evolving church, a marginalized race, and a system of social injustice when history does not provide the whole truth.

### **The True Story of Christianity**

In the book, *The story of Christianity*, the author informs his readers that revisiting, revising, and rewriting history may be somewhat of an oddity to some, but very necessary in the sense that things are never recorded as they truly happened.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, revisiting is always needed to ensure accuracy along the way. There is a story to be told of Christianity that necessitates understanding of all the ambiguities that define the church and its importance to mankind. Things change, people change, ideas change, and yet the Word of God remains the same, but what do we say of the Temple of the Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ? Can we define it as a refuge, the sanctuary, a spiritual battleground, a place of praise and worship, or the living organism that various forms of liturgy has defined it to be? Whatever the associatory terms, the central parallel is a loving God and Savior for the world but a Kingdom flawed in the most perilous of manners.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downer's Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 204.

<sup>16</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, "The Call for Reformation," in *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: Harper Collins Ebooks, 2021), 47,

Personally, I think the Black church resembles a spiritual institution of learning where people learn the ways of the living God through their understanding of the Pentateuch (Torah), prophets (early, late, and little), Old Testament, Psalms, and New Testament. In this organization, there is only one true God. Salvation is presented as a new way of life, a renewed mind, and a right spirit as people form new beliefs in the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). From a Socratic standpoint, such teachings are designed to elevate the study of the mind, body, and spirit to the strongest forms of love and compassion for all people. However, the subject of race and ethnicity has always presented itself as a major fault line since the inception of the Christian faith. How can this be when considering Christianity's origin?

#### *African History and Christianity Matters*

According to Thomas Oden Christianity's foundation lies in the bedrock of Africa, the mother of origin, rather than the European and Western narrative the world has become accustomed to hearing and believing. Without the intellect of the African mind, church history is extremely fragmented. Not only has western civilization distorted this view but it has negated African history and established the dichotomy of the African mind versus the Christian mind. Oden suggests the Christian mindset is formulated by philosophy, psychoanalysis, literature, and physics, while the African mind embraces ideologies and home-based literary productions. Globally, this speaks volumes because Christianity is infused by the moral compasses and philosophies from African literature, education, history, and ideas. Christianity's origins hold the seeds of the early African Christian Ancestors who were endowed with courage, resiliency, and intellect. These ancestors formed the world's most dominant belief system, but they now lie dormant



until their discovery by their spiritual descendants. Oden's insight gives much clarity to how and why African Christianity is the greatest story ever told, and the greatest mystery yet to be discovered. Consequently, our ancestors' discovery is vitally important to a nation seeking love and belonging.<sup>17</sup>

This deep level of faith and resurrection is the story of African heroes who have always fought the good fight of faith through sacrifice and sometimes death. It illuminates how the retched hand of man has caused a nation to silently implode. As one continues to understand the historical factors of Christianity, the footprint is wide as the roots are found within the borders of Southwest Asia, the Middle East, the Nile River, Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, and Ethiopia during the first millennium BC. To further support the notion of historical ignorance leading to the Africa American's present condition, it is prudent to highlight the misconception of Christianity being a post-colonial introduction to the continent of Africa and not the very fabric of the faith's beginning. The historical appraisal assails such views are perplexing and problematic in nature, because the age of Christianity has been taken out of context and needs vast correction to establish reconstructive ideologies that are now needed to ignite growth and spiritual dominance within this great culture.

Like Oden, Fatokum gives a detailed account of where Christianity was actively practiced in Alexandria, Egypt. Although the Bible does not explicitly state this, it can be found all throughout the localities described in the New Testament including the flight of the first family into Egypt after the birth of Jesus, the African/Ethiopian who was converted to Christianity, and Simone of Ceyrene from North Africa who assisted Christ

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<sup>17</sup> Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, 204.

in carrying the cross. It is also believed both the Apostle Thomas and Mark brought the Gospel to Alexandria and Egypt. Fatokum goes a step further to assist the reader in understanding the importance of the early Egyptian church by suggesting Christian converts were not only in Alexandria, but some were Jewish as well. In 220 AD, he explains that over seventy-five bishops were in place, and by 250 AD, there were over one-hundred and fifty. This speaks to the rapid spread of Christianity in North Africa as numbers continued to rise. The Christendom and Bishopric were well organized and consisted of intellectual mechanisms that ensued spirituality and was responsible for many significant contributions.<sup>18</sup>

As time progressed, we find the primary headquarters for African Christianity were Alexandria, Carthage, and Ethiopia. In efforts to better understand how the breakdown and dismantling of the culture within Christianity slowly began, it's important to understand that Egypt remained very indigenous in their language while North Africa relied heavily on Latin with occasional sermons in the local tongues of Berber and Punic. To further highlight the existence of African Christianity prior to the transatlantic slave trade, Emma George Ross asserts that Christianity was vibrant and well-practiced in Ethiopia during the fourth century under emperor Ezana, the Aksumite. What's more remarkable is the kingdom's location, which is positioned between the Red Sea and India. Christianity spread there when trading began with Christian Roman merchants. Soon, a more diverse population integrated into the community and their first coin system was created. Regarding the Ethiopian's African Christianity, there is great empirical data to support a popular and effective economy along with a sophisticated architecture of

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<sup>18</sup> Fatokum, "Christianity in Africa: A Historical Appraisal," 357-368.

church construction. These developments are due to the continent's wealth, organized religion, intellect, and ethical leadership. However, the question remains, what happened to these legacies and why?

*Western Christianity's Method of Power and Control*

Great theologians continue to echo Oden's sentiment that suggests the Christian mindset is formulated by philosophy, psychoanalysis, literature, and physics. Nevertheless, objectively speaking, it is also understood that Christianity's primary focus is Jesus Christ. However, history has proven time after time that the concept of love and belonging in the faith continues to find interrelationships and interfaith associations intolerable mixtures of toxicity. This monotheistic approach has controlled vast regions of the world through the belief of one God whose ideology revolved around death and resurrection. It's an idealistic dogma metaphorically represented in the rising and falling of great nations, empires, great men, and dynasties. Subsequently, this religious practice of power and control is believed to be responsible for the near extinction of the Jewish population including Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand's exile of the Moors while stripping the people of their riches because of their Islamic beliefs. This whitewashing of Christianity and the dismantling of the African culture robbed the people of their rich heritage and invaluable tribal ties.

There is a disturbing dichotomy of a loving and powerful belief system that can both create an institution of believing the dead can be risen while providing a proclamation that was responsible for a series of holy crusades and forcing Islamic rulers to fight for the holy land they did not believe in or support. Another example of this insane methodology in practice is the belief the African slave deservedly suffered due to

a 400-year biblical curse while stripped of all dignity through the transatlantic slave trade. This same premise of power and control increased the Catholic Church's sovereign power in the selling of blessings, absolution of sin, and the sale of indulgences amongst the papacy. All this was done in the name of religion and led to a massive reform of change known as the "Ninety-Five Theses".<sup>19</sup>

Although Luther, as the author of the "Ninety-Five Theses," targeted the plight of the poor, his insistence to remit such matters arbitrarily targeted the Jewish community and its riches, as well as the wealth of the papacy. He also spoke to the incredulous behavior that the pardon of sin could be attained, not through God, but with a monetary cost. The "Ninety-Five Theses" advocated against such acts and led to the split of the Catholic Church. A powerful move indeed, but corruption continued to grow and the word "heresy" became a household term that could cause one to lose his or her head at any given time. While the protestant movement created a major paradigm shift structured through humility, humbleness, celibacy, repentance, and faith, the issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and diversity continued to lie at the foot of the cross. This was especially true regarding the Jewish faith. While Luther's advocacy for righteousness was evident and sparked the Protestant regime, the inability to tolerate other religious sects and cultures continues to form a huge problem. This continued belief has created the need, problem, and opportunity (NPO) for understanding the Christian faith's invasive position and impact on the African diaspora within Western civilization's single axis on racism. This is where the modern-day church continues to serve as a conduit to such practices.

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<sup>19</sup> Gonzalez, "The Call for Reformation," 47.

In today's dispensation, everyone has the right to believe as he or she desires. However, the constructed paths of Semitic and non-Semitic still exist but from a western viewpoint: Afro-centric and Euro-centric. This problem remains due to the historical complications that led to the Great Schism divide in Western Europe. Rather than addressing the flaws of corruption, power, control, greed, racism, uncharted beliefs that inspired peasant revolts, Holy Wars, expulsion of different ethnicities, enslavement, and the destruction of monarchies, the church let these qualities grow and we are now plagued with institutional racism, police brutality, Supreme Court unethical decisions, insane prison sentences, unfair child welfare practices, dismantling of ethnic cultures and social injustices without a peaceful resolve.

Christianity's holy power has massive affects that should be used for love, belonging, healing, grace, mercy, and the embracement of an omnipotent, omniscient, omni-present, and all-knowing God. Yet, in its need for insatiable power and control, the intolerance and tremendous exclusion of others remains an issue amongst evangelicals and other elitists. Such people, passionate about power, divisiveness, and elitism, serve as a segue to understanding the importance of the Black church where the power of God is not predicated on the color of skin, nor origin of birth. Hence, introducing the intersection of the African diaspora within Western Civilization's single axis on racism is vitally important.

## SECTION 2:

### OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

#### **The Great Divide**

Proverbs 4:7 says, “Wisdom *is* the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (KJV). As a believer, the church is my sanctuary, and although her flaws are many, she remains the refuge of comfort. At the same time, there is much to be accomplished as she remains separate from the wider community and continues to diminish as time progresses. Due to a lack of reform and intolerance to making cultural competence an absolute, Christianity is often misconstrued as a one-dimensional cultural approach in serving a white God and leaving everything else to paganism or emotionalism. This level of “Whitewashing” has caused nations of people to be ostracized and traumatized by the misrepresentation of the scriptures and is no doubt accountable for historical acts of barbarity like Manifest Destiny, the Trail of Tears, the transatlantic slave trade, the Civil War, and Jim Crow laws. All are believed to be crucial mileposts on the journey of the United States’ independence as the country embarked upon a divine vision for the new nation.

#### **Plato’s Cave**

Many may frown upon the structured layout of this study, but the argument is based on the historical accounts that present like the Allegory of Plato’s cave where change is not a welcoming commodity. Therefore, the proposed alternative of educating society on the fundamentals of cause and effect is a viable alternative to the African

American rebirth in understanding the purpose of the present paradigm. In becoming so focused on the hate and pain of the oppressor, we've become obsessed with pain rather than focusing on viable solutions. I stopped to ponder why it was I was reminded of the Allegory of Plato's cave during my research.<sup>20</sup> In the allegory, people chained in the cave only see the shadows of what passes behind them and they assume the shadows are the ultimate reality, not knowing the objects themselves or the world outside of the cave. The African diaspora has been bound for so long, the hands, feet, and head are immobile and so is the oppressor. The transatlantic slave trade is like the cave and there is a constant struggle to find peace, acceptance, validation, and equality within the cave for one group, while the other is mentality satisfied being inside the cave. Like the individual who wandered out of the cave and into the light, finding existence and expressing her joy and desire to be free, the Black man seemingly serves as that prototype. However, the current culture finds this to be an annoyance. In the allegory, the person who finds resolve and peace wants to share, but is considered out of her mind because, existentially speaking, a rebirthing is taking place.

A paradigm shift has occurred and things can no longer remain the same, but rather than share in the triumph of truth and bond as a community, the prisoners seek her demise because it's all they've ever known. Therefore, the words of L.L. McMaster ring louder when he says Americans do not know any better as the cave is the only existence America has truly ever witnessed. The duality of the African diaspora's impact is too painful and complex for all members in the cave, so each party fights tirelessly to erase it, rather than explore the reality, face it, and embrace that truth and

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<sup>20</sup> Plato, *The Allegory of the Cave* (Independently Published, 2019), 7.

each other, thereby removing the fault lines. Therefore, it is up to the oppressed to remove the mask of enculturation and indoctrination and drop the chains of symbolic enslavement through promoting emotional, psychological, and spiritual empowerment in the church, in the homes, in the barber shops, in the daycares, on social media, and all throughout the airways until swords of hatred and anger are diffused and free existence becomes the norm.

### **The Jewish Support System**

Another concept to be considered is how to apply the nature of healing that has worked for other ethnic groups who have suffered similar injustices. I'm enthralled with my Jewish brethren who openly detail the accounts of the Holocaust and its ongoing traumatic impact. In efforts to build a healthy and viable ecosystem, they educate, embrace, and have established outreach service centers equipped with an integrated care system adjacent to most synagogues, like the Keshet Program.<sup>21</sup> This program is designed to support the community, clergy, and its staff from a holistic viewpoint through the communities of Temple Torat Sinai in Craston, Temple Emanu-El, and the Congregation Beth Shalom in Providence. The position of these organizations are critical to supporting the point of this thesis. The impact of the Holocaust was injurious and its effects lasting. It also presents a clear distinction of the intersectionality of class, race, religion, racism, social injustices, and trauma, but with the assistance of the temples, the

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<sup>21</sup> Jewish Collaborative Services, "The Keshet Project," 2022, <http://www.keshetproject.com> (accessed December 1, 2022).



community rebuilding is concrete. The infractions to their community are well noted and the world at large acknowledges their plight.

Through inserting the struggles of other cultures who have suffered a similar historical dilemma, the African diaspora can learn from the Jewish community. In embracing the atrocities, they have grown significantly through constant advocacy, remembrance, and acknowledging the insufficient framework that caused such detriments. However, much of the growth is due to providing a holistic and collaborative environment where cultural practices are interrelated, and scientific research is examined such as the biological roots of PTSD. Through Jewish collaborative services and researchers like Dr. Rachel Yehuda, who has dedicated her career to understanding PTSD in Holocaust survivors, veterans, and other victims of trauma, the research and healing of this community has progressed significantly. As a young girl raised in a community of Holocaust survivors who religiously shared their stories of torture and brutality, Dr. Yehuda noticed the impact on the children of the survivors as well. She described these members of the community as vigilant, hyper-sensitive, and they sometimes displayed emotional paralysis. These observations and her witness of post-traumatic stress disorders prompted her pursuit of neuroscience, and she began her journey into biological psychiatry. As a psychiatrist at the James J. Peters Veterans Affairs Medical Center in the Bronx, New York, she now serves the veteran population as well. This is another group highly exposed to strong emotional stressors.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Rachel Yehuda, "How Trauma Resilience Cross Generations," Mount Sinai, November 2017, <http://nountsinai.org> (accessed January 2022).

All these samples are presented to illustrate that the issues at hand for the African American family, community, and church are not an exception to the increased risks associated with PTSD but are one of the many communities showing how withstanding such cruelty does have a lasting impact and should be addressed with empathy, compassion, science, and spirituality. Therefore, the stories of slavery or the Holocaust will always be rehearsed, due to the generational trauma and fear of the possibility of it happening again. Just like America has recorded the history of her wars, the story of how a nation became and remains divided must also be told, especially when the racial trauma remains ongoing.

### **The Western Civilization's Single Axis on Racism**

Now that we have an understanding of the following concepts: the epistemology of African Christianity, the development of an entire nation and its amazing history, the African diaspora's view of the Black church and why history is important, one can see how Western Civilization's rise of democracy juxtaposed a structural framework encompassing a Christian methodology to forever cripple a nation within a nation. The current axis is clearly ruled by a Marxist method of elitist versus underserved and disenfranchised populations.<sup>23</sup> Here again, we see God being posited through the love of money, greed, power, and control.

In the discovery and making of America, the new inhabitants also found themselves in a new land. Under a gripping force by the British regime while trying to thrive and establish autonomy and a new governmental system, the young citizens held

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<sup>23</sup> Alex Locay, *How Christianity Built Western Civilization* (Oxford: Westbow Press, 2020), 50.

true to their traditional Christian dogma, politically and religiously. I believe Jefferson said it best, “The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time; the hand of force may destroy but cannot disjoin them.”<sup>24</sup> However, that same God did not extend such liberties for the people of color who were not included within this ecosystem as members, but precious commodities for much needed access to free land and labor. Hence, the marking of the Great Divide.

### *An Established Paradigm*

The new continent’s collection of theories, assumptions, beliefs, concepts, and ideas contributed to a worldview that created a structural framework known as the American way of life. The colonies joined together on this foundation where such faith and philosophies facilitated an ecosystem for its own benefit, growth, and survival. Within this system, everything must look, feel, and act according to the assigned visual infrastructure of physical structures, genetic makeup, cultural views, spirituality, and mentality. Everything and everyone must acclimate and accommodate the working schematics. Anything or anyone in opposition to this culture is considered threatening. Hence, the notion of Plato’s Cave. Therefore, the importance of culture and its makeup must be identified. Ethos begins with traditions like the celebration of holidays and establishing institutions such as the education system, government policies, and collections of ideas, concepts, and beliefs presented by friends and family.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *The Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 50.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 11.

However, the biggest part of this equation is our individual and collective identities that define who we are and who we should become. Right or wrong, this intricate establishment is ingrained and almost impossible to change in those whose personal worldviews fear what change looks like in the future. According to the great scientist and philosopher, Thomas Kuhn, this level of dogma creates a methodology that if followed too closely, leads to a mindset that some things should never be questioned and creates a dominant paradigm where things will inadvertently remain the same, regardless of the scientific data provided supporting the need for a traditional paradigm shift. Kuhn's philosophy gives insight to how the transatlantic slave trade can be justified, and its impact ignored. We also understand how Jefferson could vehemently proclaim God's support, and not speak against the activities noted in Figure 1. Quite frankly, it's a simple resolve of self-preservation overshadowing the love of God, or ignorance led by the pride of life, the lust of flesh, and just like that, the wealth of Africa becomes everyone's gain.

Slave exports from Africa on the Trans-Atlantic route		
Period	Number of slaves accounted for	%
1450-1500	[81,000] <sup>1</sup>	-
1500-1600	328,000 <sup>2</sup>	2.9
1601-1700	1,348,000	12.0
1701-1800	6,090,000	54.2
1801-1900	3,466,000 <sup>3</sup>	30.9
Total	11,232,000	100.0
1. Mainly traded as a commodity along the Atlantic coast for gold as well as a small number exported to Europe and Atlantic islands. 2. Does not include up to 50,000 slaves exported to Europe and Atlantic islands. 3. Includes those exported as <i>contract labourers</i> or <i>libertos</i> by the French and Portuguese.		
Source: <i>Transformations in Slavery</i> by Paul E. Lovejoy Cambridge University Press, 2000, ISBN 0-521-78430-1 Derived from tables: 2.1 and 3.1		

Figure 2.1 — Slave exports from Africa on the Trans-Atlantic route<sup>26</sup>

### *The Wealth of Africa*

The transatlantic slave trade is accountable for one of the greatest forced resettlements and ongoing human trafficking event ever documented. However, it is important to know it all began on a journey for gold. The great Mans Musa pilgrimage to Mecca sparked the interest of many during this journey. The king toured with a procession of over ten thousand soldiers, five hundred slaves, and camels with hundreds of pounds of gold throughout Egypt and sent waves of notoriety telling of the riches that could be obtained. The ruler of the Mali empire is still hailed as the wealthiest king in history with his pilgrimage to Mecca, as he used his affluence to build schools, universities, libraries, and mosques. The word of Musa's wealth and influence spread

<sup>26</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

beyond Africa after his voyage to Mecca, and tales of his enormous generosity took place sometime between 1332 and 1337. By the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, the region was sought after for gold with the deployment of the first Portuguese voyage along the Atlantic coast of Africa in the 1430s in search of one thing: gold. They began sailing the Kongo coast around 1480 and did not establish the first trading post until 1482 with Elmina becoming the first European trading fort for those who were enslaved. Trades included everything from guns, ammunition, spices, and pepper. However, it would be the indigenous people found along the Atlantic coast of Africa that proved to be the most lucrative asset, because they could be used as porters on the Saharan routes and in the Islamic territory for the Muslim Merchants.<sup>27</sup>

By the 1500s, the continent of Africa was thriving with diversity in culture, politics, and education through science, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, and the art of metal work through blacksmithing. However, trading was very prominent along the West African coast, as African traders exchanged handcrafted extravagant goods for fabricated articles from the Portuguese and Europeans traders. Consequently, the selling of those incarcerated for crimes or enslaved for family indebtedness was a common practice during this time. As the northern colonies continue to flourish, so did supply and demand through the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. During this time, sugar and coffee plantations required more skilled laborers and the purchasing of slaves increased from Ghana to the southern and eastern regions of Africa. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, trading no longer existed, but the captivity of free men, women, and children increased substantially and spread

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<sup>27</sup> J. Tesfu, "Mansa Musa," Blackpast.org, 2004, <http://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/musa-mansa-1280-1337/> (accessed 2021).

throughout a broad band of central and south-central Africa, from Eastern Kongo to Somalia and Mozambique.

Once trade transactions were complete, the captured were boarded to journey the infamous Middle Passage of a triangular trade route from Europe to Africa and then to North America. The conditions suffered while chained in the ships were inhumane as adults and children, and sometimes families, were forced to cohabitate in small spaces while being shackled together. Studies show that at least 15% of the passengers did not survive the passage, as individuals were wrenched forever from mothers and fathers, husbands, and wives, brothers, and sisters, and other loved ones, and stripped of all dignity, identity, culture, community, love, and respect in order to establish strict obedience to America's cause. Many of the great people of Africa were now branded, chained, and subjugated to torturous rituals to ensure daily compliance to the new life of forced labor that generally ended in death. The year 1859 is recorded as the last voyage of slave shipment.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Theoretical Application**

The historical atrocities that continue to affect African Americans have been thoroughly highlighted, but the question becomes why has it continued? We must truly dissect this question to offer the renewing of a nation as a plausible and feasible task. What worked for the Jewish communities should be noted but will not work completely for the African diaspora due to the conflict and structural theory serving as the foundational tool in operation. This systems theory serves as an effective instrument

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<sup>28</sup> Wangarri Maathai, *The Challenge for Africa* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

when societies are struggling for power.<sup>29</sup> While it may appear to be a form of structural functionalism, conflict ensues when awareness rises, leading to the term “woke.” This new level of consciousness disrupts the makeshift structure that is advantageous to only one sphere of influence and leads to the need for truth in education. As this information of historical knowledge becomes a tool of enlightenment, one is properly informed and possess a level of consciousness that empowers him/her to re-advance. Consequently, the conflict is understood, and structure emerges as a result. In understanding the true origin of Christianity, an entire nation can become alive and properly functioning.

Studies show that an estimated 12.5 million African men, women, and children were seized from their homes and forcibly transported to the New World as part of the transatlantic slave trade to secure the success of one system while depleting all functionalities of the newly assigned minor system. Both systems consisted of traditional and dominant paradigms. However, Western Civilization’s forceful imprisonment of the African slaves created a vacuum that reduced African culture to a minor concept within the colony’s major operating system of assimilation. When a group or race is at a complete disadvantage, inferiority versus superiority ensues as culture and behaviors are forced through assimilation, and the minor group must conform to the terms of the majority. Hence, cultural racism became the new normal and projected anything associated with Euro-centric traits as being right and pure including the teachings of the Bible, history books, policies and laws, and this served as the rudiment to internalized supremacy, but there was a saving grace.

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<sup>29</sup> Shriver, *Human Behavior and the Social Environment*, 27.



Dr. Yolanda Pierce offers the resolve of a historical narrative that requires understanding the true nature of Christianity and its origin rather than embracing it as a capitalistic tool. This was indeed the role of the western church during the transatlantic slave trade, post-Civil War reformation, Jim Crow, and the civil rights movement. However, it has also been the role of some Black churches as well. Her teaching is inserted here as a methodology of leadership, a direction to begin renewing a nation, and how to successfully engage the church. Her efforts are derived from a mezzo concept where she focuses on families and various groups to empower the people by engaging in grassroots efforts that support not only the family, but the community as well which is similar to the Jewish communities previously mentioned. This strength-based model helps individuals connect with their inner and cultural assets, as well as rectifying the power imbalances and oppressive mandates that can only be assessed through a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual equation. The conflict will remain, though, until a new structure is established, such as the empowerment and anti-oppressive perspective.<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Olu Menjay addresses oppression via empowerment through the education of Black Protestantism that seemingly overshadows the nonsense of the transatlantic slave trade as the only connector to Christianity but it is the very essence of why all men move, live, and have their being. The solution-focused method lies in embracing the African

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<sup>30</sup> Yolanda Pierce, *Hell Without Fires: Slavery, Christianity, and the Antebellum Spiritual Narrative* (History of African-American Religion), (Carol, IL: University Press of Florida, 2015).

culture and social heritage, reclaiming religion as a God-given right, not a deterrent, and the deceptions of the oppressed are removed.<sup>31</sup>

The structural theory concept embraces African religious practices with a healthy respect toward regrouping and revitalizing Black religion in the form of revivals with education serving as the precursor. Based on the practicalities presented throughout this study, including the church's need for more engagement and a shift to a healthy and holistic posture, an anti-oppressive analysis of the following must serve as the starting point: historical theology, higher education, cultural competency, and a balance of natural and spiritual laws. These tenants must complement and not appear antagonistic in nature. Due to the depths of oppression within the current system, a more radical social change must be employed as well. Hosea 4:1 states, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God; I will also forget thy children" (KJV). While this passage speaks of a sinful nature, this does not complete the thought entirely. The revelation for this researcher strongly supports a radical social change through education that questions the false narratives responsible for hijacking Christianity and crippling a complete race with sordid and unfounded biblical ideologies.

While salvation and sanctification are the primary elements of freedom, a critical analysis of other social factors must be considered if diplomacy, social engagement, and cultural embracement shall prevail in balancing the struggle for power. Conceptually speaking, we must first address oppression in order to empower the oppressed, refute the

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<sup>31</sup> Olu Q. Menjay, "A Trailblazer of American Protestant Mission Work in Liberia," *Jakes Divinity Residency* (October 2021).

current structural functionalism, embrace the inner and cultural strengths that surpasses all systems of oppression, and allow the chief advocate, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to lead the way. Let us present the Word that was in the beginning, that was with God, because in the beginning was Him. Let us stand firm on the promises through the true knowledge of God and articulate a viable structure that will restore the church, a nation, and the true promised land for its inhabitants.

### **The Birthing of the Black church**

In the name of economic growth, this new functioning system (America) caused an open system (African slave) to become closed, hostile, and dysfunctional. The roles of family units were impaired, along with a lost sense of cultural identity. Folklore and established kingdoms became mere myths as the dwindling of dynasties became an acceptable and mandated norm. The colonizers were focused on growth and material wealth without conscious regard of the inhabitants. Everything known regarding home was becoming completely overshadowed by the notion that only the new group's identity mattered and the beauty of Africa became an aching memory. The multiplicity of cultures once celebrated throughout the African continent became  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a person in chains. However, one thing remained for sure: their spirituality.

This thought of Africology and African Christianity has presented much theological debate and plagues the minds of many African Americans as western history only associates their ancestry and Christianity with the transatlantic slave trade. However, Dr. Vince Bantu provides a view of Africology where Ethiopians and Egyptians were

well engrossed in the Christian faith long before the transatlantic Middle Passage.<sup>32</sup> Dr. Bantu presents a level of critical thinking through geographical placements of African Christianity that teeters on the scope of awareness, ancestry, and identity. Like Fayola, Dr. Bantu's claim is supported by providing powerful insight on global Christianity, especially in the area of the Roman empire, Nubian Ethiopia, the North African Christian, and the Nile Valley Civilization in order to dispel the myth of Christianity being the White man's religion. One of the most enlightening aspects of his teaching is the narrative of the two Egypts and their vast differences from one another: Coptic and Roman Catholicism. This separation was due to one being considered pagan and elitist, resulting in the birthing of the Catholic church, and the other being Hebrew/Judaism/Coptic where we find much of the written text pertaining to African attributes and cultural items. The Egyptian church is known as the Coptic, where hieroglyphics are rejected and the story of Joseph and Mary's flight to Egypt after the birth of Jesus prevails primarily due to proximity. He further explains how most Christians were Coptic speakers, and we find no concept of Europe during this time, but an Ethiopian, Nubian, and Egyptian identity.

These findings are pivotal to the re-direction of the church because Christianity has always been the dominant religion along the continent of Africa. He also points out there were females active within the early African church as well, just like church mothers such as Julian of Norwich, Sinclair of Alexandria, and Melania who were very integral in the development of Christianity. African music is also responsible for the

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<sup>32</sup> Vince Bantu, "Gospel Haymount: A Constructive Theology and Critical Reflection on African and Diasporic Christianity," Jude Project, 2015, <https://jude3project.org/blog/2016/earlychristianitynubia> (accessed December 2021).

traditional gospel music known today and old negro spirituals served as messages of freedom, such as “Swing low, sweet chariot coming forth to carry me home.” Therefore, amid being stripped of African culture and social heritage, the Black Church’s inherent role became audibly clear. In serving as a cloaking measure for the African diaspora and not a hindrance, the culture remains a much-needed ally in this dispensation of social disparities, and her voice must be heard in the way it was in 1787.

*The African Methodist Church (AME) of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen*

Some may suggest denoting a religious entity by race and ethnicity serves as an unfavorable description. However, throughout this study, the institution’s description is clearly understood to have been a major source of support and strength in the African American community in 1787 when it was born out of protest to racism in the city of Philadelphia.<sup>33</sup> The American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church presented itself socially, politically, culturally, and even economically, as a refuge and extended family. In serving as a role model for the younger generations, embracing and developing musical talent, bridging the gap in meeting community needs, as well as establishing leaders and platforms to affect change towards social injustices, parishioners and members of the Free African Society encouraged members to leave St. George Episcopal Church because of racism and discrimination. This new organization was formed by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones and it developed into a mutual aid society. Hence, it became the first Black church in Philadelphia.

*Preamble of the African Free Society*

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<sup>33</sup> African American Registry, “History of the Black Church,” Journal of Registry, 2020, <https://aaregistry.org/the-journal-of-the-registry/> (accessed August 2022).

## Philadelphia

(12th, 4th mo., 1778] – Whereas, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, two men of the African race, who, for their religious life and conversation have obtained a good report among men, these persons, from a love to the people of their complexion whom they beheld with sorrow, because of their irreligious and uncivilized state, often communed together upon this painful and important subject in order to form some kind of religious society, but there being too few to be found under the like concern, and those who were, differed in their religious sentiments; with these circumstances they labored for some time, till it was proposed, after a serious communication of sentiments, that a society should be formed, without regard to religious tenets, provided, the persons lived an orderly and sober life, in order to support one another in sickness, and for the benefit of their widows and fatherless children

## ARTICLES

[17th, 5th mo., 1787] – We, the free Africans and their descendants, of the City of Philadelphia, in the State of Pennsylvania, or elsewhere, do unanimously agree, for the benefit of each other, to advance one shilling in silver Pennsylvania currency a month; and after one year's subscription from the date hereof, then to hand forth to the needy of this Society, if any should require, the sum of three shillings and nine pence per week of the said money: provided, this necessity is not brought on them by their own imprudence.

And it is further agreed, that no drunkard nor disorderly person be admitted as a member, and if any should prove disorderly after having been received, the said disorderly person shall be disjointed from us if there is not nit amendment, by being informed by two of the members, without having any of his subscription money returned.

And if any should neglect paying his monthly subscription for three months, and after having been informed of the same by two of the members, and no sufficient reason appearing for such neglect, if he do not pay the whole the next ensuing meeting, he shall be disjointed from us, by being informed by two of the members its an offender, without hiving any of his subscription money returned.

Also, if any person neglect meeting every month, for every omission he shall pay three pence, except in case or sickness or any other complaint that should require the assistance of the Society, then, and in such a case, he shall be exempt from the fines and subscription during the said sickness.

Also, we apprehend it to be just and reasonable, that the surviving widow of a deceased member should enjoy the benefit of this Society so long as she remains his widow, complying with the, rules thereof, excepting the subscriptions.

And we apprehend it to be necessary, that the children of our deceased members be under the care of the Society, so far as to pay for the education of their children, if they cannot attend the free school; also to put them out apprentices to suitable trades or places, if required.

Also, that no member shall convene the Society together; but, it shall be the sole business of the committee, and that only on special occasions, and to dispose of the money in hand to the best advantage, for the use of the Society, after they are granted the liberty at a monthly meeting, and to transact all other business whatsoever, except that of Clerk and Treasurer.

And we unanimously agree to choose Joseph Clarke to be our Clerk and Treasurer; and whenever another should succeed him, it is always understood, that one of the people called Quakers, belonging to one of the three monthly meetings in Philadelphia, is to be chosen to act as Clerk and Treasurer of this useful Institution.

The following persons met, viz., Absalom Jones, Richard Allen, Samuel Baston, Joseph Johnson, Cato Freeman, Caesar Cranchell, and James Potter, also William White, whose early assistance and useful remarks we found truly profitable. This evening the articles were read, and after some beneficial remarks were made, they were agreed unto.

*Annals of the First African Church in the United States of America Now Styled the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia...*, by the Rev. Wm. Douglass, Philadelphia: King & Baird Printers, 1862.

In 1792, Jones founded the African Church in Philadelphia, an African American church free from White control. Desiring to become an Episcopal parish, the church opened in 1794 as the African Episcopal Church and became the first Black church in Philadelphia.<sup>34</sup>

#### *The Azuza Street Revival - Pentecostal Movement - William Seymour*

Contextually speaking, the circumstances that formed the early platform for Pentecostalism derives from the Protestant church, who embraced the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a movement synonymous with the “Day of Pentecost” or the “Upper Room experience.” Given the fact this culture dwells in a nation who seemingly seeks to distinguish the powers of culture, race, and ethnicities other than their own, one must lean

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<sup>34</sup> Tom Skinner, “Racism and World Evangelism,” InterVarsity Multiethnic Ministries, 2020, <https://mem.intervarsity.org/resources/tom-skinners-urbana-70-address-racism-and-world-evangelism> (accessed August, 2022).

towards the tenets of love and faith within the Gospel if such challenges are to be accomplished. Hence, the essence of the Azusa Street revival in 1906 is where the spirit of Pentecost became the ideal instrument and strategist who infiltrated the perils of discord and extreme racial conflict. The emergence of the Pentecostal movement weighed strongly in the area of strategy, spirituality, and being instrumental in the face of Jim Crow, racism, and other judicial atrocities. William J. Seymour's vision of interracial ministry that took the world by storm in 1906, and was an excellent display of God's love, peace, grace, and mercy. It was a concept of starting right where an individual is, using what's available, and doing what one can.

With the construction of Jim Crow laws during the Civil War reformation, African Americans continued to be subjugated to all manner of violence and customs by becoming the political and legal targets of vehement hatred. Nevertheless, the Azusa Street Revival emerged. Imagine what it was like in 1906 to have prayer meetings in the homes of African Americans. William J. Seymour's vision of an interracial ministry took the world by storm. He was benevolent, soft-spoken, and trusting despite the harsh realities of segregation. Despite it all, this faith-based community was created and the movement went forward. Although sordid ideologies remained between the movement and the privileged mentality, an order of first mention was created for African American Pentecostals.<sup>35</sup>

William Seymour truly believed that the love of God and the outpouring of the Spirit would conquer the racialization brooding over the Pentecostal movement. While hearts and minds should have been changed with the perceived Word of God and being

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<sup>35</sup> McMickle, *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage*.



baptized in the Holy Spirit, the grotesqueness of hatred tried to defame and derail the powerful movement, but the faith lived on. For the first time, Blacks were in leadership positions. They communed with White congregants and laid holy hands on all populations represented. It would be the first-time women of color established their own ministries and congregations. As if time stood still, racism and bigotry was silent for a moment. From 1910-1933, the masses worked together in one accord. This was a season for the church to step in and denounce the perils of racialization, classism, and hatred.<sup>36</sup>

The holy bride was awesome in her efforts to take a stand. Within this effort, African Americans found a place of solace, meaning, love, and diversity for a moment in time. Consequently, in all the surrounding White culture's vastness, ideologies, separatism, social injustices, and the need to be supreme prevailed, but this did not deter the Black church's tenacity to stay open and become the leading voice of the civil rights movement. Powerful voices such as pastors Wyatt Tee Walker, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and Reverend Ralph Abernathy, and Dr. James Cone continued to stand for liberty and justice for all from all their denominational platforms.<sup>37</sup>

*The Civil Rights Movement - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, and the Reverend Ralph Abernathy were the faces of leadership and they stood firmly in the recruitment of an entire nation and government system to organize demonstrations,

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<sup>36</sup> Edward Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (Chicago, IL: Schocken Books, 1963).

<sup>37</sup> African American Registry, "History of the Black Church."

marches, boycotts and sit-ins during the country's darkest times. The tenacious actions of these great pastors led to the greatest and most important law on civil rights since the 1865-1877 reconstruction era after the American Civil War: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This was a tumultuous period of lynching, church bombings, and political upheaval that would eventually lead to the violent death of Dr. King. Nevertheless, the message of love and not hate prevailed.<sup>38</sup>

However, another perspective was on the horizon as theologian Reverend James Cone presented his anecdotal viewpoint of the rights of Black people through the creation of Liberation Theology. His sentiments echoed another vantage point of the existential aspect of Black independence and racism that invoked a form of Black empowerment and intimidation instead of timidity. He was not a fan of integration because it was not conducive to growth and positivity within the Black community, and it associated the White church with Black suffering. His teachings were based on the Holy Spirit being the conduit of Christian love and a source of Black power and freedom. Professor Cone's positional response to racism has been deemed partially responsible as the source of White fragility, as his sentiments echo the defining role of the church and suggest the advocacy of Black theology is, indeed, the answer coinciding with Dr. Olu Menjay's quote, "The Bible is a two-edge sword that empowers both the oppressor and the oppressed," so that we all may become free at last.<sup>39</sup>

Regardless of both positions, the purpose of this study is to present the church's eminence as a vital system of support that once shaped the African American culture and

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<sup>38</sup> Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: The Revised Edition*.

<sup>39</sup> Menjay, "A Trailblazer of American Protestant Mission Work in Liberia."

inspired the community to seek God in every aspect of life, knowing that weapons formed could not prosper, because the standard was established through unity, love, and support. Her voice has since grown quiet, and her silence is paralytic to the those who need her the most. The civil rights movement was a great start in renewing this nation, but in order to truly shift the young generations into a better posture of growth and nurturing, others must rise to the platform and offer leadership like Bishop T.D. Jakes. His movement of healing the broken, lost, and wounded through connecting with the community, has established a school of Divinity where the word of God permeates through biblical instruction and sound leadership that embraces all people without ostracizing race and culture. This is the model of church involvement required by the masses to stand and echo the words of Dr. King while sitting in a Birmingham Jail: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: The Revised Edition*.

### SECTION 3:

#### THESIS

#### **The African Diaspora's Lasting Impact**

Given all the empirical data presented, some theologians and historians present Western Civilization's fallacies against the African American diaspora as questionable when considering its impact as a huge stumbling block to viable productivity within this nation today. However, research has proven that upon colonization, such identity became disrupted and extremely fragmented. Yet many remain unmoved by the efforts to rebuild and shift into a new paradigm. With this primitive mindset in place, the old system will continue to create a hostile environment indicating who will live free and who will receive discrimination. The cause and effect of this system not only traumatizes but neutralizes the possibility of healthy functionality which is why the African American population falls into the category of underserved and disenfranchised.

#### **The Totality of Suffrage Regarding the African Diaspora**

The conflict and structural theories have established the structural damage of the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and the lasting impact of racial trauma. From a qualitative analysis approach, much of this research may appear subjective, but from a quantitative posture, the historical accounts are unmovable. In this section, the totality of suffrage is quantified within the framework of the African American culture where the struggles are evident.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Katherine V. Wormer and Fred H. Besthorn, *Human Behavior and the Social Work Environment, Macro Level* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University, 2011), 37.

The family unit suffers injurious affects through countless cases of child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, a high rate of recidivism, and a lack of vested interest in the Black church. Such dynamics have produced a myriad of concerns in establishing a structured framework consistent with trauma informed ministry, prevention and treatment, and a bedrock of social services to significantly reduce the following systemic and institutional biases.

### *The Child Welfare System*

According to Centers for Disease and Control (CDC) 2021, there were approximately 92,237 African American children currently in the United States Child Welfare system. Another data source concerning the state of children, youth, and families: the child trends analysis of data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) in 2020 provides an inside view of the racial divide between children, the populations of children adopted, and those awaiting adoption. The data provided shows a definitive line of White children being adopted out of the system by 51% more than the waiting 49% of other populations. What's staggering is that 22% of children waiting for adoption were African American.<sup>42, 43</sup>

Though African American children make up 14% of the child population, they constitute 28% of the children in foster care. This imbalance is referred to as disproportionality. AFCARS states that race is exceedingly judged and is an immense

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<sup>42</sup> The Center for Disease and Control, "Community Violence Report," CDC.gov, 2021, <http://www.CDC.gov> (accessed July 2022).

<sup>43</sup> The Administration for Children and Families, "2021 Community Violence Report," *AFCARS Report* (2022).

determining factor. Out of the six stages children go through in the system, the following five are always racially critiqued within Child Protective Services: reporting, investigation, substantiation, placement, and exit from care. Poverty is another major contributing factor, along with other multiple rooted stereotypes and implicit biases regarding race and the African American family dysfunction. This has all resulted in 72% of White children being afforded the opportunity of receiving home-based services in lieu of removal as opposed to only 44% of African American children.

### *Domestic Violence*

The 2021 CDC statistical data reports that 40% of African American women experienced domestic violence which is 25% more cases than any other race, and domestic violence service organizations report that 65% of their client populations are African American. Such behaviors are viewed as systemic in nature and are derived from direct or vicarious connections to childhood trauma associated with family violence. The pervasiveness of domestic/family violence is debatably a major concern by pediatricians within the United States. Therefore, it is imperative the church understands the effects and takes more effective action against its many manifestations. Training and awareness are the key in most cases, as numerous abusers are not knowledgeable of the pain inflicted upon others. This is also true for victims who may not act against their abusers, because they are not aware the behavior experienced is indeed domestic violence and totally unacceptable. This can also be true for the friends, loved ones, professional, and spiritual communities of the victims. Once the information is presented properly, informed decisions can be made if one understands what domestic violence looks like in its many forms. The church must be conscious enough to engage the younger generation

in this manner and become aware of the signs and symptoms of family violence to take the necessary steps to protect families and children and keep them safe from harm, as we serve this population from a trauma-informed care approach.

### *The Prison System*

The Bureau of Justice reports that one out of every 81 African American adults is currently serving time in a state prison. When viewing the breakdown of imprisonment, the study shows Wisconsin leads the nation in Black imprisonment rates: one out of every 36 African American Wisconsin citizens is in prison. In other states such as Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, more than half the prison population is of African descent. Seven states maintain a Black/White disparity larger than 9:1: California, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Wisconsin. This is in a country where the Black race only makes up 13.4% of the American population.<sup>44, 45</sup>

More than 5.6 million Americans were in prison, jail, or under probation or parole when counted in 2020. The 2020 incarceration rate by race reveals a national rate of .36%. The rate for African Americans represented 0.94%, Hispanics represented 0.45%, and the White population totaled 0.18%. In 2019, the sentenced state prison population of 1,221,300 total prisoners outlined by race is displayed as follows: 33% Black, 32% White, 22% Hispanic, and all other races were represented at 14%. Let us continue

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<sup>44</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Incarceration Rates,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, <http://www.bjs.ojp.gov> (accessed March 2022).

<sup>45</sup> The Center for Disease and Control, “Community Violence Report.”

outlining the connection to this bleak suffering according to the Criminal Justice Center report:<sup>46</sup>

- 32% of the US population is represented by African Americans and Hispanics, compared to 56% of the US incarcerated population being represented by African Americans and Hispanics.
- In 2014, African Americans constituted 2.3 million, or 34%, of the total 6.8 million correctional population.
- African Americans are incarcerated at five times the rate of whites.
- The imprisonment rate for African American women is two times that of white women.
- Nationwide, African American children represent 32% of children who are arrested and 42% of children who are detained. There is an obvious disparity in how the general public views fatal encounters between police and Black people: 66% said these encounters were isolated incidents.
- According to a 2019 survey conducted by the Criminal Justice Center, 84% of Black adults say White Americans are treated better by police and 63% of white adults agree based on the 2019 research on police relations. This does not take into consideration other forms of police brutality, including non-lethal shootings.
- 87% of Black adults say the U.S. criminal justice system is more unjust towards Black people; 61% of white adults agree.

While white people make up a little over 60% of the population, they only make up about 41% of fatal police shootings. Black people make up 13.4% of the population but make

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<sup>46</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Incarceration Rates.”



up 22% of fatal police shootings. The findings are not surprising considering the historical nature of the slave practices that continue to promote the displacement of families and free labor through the prison system and is manufactured by an unjust judicial system.

### *Understanding Trauma*

The trauma researcher, Dr. Van der Kolk, informs us that trauma occurs when one witnesses or experiences an event that poses a real or perceived threat to the life, well-being of self, or those close to us. It is the body's natural reaction to an abnormal situation that remains active until properly treated. While what has happened can never be removed or undone, the ability to learn how to manage its effects is plausible with treatment, but if such efforts are never afforded, the paralytic concept of never truly moving forward becomes the active narrative and current state of being. Please note Dr. Van der Kolk's quote on trauma from his book, *The Body Keeps the Score*:<sup>47</sup>

Nobody can “treat” a war, or abuse, rape, molestation, or any other horrendous event, for that matter; what has happened cannot be undone. But what can be dealt with are the imprints of the trauma on body, mind, and soul: the crushing sensations in your chest that you may label as anxiety or depression; the fear of losing control; always being on alert for danger or rejection; the self-loathing; the nightmares and flashbacks; the fog that keeps you from staying on task and from engaging fully in what you are doing; being unable to fully open your heart to another human being.

This notion of paralysis has been elicited by Dr. Patricia Read-Meritt, Dr. Thadeus Mathis, and Dr. Emeritus Leonard G. Durston of the National Association of

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<sup>47</sup> Bessel Vanderkolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 15.

Black Social Workers, whose research strongly postulates that this unresolved trauma speaks to the current state of affairs in the widespread incidents of domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse, the disproportionality of the child welfare system, and the high rate of recidivism amongst the African American race, as it thrives to heal from forced migration, enslavement followed by segregation, racism, and oppression. The American Psychological Association outlines four types of traumas: acute, chronic, complex and historical, but for the sake of this study, the focus is narrowed to historical, chronic and complex trauma.<sup>48, 49</sup>

1. Historical trauma: A personal or historical event that causes emotional and psychological injury and can be transmitted from one generation to the next (e.g., racial trauma such as slavery or forced placement in society, transgenerational trauma such as sexual abuse that happens in several generations of a family).
2. Chronic trauma: Repeated traumatic events (e.g., witnessing and experiencing violence over several years). Because of the recurring and longstanding nature of chronic trauma, the effects can be cumulative and build up over time. One becomes more vulnerable to everyday stress and may have diminished ability to cope.
3. Complex trauma: Includes both the exposure to chronic trauma and the lasting impact on one's well-being which usually begins at a very young age of five and

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<sup>48</sup> Renee L. Hampton, Patricia Thomas, and Jessica Ramos, *Interpersonal Violence in the African American Community Evidenced Based Prevention and Treatment Practices* (Oxford, England: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 323.

<sup>49</sup> Resa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Broken Hearts and Bodies* (Minneapolis: Central Recovery Press, 2017).

often is a part of a child's relationship with a caregiver (e.g., physical abuse by a parent).

In witnessing this level of suffering and post-traumatic stress, one can only surmise that this population finds itself in a perpetual state of chronic and complex suffering while trying to overcome the detriments of historical disturbances, only to struggle for power from an ineffective posture and a perpetual state of overcoming. Therefore, viable solutions must be applied.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Yehuda, *How Trauma Resilience Cross*, 50.

## SECTION 4:

### ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

For this artifact, the term's identity and crisis are synonymous and complement each other when applied effectively. Identity is defined as a system or element of being, which can be influenced by a myriad of factors, such as cultural norms, ethnicity, societal acceptance, local opportunities, media, interests, appearance, self-expression, and life experience. Crisis, on the other hand, is defined as a time of extreme toil, distress, or danger. This dichotomy serves as a perfect description of the African American community, family, and the Black Church, as it presents a kaleidoscope effect that has dangerously affected development and growth of an already perplexed and complicated system. To remedy this threat, the project in place provokes systemic change within the family unit, the community, and an invocation to the church to be an agent of change while renewing a nation through reenergizing relationships and reestablishing places of refuge, solace, comfort, and trusted sources of safety.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Family Advocacy Project Research Center**

The theological approach for the Family Advocacy Research Project Center (FARPC) is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Based on this theory, there are five classifications of needs to be achieved sequentially and without the first being met, the

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<sup>1</sup> Patrice Dixon, *African American Relationships, Marriages and Families: An Introduction* (Oxfordshire: Routledge and Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 233.

next level is almost impossible to achieve.<sup>2</sup> The categories are Physiological (food, clothing, and shelter); Safety (health, employment, and social stability); Love and Belonging (Primary relationships/Family, and a sense of connection); Esteem (confidence, achievement, respect of others, and uniqueness), Self-Actualization (Morality, purpose, self-concept, creativity, and self-identity).

According to Dr. William A. Smith, a Professor at Utah University, pervasive and oppressive societal issues have impacted the African American race, family, and community to the point the unit itself is disconnected, disorganized, and moved into a place of survival—what he has coined as racial trauma. From both a micro and macro perspective, researchers continue to see societal issues through cycles of abuse deriving from learned behaviors interwoven in the fabric of a nation trying desperately to achieve self-actualization.<sup>3</sup>

This cycle is why both education and the church are so important. The required platform must be able to reach the multitude and serve as the bridge connector in the renewal of this nation. Consequently, the church has inadvertently become that intermediary according to the Pew research center.<sup>4</sup> In a survey conducted in 2020, 81% of African American adults believe in the Bible and a God who is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscience. This suggests the plausibility of success if the Black church takes a leading role in cultural transformation.

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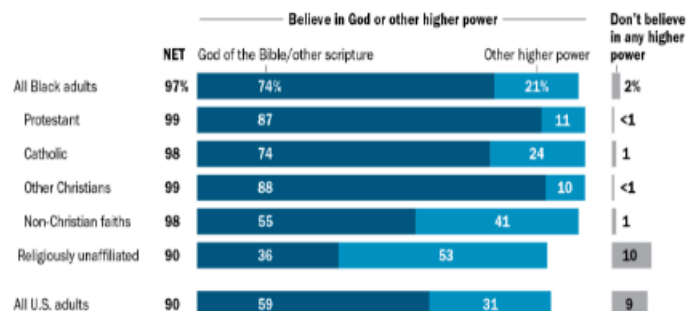
<sup>2</sup> Landon T. Smith, *Meet Maslow: How Understanding the Priorities of Those Around Us Can Lead to Harmony and Improvement* (Chicago: Independent Publisher, 2017), 29.

<sup>3</sup> William A. Smith, *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education: The Continuing Challenges for the 21st Century* (Utah: State University of New York Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Diamant, *The Black Faith*, 9.

### Almost all Black Americans believe in God or another higher power

% of Black Americans who say they ...



Source: Survey conducted Nov. 19, 2019-June 3, 2020, among U.S. adults.

Note: Those who gave unclear responses about the type of God they believe in are included in the NET but not shown.

Those who did not answer the questions about belief in God are not shown.

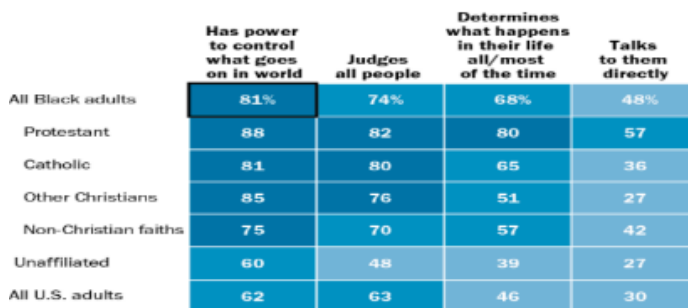
"Faith Among Black Americans"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 3.4 — Almost all Black Americans believe in God or another higher power<sup>5</sup>

### Eight-in-ten Black adults believe God has power to control what happens in the world

% of Black Americans who say God or a higher power ...



Source: Survey conducted Nov. 19, 2019-June 3, 2020, among U.S. adults.  
"Faith Among Black Americans"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 4.5 — Eight-in-ten Black adults believe God has power to control what happens in the world<sup>6</sup>

This artifact is composed of a two-part project: The Family Advocacy Project Research Center (FAPRC) for Marginalized Communities and the Simple Leaf book that

<sup>5</sup> Jeff Diamant. "The Black Faith in America," Pew Center Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/staff/jeff-diamant/> (accessed December 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Diamant, "The Black Faith in America,"

serves as the blueprint of the marginalized experience and describes the nature of the African diaspora's impact on the family from a child's perspective. Part one of the artifact is a pilot program to strengthen the relationships of African American families, re-establish church engagement, and support the social community through offering culturally sensitive education based on sound research, seminars, workshops, counseling, and crisis intervention cultivated by an integrated care system that is African-centered from a biological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual concept.<sup>7, 8, 9</sup>

The FAPRC is comprised of seven domains: social scientist, treatment team, social services, substance abuse center, family law team, congregational social workers, and the Church in Community Initiative. The purposes of these domains are to present Christian worldviews, hope, and evidence-based practices. Research teams, counseling, awareness, and prevention programs are designed to empower, encourage, inspire, and uplift the lives of the disenfranchised and underserved populations who have fallen victim to the maladies of domestic and family violence. These maladies include: sexual assault, substance use disorders, child abuse, juvenile delinquency, and other traumas that grossly impact the African American community and deter their faith in the one true God. All research and objectives are based the (NPO) need, problem, and opportunity.

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<sup>7</sup> Kmt G. Shockley and Kafi Lomotey, *African Centered Education Theory and Practice* (New York: Myers Education Press, 2020), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Guadalupe Navarro-Garcia, "Integrating Social Justice Values in Educational Leadership: A Study of Americans and Black Universities Presidents," *ProQuest Dissertations Amp; Thesis*, no. 44 (2016).

<sup>9</sup> Diane Garland, *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives* (N.p.: North American Association of Christian Science, 2014).

### *The Aim*

Our aim is to have a FAPRC adjacent to every church and planted throughout the United States and abroad in every marginalized community to equip, empower, and restore a healthy level of functioning and self-actualization within the family unit. The concept follows an integrated care systems approach composed of medical and dental, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, clinical training institute, The Family and Child Welfare Healthy Homes Initiative, educational/life skills, a shelter service, and orphanage concept. The domains are reflective of the limited access often experienced by the African American population and presents a model of care conducive to achieving autonomy.<sup>10</sup>

### *Theoretical Approaches*

This humanistic concept embraces Maslow's hierarchy of needs and self-actualization as the optimum desired outcome. In providing a conglomeration of theoretical approaches to improve self-love and affection, FAPRC has included an African model of treatment that promotes cultural awareness to the African diaspora. The most culturally competent model is NTU (IN-TO), a Bantu (Central African) word meaning unity. Given the cultural impact, it is only fitting to add such a non-invasive approach to this methodology of care.<sup>11, 12</sup> The Afro-centric and trauma-informed care

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<sup>10</sup> Julius Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> F. B. Phillips, "NTU Psychotherapy: An Afrocentric Approach," *Journal of Black Psychology* 17, no. 1 (1990): 55–74.

<sup>12</sup> Phillips, "NTU Psychotherapy," 55.



approach is applied in hopes of strengthening an understanding of heritage and embracing NTU psychotherapy. While the origin is an African concept, the model is formed out of humanistic psychology. Its core is related to healing from a natural aspect while embracing ethnicity and cultural awareness. This will serve as an African American worldview that helps rediscover harmony, awareness, alignment, Actualization and spirituality.<sup>13, 14</sup>

It is vitally important to consider all maladaptive behaviors mentioned, as they paralyze the family unit, especially in the area of child abuse and neglect. The cycle of abuse is a predator that continues to dismantle the very fabric of the African American unit, leaving many feeling neglected, rejected, and alone. Therefore, the book, *A Simple Leaf*, will serve as the guide to understand how the family unit truly suffers from dysfunctionality and abuse. The connector between church and community is the congregational social worker. With the congregation as the center focus of the congregational social worker, the individual provides leadership in community affairs, research, and education to the pastoral staff and strengthens the church's mission. This concept is derived from research conducted by the Baylor University under Diane Garland's School of Social Work.<sup>15</sup>

However, there is a distinction between the universities concept and the FAPRC concept. These centers are positioned throughout marginalized communities to also serve those who are not church affiliated, yet who can still receive the message of healing. The

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<sup>13</sup> Toyin Falola, *The Power of African Cultures* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 50.

<sup>14</sup> Falola, *The Power of African Cultures*, 50.

<sup>15</sup> Garland, *Congregational Social Work*: Association of Christian Science,

centers are also equipped with community social workers, child advocates, victim advocates, focus groups of professionals, social services, elected municipal and state representatives, a Justice of the Peace, probation officer (both adult and child), mental health professionals, faith-based community leaders, child welfare system experts, school district and literacy program representatives, as well as higher education institute representatives. The completion of this project will result in Family Advocacy Project Research Centers serving communities with trauma-sensitive congregations, family-based safety shelters, family service support programs, and social work and substance abuse clinical training institutes with African-centered pedagogy. This ensures that the integrated care necessary for educational and supportive services is achieved.

*Part Two: A Simple Leaf*

Part two of the Artifact centers around the book, *A Simple Leaf*, which will explicitly outline the impact of the African diaspora as supported by this research. Many people find themselves suffering the maladies of domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse, and addictions. These dynamics are usually the result of underlying issues that were never properly addressed throughout the developmental journey of life. Empirical data, along with most counseling theories, suggest most issues are a direct result of past life experiences that should be examined from a biological, psychological, social and spiritual perspective when trying to gain an understanding of the self or the actions of another. While many of the incidents in this book are not a direct account of the author's life story, the dynamics associated with the situations are in proximity and serve as an educational tool for healing. The text speaks to the problems witnessed in

Black culture such as Black crime, Black illegitimacy, self-hatred, and child abuse due to mental health issues. It will then introduce the love of God as the family's intercessor.

In this writing, we learn what domestic violence, child abuse, and neglect truly look like from a practical worldview. The book will be utilized in all areas of awareness, prevention, and treatment, especially for those clients affected by family protective services to help them better understand how debilitating and distressing these acts are to children. We start with this book in order to understand the importance of a secure attachment and the inexcusable behavior of domestic violence. Others will read this book and form an opinion of the family. However, it would morally and intellectually shallow to assess those who have been brutishly dealt with and who act in a manner that seems right to them due to behaviors learned from the African diaspora and ongoing racial trauma. It proves the need for the renewing of a nation and why the family unit is the most important element. The below case study illustrates the need for the fast planting of FAPRC and promoting the book, *A Simple Leaf*. While this is a fictitious case, situations are presented like this daily in the family court system.

### **Supporting Research**

This three-month case study and writing sample serves as the fuel behind the quick pursuit of planting the FAPC in marginalized communities and the promotion of *A Simple Leaf*. Concerning the African American Nation, Frederick Douglas once said, "It is easier to build strong children, than to repair broken men." Therefore, special emphasis is placed on domestic violence and child abuse as two factors negatively affecting the African American family and children within the child welfare system. Although much legislation has been achieved to support and advance the child welfare system, relevant

federal and state child welfare laws include implicit biases and these are enforced by tainted governmental structures. Both issues continue to serve as major contributors to an already fragmented system.

With such implicit biases produced in the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) units and the Child Protective Services (CPS) process support, there must be a system to address why the effects of domestic violence are so impacting and why we must concentrate on the significance of African-centered social work for social work practice. The cycle of violence is the nucleus that settles in the nest of addictions, the high rate of recidivism, and a child welfare system that leads to African American children being overwhelmingly misrepresented. The story below is a fictitious case of an African American family unit at the mercy of the court system as they try to retain parental rights during dire circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, child trauma occurs when a child witnesses or experiences an event that poses a real or perceived threat to the life or well-being of the child or someone close to the child.<sup>17</sup> Examples of child trauma could include witnessing domestic violence, experiencing physical or sexual abuse, the death or loss of a loved one, an automobile accident or any life-threatening natural disaster. The experience of being removed from your family by CPS is an excruciatingly traumatic event that often causes feelings of fear, helplessness, or horror the child may

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<sup>16</sup> S. G. Isaksen, *Making a Difference with CPS: A Summary of the Evidence* (Facilitative Leadership: Making A Difference with Creative Problem Solving, 2000), 187.

<sup>17</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. "Academy on violence and abuse (AVA)", 2020. <http://www.nctsn.org> (accessed 2022).

express in a variety of ways. Overall, the child cannot cope with the intense feelings and becomes overwhelmed by the event. Empirical evidence has proven this particular action happens within the African American family unit far too frequently, as the absence of positive parental skills and domestic violence continues to promote an ongoing cycle of instability within the family unit.

### **Case Study**

Placement: Aisha and Amari are currently placed with their maternal grandmother in Killeen, Texas.

*Child' current situation:* Aisha Alexander, aged 11-years-old (DOB: 10/10/2010), and Amari Griffin, aged 1-year-old (DOB: 11/17/2020), were removed from the care of their mother, Lillian Lee, and Amari's father, Eddie Andy Cane Jr., due to continued marijuana usage and physical violence.

Aisha is a talkative, caring, and distractible eleven-year-old. She is comfortable living with her grandmother, aunt, and cousin. However, she is adamant about returning to her mother's house and her old school. Aisha enjoys reading chapter books for herself and reading to Amari. Aisha is attending Rancier Middle School as a 6<sup>th</sup> grader this year. Teachers report outbursts and attendance issues from Aisha. Her favorite class is choir, and she is making 100% in choir. She has a 71% in math, 85% in reading, 60% in history, 67% in science, and a 70% in English. Attendance is taken by period at her middle school.

Since December 1, 2021, in her official student data sheet dated February 23, 2022, Aisha has had 27 cleared absences (cleared by campus or medical note), 17 parent excused absences, 22 unexcused absences, and 15 tardies. Additional unrecorded tardies

were noted by teachers. An ARD (admission, review and dismissal committee) was held in December to address Aisha's IEP (Individual Education Plan). Additional accommodations were added, including measures to address attendance. However, Aisha continues to struggle. Grandmother is waiting for an ARD to be scheduled for Aisha to address these issues further along with considering placement at another campus. A positive change in Aisha has been noticed since she started medication.

Aisha is up-to-date on vaccinations, medical, and dental appointments. She went to the doctor on January 6, 2022, and received an official diagnosis of ADHD along with a medical prescription. This is backed up by her psychological evaluation from December 14, 2021. She is currently taking Concerta 18MG CR (takes one tablet in the morning) and Flonase 50mcg (1 spray daily), and Zyrtec 10mL (daily). Aisha did not go to counseling for the entire month of December. She started a regular schedule of every other week in January 2022.

Amari is a 1-year-old who usually presents as happy and playful. She is now walking and saying some words. Amari is eating and sleeping well. She is very bonded to her maternal grandmother and often looks to her for comfort. She is up to date with her medical and dental appointments as well as vaccinations. I observed some slight delays in walking and talking and asked her grandmother to make a referral to ECI (Early Childhood Intervention). Amari is scheduled for a baseline evaluation on February 25, 2022, but she is not currently delayed enough to warrant services. They will evaluate and educate the caregiver on normal development and advise when to reach back out for treatment. Since the request, she is walking and repeating consonant sounds starting February 17, 2022.

### *Permanency Plan*

The permanency plan goal is family reunification with a concurrent goal of relative conservatorship.

*Summary of facts since last review:* Amari's paternal grandparents, Allissa and Edmond Griffin, have had regular weekend visits every 2-3 weeks. Amari's father does not have a permanent residence to receive the child. Hence, she remains with her maternal grandmother. Amari's father was arrested in January 2022 and has since been released but has not been able to be reached since February 25, 2022, despite three phone call attempts.

*Remaining concerns:* The children's biological father does not have permanent housing and has been inconsistent with counseling and drug testing.

- Concerned with biological mother's parenting skills and inability to advocate for her children.
- Concerned about the smell of marijuana in the parent's home.
- Concerned about Aisha's continued struggles at school both academically and socially.

### **Shelter and Orphanage Need Established**

This case analysis provides a definitive role for the FAPRC to establish "A place called home" program, a two-part shelter and orphanage concept. The Shelter is a temporary refuge that will serve in the best interest of child removals for minor infractions and provide families with living quarters while receiving the much-needed assistance, always keeping in mind that the safety of the child is paramount. For more

extreme cases, an orphanage concept will serve as home for those who are not safe in the placement of their own parents. This home is for the population of children without placement (CWOP) and will be both an extension of the church and a safe house to shelter without the placement of foster care with strangers which takes the children out of their community. This collective center of modalities will provide hope to parents as well as the children because they see active advocacy taking place on their behalf, rather than the Black and White conflict that's customary within the system.

In the rebuilding of a nation, it is vitally important to understand that children who live and witness violence in the home face many challenges and risks that can last throughout their lives. There is a common link between domestic violence and child abuse. Among victims of child abuse, 40% report domestic violence in the home. One study in North America found that children who were exposed to violence in the home were 15 times more likely to be physically and/or sexually assaulted than the national average. This link has been confirmed around the world, with supporting studies from a range of countries including China, South Africa, Colombia, India, Egypt, the Philippines, and Mexico. In one study, 40% of children had lower reading abilities than those from non-violent homes.

According to Dr. Nadine Burke, a childhood trauma psychiatrist, the most disturbing impact is the personality and behavioral problems among children exposed to violence in the home. These impacts can include psychosomatic illnesses, depression, suicidal tendencies, bed-wetting, and other forms of social problems including the following:<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.



- A greater risk for substance abuse, juvenile pregnancy, and criminal behavior.
- Impaired social development.
- Lowered ability to feel empathy for others.
- Social isolation, social discomfort, or confusion over what is acceptable.
- Aggressive behavior, such as bullying, as well as being three times more likely to be involved in fighting.

These mental health concerns are normally associated with various symptoms such as anxiety, insomnia, agitation, irritability, rage, flashbacks, intrusive memories, feeling disconnected from the world, unrest in certain situations, being passive, feeling depressed, eating problems, needing to do certain things over and over, unusual fears, impatience, always having to have things a certain way, doing strange or risky things, difficulty concentrating, wanting to hurt oneself, being unable to trust anyone, feeling unlikable, feeling unsafe, using harmful substances, keeping to oneself, and overworking.

### *Supporting Statistics*

The following statistics are taken from the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) and Child Protective Services:<sup>19</sup>

- According to CPS (2019), 686,000 children (9.2 per 1,000) were victims of maltreatment.

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<sup>19</sup> The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Data and Statistics Data Card, 2021. <https://dfps.texas.gov> (accessed 2022).

- 78% of children were victims of neglect, 18% of physical abuse, 9% of sexual abuse, and 11% were victims of other types of maltreatment, including emotional and threatened abuse, parent's drug/alcohol abuse, or lack of supervision.
- 3.6 million referrals (6.6 million children) suffered child abuse and neglect in the United States. 9/10 of this group will become abusers.
- 25% of girls and 16% of boys will enter the U.S. Prison Population.
- CPS reports of child maltreatment may underestimate the true number of occurrences.
- The total lifetime economic burden resulting from new cases of fatal and nonfatal child maltreatment in the United States is approximately \$124 billion.

## SECTION 5:

## ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

As a pastor and an agent for active advocacy in the field of social work, the concept of FAPRC and the book, *A Simple Leaf*, serves as necessary intermediaries to bridge the gap between the Christian arena, the church, and the African American family unit, as well as the community. In this work, we serve in the role of the beatitudes in caring and meeting the needs of the disenfranchised and underserved populations. Our belief is for us to effect true change, all aspects of healing the whole person must be included: biological, psychological, social, and spiritual. We must speak the same language. For the church to engage, they must be properly informed of the impact through viable statistical data. The domains of the FAPRC will be outlined according to the following categories: medical and dental, mental health services, substance abuse treatment and clinical training institute, The Family and Child Welfare Healthy Homes Initiative, African-centered education, educational/life skills, and a shelter service and orphanage concept.<sup>20,21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kimberley Freeman, Cynthia Winston, and Felicia Gangloff-Bailey, "Racial Identity-Rooted Academic Motivation of First-Year African American Students Majoring in STEM at an HBCU," *Frontier's in Psychology*, 12 (June 2021): 1-12.

<sup>21</sup> Freeman, et al., "Racial Identity-Rooted Academic Motivation," 1-12.

### **Goals and Objectives**

- To create the role of congregational social workers to ensure personnel are professionally trained to intervene and support families through supportive services and identify abuse cases while addressing the biological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual formation of injured populations.
- To mitigate the high rate of crime, imprisonment, family violence, child abuse, and recidivism.
- To establish African American-centered social services.
- To increase the church's significant and vital support.
- To prevent spouse/intimate partner and child abuse and neglect
- To protect those who are victims of abuse.
- To treat those affected by domestic violence, child abuse, and neglect.
- To strengthen the family and prevent the recurrence of abuse.
- To establish a child protective service family-based support system through providing family-based safety services, mediation on behalf of the family, and pastoral support on behalf of the family. The church/center serves as the family liaison.
- To establish an orphanage concept to reduce child removals and limit foster care outside of the child's cultural setting.
- To establish substance abuse clinical training institutes, along with education and supportive services, while teaching the unequivocal Word of God.
- To provide empowerment, autonomy, education, and a plethora of other proper resources.

- To discuss the practice, policy, and research implications of African-centered social work.
- To engage in self-assessment as it relates to African-centered knowledge and values.
- To engage in applying African-centered principles, concepts, and values in practice contexts.
- To use *A Simple Leaf* as an informational source on the impact of abuse on children and families

### Substance Abuse and Clinical Training Domain

Regarding domestic violence and substance abuse, the Department of Justice reports women who have been abused are fifteen times more likely to abuse alcohol and nine times more likely to abuse drugs than women who have not been abused<sup>22</sup>. In 2019, the Department of Justice found that 36% of victims in domestic violence programs also had substance abuse problems and 51% of domestic violence program directors agree that a woman's use of alcohol can be a barrier to leaving a violent relationship. In the same survey, 87% of domestic violence program directors agree that the risk of intimate partner violence increases when both partners abuse alcohol and drugs.<sup>23</sup> The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that 69% of women in treatment for substance abuse say they were sexually abused as children. When domestic violence programs were asked why they did not provide substance abuse treatment:

- 75% of programs cited a lack of financial resources.
- 71% of programs cited a lack of staff resources.
- 60% of programs cited a lack of experience dealing with substance abuse problems.
- To improve treatment for individuals with both substance abuse and domestic violence problems, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment recommends providing more federal funding for programs to be able to provide these much-needed services in shelters.

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<sup>22</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. "Incarceration Rates." Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://www.bjs.ojp.gov> (accessed March 2022).

<sup>23</sup> SAMHSA, "National Registry of evidence-based programs and practices," PEERTA, June, 2022, <http://www.PEERTA.ACF.HHS.GOV> (accessed 2022).

- Furthering efforts to link domestic violence and substance abuse treatment programs in human service systems include providing counseling, childcare, substance abuse treatment, and mental health treatment, among other services, in one program.
- Creating mechanisms for interagency cooperation at the state and local levels.
- Funding projects to test the feasibility and effectiveness of linking domestic violence and substance abuse treatment programs.
- To provide life skills, educational, and entrepreneur services for family members to learn to earn.
- To establish an integrated methodology of care where medical programs, dental services, social services, and substance abuse treatment operate in concert while providing living quarters for families while they complete all aspects of services.

#### *Substance Abuse Treatment Program Outline*

Clients who are identified as having Mild SUDs (substance use disorders) will be assisted by an on-site addiction counselor, receive an individual assessment, and enter the on-site program. Those having moderate to severe levels of severity will be referred to a residential treatment center. The most notable and effective residential service at the moment is one of our community partners: the Dallas County 18–24-month treatment center. We have a special interest in and previous experience working with family violence, drug offenders, and alcoholics through our continuing services, education, military training, ministerial training, and volunteer services. Clients who are in the recovery process will be assisted by an on-site addiction counselor. Clients will receive an individual assessment, followed by group and individual intervention sessions. The

addiction counseling program is designed to meet the specific needs of each client and will include relapse prevention workshops and recovery workshops. This program is designed for a 6-week attendance to enable sobriety and abstain from alcohol and all drugs (verified by random 10-panel urine screens at least once during the program).

Topics the program will cover include:

- Overview of drug and alcohol education
- Disease of alcoholism
- Identifying the addict
- Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous
- Relapse and enabling
- Family dynamics
- Steps to breaking physical & psychological addiction
- Prescription drugs
- Screening (SALCE Drug Evaluation and Dast-20 Drug Evaluation)
- Neurotransmitters and chemistry
- Agree to engage in aftercare services (monthly documented AA/NA Meetings)

### *Drug and Alcohol Prevention*

The drug and alcohol prevention component of the program is designed to educate the public regarding the realities of drug and alcohol use, its effects on the body, and the costs associated with addiction. A variety of workshops covering such topics as “The Drug Trade in America,” “Addiction Causes & Cures,” “Substance Abuse and the Family” will be a regular part of the program with a certificate of completion awarded at the end.



### **The Educational and Life Skills Domain**

One of the primary needs of marginalized communities impacted by the maladaptive behaviors identified in this study is basic academic skill development. FAPRC will offer a full-service educational skills center to help prepare our clients for successful entry into the job market and prepare them to further their education. The educational skills center will focus on basic literacy and with African-centered education. Low levels of literacy have been shown to be a common thread connecting people to poverty, homelessness, and joblessness. Also, one in every three adults currently function at the lowest level of literacy, and nearly one million of this number are functionally illiterate. According to a community assessment by the United Way of the Gulf Coast, adult literacy is the third leading unmet concern in marginalized communities.<sup>24</sup>

To combat this problem, FAPRC will provide courses in reading and basic academic skill development from an African-centered curriculum. The process will center around the cultural heritage of African Americans to stimulate the growth and development of African and African American mental and ethical traits.

Case management will ensure wraparound services with an individual needs assessment, and comprehensive case management. Each client will receive comprehensive intake counseling from a certified, on-site social worker, and an individually crafted rehabilitative plan-of-action will be designed. Clients in need of more intensive services will receive individual and group counseling designed to increase coping skills for stress and depression, address anger management, and increase the

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<sup>24</sup> Frances J. Powell, "African Centered Education: What Is It and Why Do We Need It?," *Institute of Education Services* (1991), <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED344832> (accessed December 2022).

ability to handle day-to-day life pressures. We'll work cohesively with law enforcement, local hospitals, Child Protective Services, and Habitat for Humanity.

### *Education and Outreach*

Outreach includes direct and indirect client services (crisis intervention, advocacy, and support services), along with community engagement. These services include, but are not limited to, vocational training, financial counseling, job readiness assistance, and education programs, and assistance with educational and professional certification. An advocate will offer case management services, victim advocacy assistance, and counseling.

This program is designed to bring about awareness and education regarding the risk factors associated with the identified problem while helping participants learn about the impact and lasting effects of maladaptive behavior. All participants enrolled in this class will receive a certificate of completion. While training and classes are not mandatory, individuals are encouraged to attend as they provide counseling, awareness training, and are offered in individual and group sessions. Certificates of completion are awarded as an incentive.

Members provide emotional support to one another, learn new ways to cope, discover strategies for improving their condition, and help others while helping themselves. Women can share pragmatic, experience-tested insights gained from first-hand experience with in similar situations. This has been increasingly recognized as a viable, efficient method of holistic healing within the community.

### *Men's Support Group*

Members provide emotional support to one another, learn new ways to cope, discover strategies for improving their condition, and help others while helping themselves. Men can share pragmatic, experience-tested insights gained from first-hand experience with others in the same situation. This has been increasingly recognized as a viable, efficient method of holistic healing within the community.

### *Anger Management*

The anger management program utilizes the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA), National Registry of Evidenced-Based Program and Practices (NREPP) Anger Management Curriculum. This program is designed for group cognitive behavioral therapy sessions on anger management for people with substance abuse problems or mental illness. The utilized workbook summarizes core concepts for each session and includes worksheets and homework assignments.

### *Parenting Classes*

Protective parenting classes are offered in a private or group setting utilizing the state of Texas approved curriculum, "The Positive Parenting Program." This parenting program curriculum is included in the National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. This is an 8-19 week certification course covering basic parenting techniques, parent survival skills, causes of child behaviors, managing misbehavior, issues of child development, encouraging positive behaviors, stress management, positive discipline, boundaries,

childhood abuse and neglect, alcohol, drugs, and abuse. We also utilize the book, *A Simple Leaf*, as presenting a unique understanding of who is really affected by a dysfunctional family unit.

### *Victim Support Services*

Victim advocates are professionals trained to support victims of crime. Advocates offer victims information, emotional support, and help finding resources and filling out paperwork. Sometimes, advocates go to court with victims. Advocates may also contact organizations, such as criminal justice or social service agencies, to get help or information for victims. Some advocates staff crisis hotlines, run support groups, or provide in-person counseling. Victim advocates may also be called victim service providers, victim/witness coordinators, or victim/witness specialists.

### *Sexual Trafficking/Peer Relationship Education Program*

Peer program assistants provide counseling and advocacy to clients who have been sexually assaulted, harassed, stalked, and/or became a victim of relationship violence. The coordinator provides rape crisis response services; coordinates and provides sexual and relationship violence prevention, awareness and training to the community with both educational presentations and prevention programs; Collaborates with community resources in the development and monitoring of sexual misconduct policies, procedures, and responses; and provides professional expertise on sexual/relationship violence prevention to faculty, staff, student organizations and community organizations. A peer program assistant also provides professional, clinical, individual, couples, and group counseling, case management, and assistance to clients, as

well as crisis intervention, emergency evaluations and screenings, and referral services to at-risk youth.

### **Mental Health Services Treatment Curriculum**

FAPRC embraces the idea of treating dual diagnosis (co-occurring mental health disorders). Research-based clinical practices provide clients with effective therapy. This effective, research-based curriculum is supported through SAMHSA. Among dual diagnosis treatment centers, American Addiction Centers' addiction recovery curriculum, "Embracing Change: Recovery for Life," is a comprehensive, quality product and a top strength of our treatment facilities. Our dual diagnosis curriculum focuses on engaging our clients, from the content and imagery to the colors and interactive exercises. Presented as a series of workbooks that follow alongside the dual diagnosis treatment process, our curriculum was designed with interactive and informative lessons that appeal to all learning styles.

This dual diagnosis curriculum was chosen as it appeals to many different learning styles with information to which anyone can relate. Throughout treatment, clients participate in trauma and recovery-focused didactic and experiential groups and have time to complete their workbooks together or independently. For many clients, their workbooks are tangible and powerful indicators of progress and inspiration. For the rest of their lives, they can revisit these pages for further reflection and growth.

### *Stages of Change*

Stages of Change primarily focuses on the research-based modality of motivational interviewing. Since the problem has been identified, this book delves deeper into tangible stages of change and goal setting.

### *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)*

Cognitive behavioral therapy centers on the relationships between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and changing the way clients think so their mind is more conducive to long-term recovery. In addition to CBT, the modalities of rational emotive behavioral therapy (REBT) and solution-focused therapy are emphasized via reflection exercises. This addresses the identification and practice of coping skills. In collaboration with the treatment team and treatment plan, clients learn to narrow down what works best for them and their recovery.

### *Individual Therapy*

Depending on client needs, length of treatment, and level of care, sessions with the primary therapist may be initially scheduled once or twice per week. It is during these sessions that the treatment plan is developed with input from the client and multidisciplinary staff.

### *Family Therapy*

These sessions may include participation from anyone significant in the client's life such as a spouse, significant other, parent, sibling, etc. With the client's permission,

these sessions may occur in-person or using HIPAA-compliant technology for online or telephone sessions.

### *Group Therapy*

Group therapy consists of therapeutic groups led by a licensed clinical professional and provides clients the opportunity to explore issues and process their recoveries in a safe, peer-supported atmosphere.

### *Trauma Therapies*

We realize that many clients self-medicate with substances to repress traumatic experiences. The cessation of substance use may incite a high level of intensity of emotions and traumatic symptoms. This is why all treatment is offered from a trauma-informed care approach (TIC):

- Dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT)
- Wellness curriculum
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Motivational interviewing
- Rational emotive behavior therapy
- Seeking safety and other trauma-focused therapies
- Trauma-focused CBT
- Trauma-informed care (TIC)

### *Medical and Psychiatric Sessions*

Research by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), and National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), shows that comprehensive, integrated care significantly increases long-term recovery and quality of life success rates. Therefore, medical and psychiatric assessments and follow-ups are offered throughout the treatment stay.

Meetings of 12-step groups and group work are offered several times per week depending on client needs, preferences, and level of care. These meetings help strengthen peer support and promote the continued practice of working a recovery program. In addition to these meetings, clients may participate in groups focused on the principles of 12-Step and/or peer support groups

### *Motivational Interviewing (MI)*

Motivational Interviewing is a major aspect of our programming because it ties into our philosophies of caring staff, collaborative processes, and individualized treatment. MI is a collaborative, therapeutic conversation between licensed clinicians and clients that addresses the common problem of ambivalence for change. As defined by William Miller, the creator of MI, its purpose is to strengthen the client's own motivation for and commitment to change in a manner that is consistent with said client's values. Therefore, rather than imposing or forcing changes, we "meet the client where the client is" and help her/him move toward his/her goals by drawing out and building his/her readiness to change.



## The Shelter and Orphanage Concept

According to the Department of Family Protective Services, all efforts to place children removed from homes on an emergency basis lack the access to safe, stable placements that meet their individual needs and support their permanency goals. This aspect of the program requires state leadership and lawmakers, health and human services, residential and acute care providers, faith-based community organizations, state and local courts and court-appointed professionals, and other child welfare advocates to join in establishing such shelters and orphanage concepts. As of September 7, 2021, 28,943 children and youth are in the Texas child welfare system, and 161 (0.56%) are in CWOP (Children without placement) due to their high-risk behaviors, which is another delicate challenge for those who have been severely abused. There is a desperate need for the faith-based community to establish licensed facilities to assist with this population. Here is where the FAPRC will engage our congregational social workers, child advocates, and elected officials to have a very candid conversation with the court system regarding these challenges while leaving no stone unturned in remedying this crisis. This is a future project that is coming soon.

## Operating Budget

### Sample Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Operating Budget

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

410 · Revenue

412 · Individual Donations

**TOTAL**

**Sep '22 - Aug 23**

25,200.00

<b>413 · Government Grants</b>	
<b>413.1 · CVC Grant</b>	96,030.00
- CVC Growth	53,970.00
<b>413.2 · VOCA Grant</b>	250,000.00
<b>413.3 · OVAG</b>	0
<b>413.4 Substance Abuse Grants/SAMHSA</b>	42,000.00
	120,000.00
	0
<b>Total 413 · Government Grants</b>	442,000.00
	0
<b>414 · City/County</b>	25,000.00
<b>415 · Corporate Contributions</b>	20,000.00
<b>41552 · Walmart</b>	10,000.00
<b>41554 · Amazon Smile Program</b>	100.00
<b>41555 · Baylor Scott &amp; White</b>	3,000.00
<b>Total 415 · Corporate Contributions</b>	33,100.00
<b>41550 · Foundations</b>	
<b>Anderson Foundation &amp; Superior Health</b>	15,000.00
<b>41550 · Foundations - Other</b>	37,500.00
<b>Total 41550 · Foundations</b>	52,500.00
<b>418 · United Way</b>	
<b>418.1 · United Way - CT</b>	10,000.00
<b>418.2 · United Way - GFH</b>	3,700.00
<b>418.3 · United Way - GA</b>	0.00
<b>418 · United Way - Other</b>	0.00
<b>Total 418 · United Way</b>	13,700.00
<b>461 · Reimbursement</b>	0.00
<b>410 · Revenue - Other</b>	0.00
<b>Total 410 · Revenue</b>	591,500.00
	0
<b>416 · Fundraiser Events</b>	
<b>416.1</b>	
<b>2 · Kris Kringle Christmas Raffle</b>	
<b>Shades of Purple Community Banquet</b>	8,000.00
<b>416.13 · Fall Mailer</b>	0.00
<b>416.14 · Meet &amp; Greet</b>	0.00
<b>416.1</b>	
<b>6 · Casa by The Water</b>	
<b>African Heritage Celebration</b>	15,000.00
<b>416.1</b>	
<b>7 · St Patricks</b>	
<b>Junetenth Celebration</b>	10,000.00

416.2 · Charity Bingo	0.00
416.3	
0 · CASA on Main	
Garage sale	500.00
416.4 · Gift For Kids	0.00
416.50 · Dine & Donate	500.00
416 · Fundraiser Events - Other	0.00
<b>Total 416 · Fundraiser Events</b>	<b>34,000.00</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>625,500.00</b>
<b>Expense</b>	
500 · Depreciation Expense	0.00
501 · Salary & Benefits	
501.1 · Executive Director	50,000.00
501.2	
· Volunteer Supervisors (1,2,3)	119,750.00
501.3	
· Lead Volunteer Supervisor	
Congregational SW x3	0
Lead SW	41,000.00
501.4 · FT Executive Admin	35,360.00
501.5 · Recruiter/Trainer	41,000.00
Advocate Supervisor 4	37,500.00
Advocate Supervisor 5	18,750.00
Volunteer/Outreach Coordinator	35,000.00
<b>Total Salary</b>	<b>378,360.00</b>
501.8 · Payroll Fees	1,763.88
502 · Payroll Taxes	
502.1 · FICA - SS/Med-ER	28,944.54
502.2 · Fees/Interest	0.00
502.3 · SUTA/FUTA	3,026.88
502.4 · Payroll Tax Refund	0.00
502 · Payroll Taxes - Other	0.00
<b>Total 502 · Payroll Taxes</b>	<b>31,971.42</b>
501 · Salary & Benefits - Other	0.00
<b>Total 501 · Salary &amp; Benefits</b>	<b>406,114.18</b>
503 · Insurance	
503.1 · Health	54,135.36

503.2 · Workers Comp	1,219.00	
530.3		
· General Liability/D&O	Directors & Officers Liability	867.00
530.4		
· Commercial Lines	General Liability	2,156.00
503 · Insurance - Other (Charity Bingo Bond renewal)		100.00
Total 503 · Insurance		64,558.00
520 · Operating Expenses		
521 · Utilities		
	521.1 · Electric	6,000.00
	521.2 · Water	864.00
	521.3 · Cable	2,160.00
	521.4 · Telecom/Internet/Website ESI Hosted Services	0.00
	(office phones)	4,572.00
	T-Mobile (staff cell phones)	2,376.00
	Time Warner (internet)	2,136.00
	521 · Utilities - Other	0.00
Total 521 · Utilities		18,108.00
522 · Rent		40,200.00
524 · Building Repair & Maintenance		220.00
532 · Printing/Advertising/Recruit		
	532.1 · Advertising - Media	4,500.00
	532 · Printing/Advertising/Recruit - Other	0.00
Total 532 · Printing/Advertising/Recruit		4,500.00
551 · Books, Subscriptions, Reference		200.00
560 · Fundraiser Events/Meetings		1,000.00
573 · Equipment Maintenance		300.00
574 · Furniture & Equipment		2,000.00
	574.1 · Copier Lease	0.00
	574 · Furniture & Equipment - Other	0.00
Total 574 · Furniture & Equipment		2,000.00
575 · Computer IT/Software		0.00
	Evinto Solutions (Optima)	2,520.00
	GoDaddy (domain renewal)	120.00
	Quickbooks Online	560.00
582 · Office Supplies		1,500.00
584 · Postage		600.00

587 · Bank Charge	
587.1 · Credit Card Fees	200.00
587.2 · Bank Charge - Fees	0.00
587 · Bank Charge - Other	0.00
Total 587 · Bank Charge	200.00
	0.00
Total 595 · Miscellaneous	0.00
520 · Operating Expenses - Other	0.00
Total 520 · Operating Expenses	542,140.18
540 · Program Expense	
540.1 · Travel/Local Mileage - Staff	13,200.00
540.15 · Volunteer Travel/Mileage	1,200.00
540.2 · Volunteering Training	1,800.00
540.3 · Background Checks	1,200.00
540.4 · Volunteer Appreciation	2,000.00
540.5 · Outreach Expenses	2,400.00
540.6 · Recruitment	1,200.00
540.7 · Staff Appreciation	600.00
595.1 · Gifts for Kids	675.00
540 · Program Expense - Other	0.00
Total 540 · Program Expense	24,275.00
550 · Professional Expenses	
550.1 · Accounting/Audit Fees	6,700.00
550.2 · Contract Bookkeeping Services	0.00
550 · Professional Expenses - Other	0.00
Total 550 · Professional Expenses	6,700.00
586 · Training/Registration	
586.1 · Staff Training	
586.11 · Meals	800.00
586.12 · Travel/Lodging	3,000.00
586.1 · Staff Training - Other	0.00
Total 586.1 · Staff Training	3,800.00
586 · Training/Registration - Other	0.00
Total 586 · Training/Registration	3,800.00
628 · Depreciation and Amortization - Allowable	0.00
Total Expense	576,915.18
Net Ordinary Income	48,584.82

Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
999 · Uncategorized Income	0.00
Total Other Income	0.00
Other Expense	
800 · Ask My Accountant	0.00
Total Other Expense	0.00
Net Other Income	0.00
Net Income	48,584.82

## SECTION 6:

## POSTSCRIPT

**Post Graduate Consideration**

Within this artifact, much consideration has been given to the tenants of domestic violence, child abuse, and substance abuse. While other dynamics are major contributing factors to the current status of the African American community, the formative years of a child and healthy growth through the stages of development should now become the focus. The foundation should be comprised of learning and overcoming obstacles that prepare them for managing a healthy lifestyle and reaching a level of autonomy. This is where a healthy and nurturing environment teaches control, reduces unhealthy impulses, and is prepared to successfully shift from one stage of growth to the next stage. Therefore, practices in the environment must be age appropriate and fit the maturity level, thus ensuring the balance of advancing cognitively, psychologically, morally, sexually, and mastering the motor skills needed to gain and maintain autonomy.

However, if the growth is impeded because parents are not equipped to provide physiological needs, safety, love, belonging, and the building and shaping of esteem, the process becomes very problematic, complex, and fragile enough to completely disrupt the growth process which can prove devastating. Alfie Kohn tells us, "If children feel safe, they can take risks, ask questions, make mistakes, learn to trust, share their feelings, and grow."<sup>25</sup> While this task appears seemingly easy, unlike other cultures and nationalities,

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<sup>25</sup> Alfie Kohn, *Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason* (New York: Atria Books, 2006), 72.

the African American identity and social environment is not built on a standpoint where the entire economic entity, population, and culture functions from a dynamic inclusive of an ecological and systems perspective. Hence, homeostasis continues to be an issue and aggressive maltreatment continues to upset the equilibrium.

When considering the implementation of the FAPRC, the time is now. The time for the church to embrace a methodology to shift the trajectory of this nation is now. In the words of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, “The time to what is right is always now.”<sup>26</sup> All systems mentioned have also been applied to the Jewish community where similar centers are erected alongside synagogues to assist in healing and have produced massive results in the lives of Holocaust survivors and their descendants. I foresee the same results occurring for the African diaspora. As for the book, *A Simple Leaf*, it will be published in May 2023 in preparation for the upcoming FAPRC’s model and to always meet the people where they are in *their* environment, not ours. This concept was not mentioned throughout this dissertation discussion because the focus is to bring individuals out of the environment. However, I realized this is the exact lack of consideration afforded the African diaspora. Therefore, we must adopt the Person-In-Environment (PIE) concept and give understanding to the whole person, regardless of economic status and meet them where they are.<sup>27</sup>

In summarizing this dissertation’s execution, I find it necessary to lay out the systems theory. It is here where the reader truly grasps an understanding of how the moving pieces work together. Healthy or unhealthy, these pieces are still at play.

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<sup>26</sup> Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: The Revised Edition*.

<sup>27</sup> Shockley, et al., *African-Centered Education*, Afterword.



Primarily, systems theory is being presented because at the end of it all, these issues are not racial issues, but system issues that have been permitted to operate far too long. While people may be the driving force behind the wheel, it is the concept of values and belief systems breeding ignorance and in the words of W.E.B Dubois, “Ignorance is a cure for nothing.” This statement speaks volumes as I reflect upon my initial artifact. It was spoken in a podcast where individuals were able to present their solutions to the problem at hand. Although each interviewee presented eloquently on the issues of the Africa diaspora’s impact, the proverbial complaints remained without resolve.<sup>28, 29</sup> It was as if they were reliving the trauma repeatedly. Consequently, there is a need for the book, *A Simple Leaf*, because it describes how disconnected we feel when not embraced by our environment and those who are responsible for our wellbeing. It truly exemplifies the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theoretical approach. I will revisit the podcast soon, but from a much healthier posture and after further research.

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<sup>28</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “Du Bois Quotes,” W.E.B Dubois Center, <http://duboiscenter.library.umass.edu/du-bois-quotes/> (accessed 2022).

<sup>29</sup> Shockley, et al., *African-Centered Education*, Afterword.

## Systems Theory

Since much is mentioned throughout this study regarding operating systems, it is only practical to present the systems theory as it is applied to this project. According to the Webster dictionary, systems theory is defined as a “regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole; a group of related natural objects or forces.” However, from a social work perspective, the theory is explained in a much broader contextual view and formed by types:<sup>30</sup>

1. System: A unit made up of interconnected/mutually dependent parts.
2. Complex system: The bigger, whole system made up of individual, smaller systems. This aspect is normally utilized in social sciences.
3. Ecological systems: The numerous systems in a person’s life that impact their behavior.
4. Homeostasis: The state of perpetual circumstances within a system. All systems should constantly move toward homeostasis.
5. Adaptation: A system’s propensity to make modifications that will protect itself when presented with new environmental factors.
6. Feedback loop: When the outputs of a system ultimately affect its inputs, causing the system to feed back into itself circularly.

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<sup>30</sup> Jeremy Sutton, “What is Systems Therapy: Theories and Technique explained,” Positive Psychology, <https://positivepsychology.com/systems-therapy/> (accessed 2022).

When holistically evaluating certain dynamics, conditions and environment are key factors in understanding the hardships on people in their environment. The theory consists of an interdisciplinary study of systems (African American population, family, culture, and church) and how their relationships work within a larger and a more complex system (racialized government system, unjust justice system, and the Black church). The key concept of systems theory, regardless of which discipline is being applied, is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In examining how minor systems (African Americans) come together to influence the greater complex system (racialized government system, unjust justice system, and the church), certain characteristics of the whole (Western Civilization) are seemingly confusing in its own context or when viewing a single aspect or part. In laymen terms, this theory pursues the opportunity to describe and expand suppositions about qualities arising within intricate systems that outwardly cannot develop alone within the whole.

Without the support of the whole, the subsystems try to emerge while becoming increasingly ineffective because the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This simple theory explains why the African American community continues to remain in a downward spiral and perpetual state of crisis that drives the negative societal connotations mentioned beforehand. The community tries to operate from a posture of independence when the whole is designed to be dependent upon. Within any discipline, the application of systems theory must look at all factors concerning its makeup. If we examine the makeup of the Black population and consider all the atrocities experienced (past and current) and see them as ingredients (systems) needed to bake a pie, all the elements of the pie are available, but you must have access to the major instrument

required to produce this final product. While it is understood that all ingredients are required to create the pie (complex system/whole), the heat of the oven serves as the emerging characteristic needed to solidify the result. Hence, a significant change had to take place.

The heat of the oven baking the ingredients establishes the fact the fragments alone did not create the dessert, but multiple factors contributed to the outcome with heat being the final step. This holistic approach must be considered when grasping an understanding of the impact on the African diaspora. The forced migration of a major system into a more complex whole has resulted in generations of disrupted systems, and any time emergence behavior does not occur, the minor subsystem remains half-baked until the appropriate and needed action takes place to make it an effective part of the major system. The minor system, or ingredients of the disrupted system, is described as the African American race, her family, children, socioeconomics, her culture, ethnicity, her resilience, emotional intelligence, mental, and emotional healing, and her most beloved and desired ally, the Black church.

Such denial and exclusion of the major system has caused the Black American life experience to become synonymous with terms like socialization, acculturation, acclimation, trauma-informed ministries, Black consciousness, Black theology, Black liberation theology; societal injustices, discrimination, systemic racism, racial trauma, racial fatigue, battle fatigue, microaggressions, marginalized communities, police brutality, imprisonment, recidivism; domestic violence, child abuse, child welfare, CPS (Child Protective Services), juvenile delinquency, impoverished, depression, and anger. The systems theory suggests every living element is considered part of a whole and they

depend on each other in some form or fashion in an effort to create a greater whole, but if access is denied, a disruption occurs, a new system must be created.

There were many mixed emotions throughout this journey: fear, anger, disappointment, and the joy of knowing change is happening. This has been especially true after a thorough review of Africology, the true story of Christianity, and spending time under the tutelage and leadership of Bishop T.D. Jakes. This level of leadership demands excellence with little to no room for mediocrity. It has brought me back to the place of nostalgia where I experienced the fear of being misunderstood or appearing radical when addressing the impact on the African diaspora and I suddenly understood the silence of the Black church. How do we accomplish this change without seeming antisemitic or appearing militant and being feared? These were the questions, but then I came across two of Frederick Douglass's greatest quotes: "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." This one helped in targeting the oppressive and disproportionality of the child welfare system and family violence throughout the culture. The second came to me as I sought to implement African-centered theoretical treatment strategies and ecosystems without timidity alongside the church globally, and I was comforted by the great abolitionist: "The Constitutional framers were peace men; but they preferred revolution to peaceful submission to bondage. They were quiet men; but they did not shrink from agitating against oppression. They showed forbearance; but that they knew its limits. They believed in order, but not in the order of tyranny. With them,

nothing was ‘settled’ that was not right. With them, justice, liberty, and humanity were ‘final’ not slavery and oppression.”<sup>31</sup>

Hence, my fear dissipated, questions were answered, and the lines of argumentation were developed. Therefore, I have humbly submitted myself to the discipline of study in pursuing my PhD in Christian Studies to serve as an agent of change globally and to renew a nation that is proud of its culture, economic growth, and development while empowering future generations to do the same.

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<sup>31</sup> Frederick Douglas, *Selected Speeches and Writings (The Library of Black America series)*, ed. Philip S. Foner and Yuval Taylor (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1975), 188.

## APPENDIX A:

### ARTIFACT

An Excerpt from the book, *A Simple Leaf*, gives insight to what abuse truly looks like from a child's perspective. It also serves as the reading assignment for every family member within the FAPRC, as it speaks to the posture of many who are born out of the African diaspora.

#### **Who Am I**

While muddling through an agonizing period of self-worth and identity, I was introduced to the poem "Equipment" during a message given by Bishop T.D. Jakes. Upon researching this writing, I was perplexed and wondered where the author came up with the notion that all men were given the same opportunities. Where did one decide that your skin, race, religion, creed, or gender didn't matter? I thought about my view of self and figured this couldn't possibly be that simple, or could it? The author speaks of courage, fighting to survive, and facing one's handicap. When there are many handicaps to overcome, many demons to battle, and high hurdles ahead, was it possible that defeat could be defeated? A sense of hope and inspiration began to surface and the motivation to write emerged. After all, this was indeed George Washington Carver's favorite poem and Tuskegee Institute's National Anthem to inspire, rise, and overcome. I was drained trying to balance two different extremes. I wanted life more abundantly. I wanted to live and let live. I needed peace, love, and happiness. I needed to dance like David danced and worship in His presence. I needed to know for once in my life, who was staring back at me! Was I really the product of venomous words of hatred that were the result of

alcoholism, adultery, family feuds, poverty, and plain old misery? In my world, self was ugly. It represented failure, a life of doom and gloom, because Black was not beautiful, at least not in my house. Dark was repulsive. “Big Lip Whatever” became a pet name for times when one didn’t live up to the authoritarian rules of the caretaker at hand. I especially wondered if the author had to struggle with certain affirmations such as, “You’re beautiful, not ugly,” and “You’re smart, not stupid.” Oh, if someone had only said, “You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you,” verses, “You can’t do anything right,” maybe some of my choices would have been different.

I remember the first time I heard, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God,” (KJV). I thought, “They obviously do not know what else comes by hearing. When darkness is a constant, instead of light, you become a product of that environment as well.” This was my household experience, my life, and future as far as I was concerned. It was impossible to believe anything else would be afforded, or so I thought. The term abuse was never spoken within the walls of our humble dwelling, but it often presented itself in various forms: emotionally, physically, and financially. It is my personal belief that emotional abuse or scarring is the toughest obstacle to overcome as the mind seems to find comfort in all that has been learned, good or bad. It fights desperately against change and acts as a spoiled child when the melody is no longer the same. The mind presents itself as a cage or a prison and fights relentlessly to secure her position of power and control. One then becomes a hostage as she strives to keep her listening audience. She pleads for your attention with intrusive thoughts at the most inopportune times; she is selfish, bold, and if not arrested, deadly!



I began to understand this stronghold, or malady, known as “emotional neglect.” Negativity develops just as powerful as positivity. Unhealthy develops at the same rate as healthy. Hence, growth is going to take place, regardless of the instructor. Like Maya Angelou, I, too, know “why the caged bird sings!” I also know why someone will settle for such shortcomings as being labeled as a young man’s female dog, or in laymen terms, b\$&a%\*! The world stands by in shock as females, young and old alike, succumb to these detrimental and derogatory terms, not realizing words give life to thoughts, thoughts give life to actions, and actions give life to experiences. Thus, we have life as we know it: a hot mess! A hot mess indeed, yet we serve a God, who inspires and directs His men and women of the cloth to speak over the airways, the pulpits, and use their anointed gifts to write and touch the essence of each other’s souls. Therefore, my eyes and heart are drawn again to the words of Edgar A. Guest’s poem, “Equipment.” Self-pity is no longer an option and captivity reigns no more because I, too, have the equipment to excel to great heights and become whole in Him, but how does one accomplish this arduous but doable process?

There’s a process of understanding one’s self-concept, self-worth, and a healthy image that must be achieved. Some may find it through the Bible, pastoral counseling, or psycho-educational therapy. Whatever the case, it can be achieved. Wholeness is God’s gift to mankind and the key to healing the scars of the past. Therefore, I share this poem with you.

#### **Carver’ s Favorite Poem: “Equipment”**

Figure it out for yourself, my lad,  
You’ve all that the greatest of men have had,  
Two arms, two hands, two legs, two eyes  
And a brain to use if you would be wise.

With this equipment they all began,  
 So, start for the top and say I can  
 Look them over, the wise and great!  
 They take their food from a common plate,  
 And similar knives and forks they use,  
 With similar laces they tie their shoes.  
 The world considers them brave and smart,  
 But you've all they had when they made their start.  
 You can triumph and come to skill,  
 You can be great if you only will.  
 You're well equipped for what fight you choose,  
 You have legs and arms and a brain to use,  
 And the man who has risen great deeds to do  
 Began his life with no more than you.  
 You are the handicap you must face,  
 You are the one who must choose your place,  
 You must say where you want to go,  
 How much you will study the truth to know.  
 God has equipped you for life, but He  
 Lets you decide what you want to be.  
 Courage must come from the soul within,  
 The man must furnish the will to win.  
 So figure it out for yourself, my lad.  
 You were born with all that the great have had,  
 With your equipment they all began,  
 Get hold of yourself and say: I Can.  
 —Edgar A. Guest<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Edgar Albert Guest, "Equipment," All Poetry, <https://allpoetry.com/poem/8471335-Equipment-by-Edgar-Albert-Guest> (accessed February 28, 2023).

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# **A Simple Leaf**

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**Lolita Gilmore-Randall**

**“Renewing a Nation”**

**A Practical view of Family Violence,  
Child Abuse and Neglect through the  
eyes of children**

A SIMPLE LEAF

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## **Dedication**

The Lord is my Shepherd, and I shall not want (Psalm 23:1, KJV). I thank God for all that He has bestowed upon this author and her family. I am forever grateful for the angels that have been placed along the journey of life, and the intimate relationship with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To you all, I dedicate this book.

To my beautiful daughter, Carmise (MiMi) Gilmore, you are a true ballerina and the sweetest and most loving daughter a mother could ever imagine having in her life. Thank you so much for your support, hugs, kisses and understanding when mom couldn't always make the games or the competitions. You rock little lady!!

I thank my sons, Adrione Randall and Charles Glenn Gilmore Jr. You both have a very special way of expressing your love and support. It never ceases to amaze me how you both strive so hard to be the men God has called you to be. I am forever humbled

at the fact you both still call for guidance and advice. I love you dearly.

To my parents, Lola and Felix Randall; my siblings, Leonard Randall, Lorenzo Randall, Latesha Whitt and granddaughter, Imari Randall, thank you all for your love and support throughout this journey.

To my first Pastor, the late Apostle Nathaniel Holcomb, I say thank you for the biblical teachings that inspired spiritual growth and maturity. Through this beginning, I learned whose I am and who I am. I thank God for your love, support and inspired faith. You will forever have a place within my heart.

To the book midwife, Pastor Rekesha Pittman, thank you for the constant push for excellence! I am encouraged to move further in Him through more writings to help others along the path. “Get Write” is a term that will always bespeak excellence. Blessings to you always!!!!

I am truly thankful and humbled to all of my friends and family for your love and support.

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- XI. The Quiet Storm
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  - b. Transition
  
- XII. The Hard Truth

- a. Facing Your Demons
- b. Division
- c. Separation

### XIII. The Struggle is REAL

- a. Isolation
- b. Rejection

### XIV. Redemption

- a. Acceptance
- b. Salvation
- c. Forgiveness

About the Author

References

Many find themselves suffering the maladies of Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, Substance Abuse and addictions. These dynamics are usually the result of underlying issues that were never properly addressed throughout the developmental journey of life.

Empirical data and most counseling theories suggest that most issues are a direct result of past life experiences that should be examined from a biopsychosocial and spiritual perspective when trying to gain an understanding of self or the actions of another.

While many of the incidents of this book are not a direct account of the author's life story, the dynamics associated with the situations are in close proximity. Hence, a study of Human behavior, theology and spirituality has become a favorite past time in gaining wisdom, knowledge and understanding when trying to move forward.

The prophet Hosea 4:6King James Version (KJV) tells us that "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Abuse

is real and can serve as an invisible prison for many. It is this scripture that ignites the passion to help others understand that shifting from one paradigm to the next is indeed a process that requires one to embrace the whole man, biological, psychological, socially and spiritually with the Word of God serving as the nucleus. Replace this wording with your own.

## **Chapter One**

### **Who Am I**

In muddling through an agonizing period of self-worth and identity, the poem “Equipment” was introduced to these ears during a message given by Bishop T.D Jakes. Upon researching this writing, I was perplexed and wondered where the author came up with notion that all men were given the same opportunities. Where did one decide that your skin, race, religion, creed or gender didn't matter? I thought about my view of self and figured that this couldn't possibly be that simple or could it? The author speaks of courage, fighting to survive and facing one's handicap. How so, when there were many handicaps to overcome, many demons to battle and high hurdles ahead? Was it possible that defeat could be defeated? A sense of hope and inspiration began to surface. Hence, the motivation of this book was birthed. After all, this was indeed the great George Washington Carver's favorite poem and Tuskegee Institute's National Anthem to inspire, rise and



overcome. I was drained of trying to balance two different extremes. I wanted life more abundantly. I wanted to live and let live. I needed peace, love and happiness. I needed to dance like David danced and worship in His presence. I needed to know for once in my life, who was staring back at me!

Was I really the product of venomous words of hatred that were the result of alcoholism, adultery, family feuds, poverty and plain ole misery? In my world, self was ugly; it represented failure, a life of doom and gloom, because black was not beautiful, at least not in my house. Dark was repulsive; big lip whatever became a pet name for times when one didn't live up to the authoritarian rules of the caretaker at hand. I especially wondered if the author had to struggle with certain affirmations such as you're beautiful, not ugly; you're smart, not stupid. Oh if someone had only said, "you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you", verses you can't do S\*&% right, just maybe some choices would have been different.

I remember the first time I heard that "faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God"(KJV). I was literally like, they obviously do not

know what else comes by hearing. When darkness is a constant, instead of light, you become a product of that environment as well. There again, this was my household experience, my life and future as far as I was concerned. It was impossible to believe that anything else would be afforded, so I thought. The term abuse never spoken throughout the walls of our humble dwelling, but it often presented itself in various forms: emotionally, physically and financial. It is my personal belief that emotional abuse or scarring is the toughest obstacle to overcome, as the mind seems to find comfort in all that has been learned, good or bad. It fights desperately against change, and acts as a spoiled child when the melody is no longer the same. It presents itself as a cage or prison that fights relentlessly to secure her position of power and control. One becomes a hostage, as she strives to keep her listening audience. She pleads for your attention with intrusive thoughts at the most inopportune time; she is selfish, bold and if not arrested, deadly!

I began to understand this strong-hold or malady known as “Emotional Neglect”. Negativity develops just as powerful as positivity. Unhealthy

develops at the same rate as healthy. Hence, growth is going to take place, regardless of the instructor. Like the great Maya Angelou, I too know "Why the caged bird sings"! I also know why someone will settle for such short comings as being labeled as a young man's female dog, or in laymen terms, b\$&%\*! The world stands by in shock as females, young and old alike, succumb to these detrimental and derogatory terms, not realizing words give life to thoughts! Thoughts give life to actions! Actions give life to experiences, thus we have life as we know it.....A Hot Mess!!!!

A Hot mess indeed, yet, we serve a God, who inspires and directs His men and women of the cloth to speak over the air ways, the pulpits and use their anointed gifts to write and touch the essence of your very soul. Therefore, my eyes and heart are drawn again to the words of Edgar A. Guest, Equipment. Self- pity is no longer an option and captivity reigns no more, because I too have the equipment to excel great heights and become whole in Him, Christ Jesus, but how does one accomplish this arduous but doable process?

There's a process of understanding one's self-concept, self-worth and a healthy image that must

be achieved. Some may find it through the Bible, Pastoral Counseling or psycho-educational therapy. Whatever the case, it can be achieved. Wholeness is God's gift to mankind and the key to healing the scars of the past.

### **Carver's Favorite Poem, "Equipment"**

Figure it out for yourself, my lad,  
You've all that the greatest of men have had,  
Two arms, two hands, two legs, two eyes  
And a brain to use if you would be wise.

With this equipment they all began,  
So start for the top and say, "I can."

Look them over, the wise and great  
They take their food from a common plate,  
And similar knives and forks they use,  
With similar laces they tie their shoes.  
The world considers them brave and smart,  
But you've all they had when they made their  
start.

You can triumph and come to skill,  
You can be great if you only will.  
You're well equipped for what fight you choose,  
You have legs and arms and a brain to use,  
And the man who has risen great deeds to do  
Began his life with no more than you.

You are the handicap you must face,  
You are the one who must choose your place,  
You must say where you want to go,  
How much you will study the truth to know.  
God has equipped you for life, but He  
Lets you decide what you want to be.

Courage must come from the soul within,  
The man must furnish the will to win.  
So figure it out for yourself, my lad.  
You were born with all that the great have had,  
With your equipment they all began,  
Get hold of yourself and say: "I can."

--Edgar A. Guest

## **Chapter Two**

### **Grammy's House**

In the days of my youth it seemed that everything was an array of fun, laughter and joy when we were at Grammy's house. There, cousins could talk, play and run as wild as we wanted too without a care in the world. There was this certain aura of innocence that only a child could appreciate. No one talked about things lurking in the night, because the only objects moving were little people trying to get in the last giggle before the lights went out. Even after the lights were out, we still giggled and told our own ghost stories. These tales included what we all wanted to be once grown up. No one envisioned becoming pregnant at 19, a drug addict at 21, or a mother of 3 before the age of 23.

A safe haven is what it was. No screaming or shouting; no stabbing or shooting, and no name calling that would define you for the greater part of your life. All was good in this hood! Everyone was loving, caring; sharing and giving and just an amazing wonder. Summer was the absolutely best time of the year! Life was bright and warm, especially in the grasp of grandma's arms. This was the true definition of love. Tea cakes and snowballs in the form of the sweetest frozen kool-aid



available. Every child in the neighborhood loved Grammy's snowballs. Just line up on the back porch and eat away. The dog days of summer were a cherished commodity that proved life was worth living or so we thought!!!

“Janky, what is that on your leg? Come here!” Grammy would always see something out of place and question it, but I knew better to say anything other than I slipped or fell down. “Grammy, why can't I stay with you? Why do we have to go home?” This would be my cry every time summer was nearing its end, because here, questions could be asked and answered without penalty. Here, you felt tall and confident and not afraid to speak. No screaming and yelling, just comfort. Walks to the corner store or to Momma Louise's house up the street were the best. Momma Louise was Grammy's best friend, and they could gossip about everything and everybody. They talked about who they didn't speak to, so I decided I wouldn't speak either. I tried my best to practice whatever Grammy said. She would tell Momma Louise, “just turn ya head, and act like you don't see the old hag! Always in somebody's business. Old fool need to sat down somewhere!” Momma Louise was a character

herself. “You show right Bell (Grammy’s real name). I need to tell that hag a thang or two, but the good Lawd been too good to me and these here grandbabies, so I guess it’s best to just act like I don’t even see the old hag! Bell, girl you is crazy, just plain old crazy. Whew! You done made me laugh today!” They talked about everybody, and I absorbed every bit of it! This is what growing up was supposed to be like. Listening to grown folk’s gossip, eating snowballs and playing in the streets until the street lights came on. Life didn’t get any better than that! Hanging out with Grammy proved to be an adventure every time.

I loved walking and never complained about going to the corner store for Grammy, so when it can to venturing out to the gardens and to momma Louise’s house, I was the nomination of choice. Nobody else really cared, because they all said it was too hot to do all that walking, but they didn’t know was at the end of journey. I knew who was cheating on who. I knew who had brothers and sisters they didn’t know about; I also knew that Mr. Sam lived like he had two wives, because he stayed with Ms. Gwen more than he stayed at home. I also knew who was pregnant and who had to go visit

their relatives in another city until the baby was born. Yep, I had it all!

One evening as we were walking back to our house, Grammy became very solemn and serious. She stopped at one of the benches and motioned for me to sit there with her for a moment. The silence was creepy and awkward for what seemed like forever. After about five minutes of silence, she finally spoke. “You know Grammy loves you right? You know there ain’t nothing I won’t do for you, Right? I wants you to listen to me, and listen to me good. I wants you to tell me the truth. Why you got all them marks on your back, arms and legs? Who doing all that stuff to you? Is it your momma or your daddy? Now, last time I asked, you say that you always falling. Baby, them there don’t come from falling. Who beating on you like that?”

Now it was my turn to sit in silence. The scene was no longer serene but ominous, because my Grammy wasn’t smiling, and God knows telling would be the death of me, so I sat frozen until tears began to glisten and form a trail on my cheeks. This trail of tears began slow and methodical. It was as if they had a mind of their own, and without warning, the steady stream gushed out like a flood trying to

breach a dam. It was uncontrollable, unrecognizable and relentless. In every tear there was a pang of anguish that couldn't be explained. Yep, I just cried, wiped my eyes and grew silent again. Grammy held me tighter than she ever had.

After that episode, it seemed Grammy and I were inseparable. We had this unspoken language that said, "you don't have to tell me what I already know." She would always whisper in my ear when it was time to go home, "you know ya'll can always stay with me." I just smiled, because I thought it was just wishful thinking. In her heart she meant it, but the reality of it all was this, what happened in Loretta's house, stayed in Loretta's house. Summer was coming to an end, and so was my outlet to freedom.

Once arriving home, I was met with a rude awakening, "what the hell did you say?" All I could do was stand and look at Loretta like she was a ghost. I didn't know which way to go or what to say. I thought Grammy was just trying to make me feel better, but I knew in my heart that she had spoken to Loretta about our encounter and somebody was about to pay a price. "I don't know who you think are, running around telling folks about my

business.” I couldn’t move. I just stood frozen waiting for the big moment, but the blow never came. What followed next would haunt me for the rest of my life: “I knew I should have had an abortion and killed every last one of ya’ll. You ungrateful bastards! Who do you think had to give up her life, so you can have clothes on your back, me, that’s who. I swear if you ever tell anybody else about anything that happens in this house, you think yo ugly behind is black now, but when I finish with you, they won’t recognize you. Now get yo ugly, black azz outta my face!” This tirade went on for hours... I was everything from a black, long lip whatever, to an ugly, big lip, nappy head whatever. The louder the tone, the more perverted the name calling became.....We all just sat in the room like little tin soldiers waiting for it to end. Yep, summer was officially over, and winter was well on her way. I know fall is next in line, but the air was so cold and thick that winter was already in the midst of us. I wanted to tell my siblings that I was sorry. I wanted to put my arms around them, but we all just sat there, because we knew how this was going to end. That awkward silence that I experienced with Grammy found its way across

town in that two bedroom apartment that housed four children and sometimes two adults. When Loretta was upset, nobody slept, ate or relaxed, but just waited for the aftermath of explosive degradation or the intense physical pain that could cause the strongest of men to cry.

I can remember thinking could someone please turn on the heat, but it wasn't cold. Fear had gripped my very soul. Time was slow. The night was quiet and I didn't know what to do, so I began to dream. I dreamt I was a dancer and the world was my audience. Children from all over were running to the stage just to see me dance. I danced like a ballerina awaiting her chariot to take her away. The faces in the crowd glistened with tears as I whisked by them with such force and strength! My legs had a mind of their own, and my arms tried to follow in pursuit. It was beautiful, surreal and dreamlike. A dancer for the world to see. In this world, everything was pretty and warm. The smiles were friendly and the touches were gentle. Every turn, a flower was being presented from every angle. Nothing could destroy the marvelous encounter. Yes, this was my world, and no one was allowed unless invited! This world allowed me to dream and talk about it without

repercussion. In this place, I could identify and express my emotions. Yep, I wanna stay in this world, but what about my sisters and brother? If I invited them in would they understand this safe place? Maybe if we all would go there and not make a sound, maybe Loretta could get her wish. Maybe then she could be happy. If we could all just go away, then she wouldn't have to work so hard, and wouldn't have to be so mean. Maybe if we found her a husband that could help instead a boyfriend that called himself our daddy when it was convenient that would help. I'm wasn't sure what Grammy said, but she didn't beat me that night, nor did she come back in the room to say anything that night or the next morning. We knew she was gone when the front door slammed! Well now, let my duties begin.

Fly High!

Fly high little girl, Fly high, high high

Go ahead, go straight to the sky

Never look back, never let them see you cry!

You can be who you want be  
See what you want see  
Walk in the Gardens  
Walk on the seas  
Jesus is Lord  
He guards your heart  
So fly little girl 'til you touch the sky!  
By Lolita Gilmore



## **Chapter Three**

### **We're In This Together!**

“Sckat, get up and get ready for school. Loretta should be walking in the house in a few minutes, so hurry up!” This was my little sister, Tracy. She gained her nickname from playing in the neighborhood and racing against the boys. Everybody around Grammy’s neck of the woods knew she was the fastest girl on the block. We didn’t do much playing at Loretta’s house, so Sckat had plenty of energy to release once we got to the 9th Court. That was the hood of hoods, but it was Grammy’s palace and our safe-haven. If a fight were to break out, Sckat could run get help in a moment’s notice, and before you knew it, every cousin, uncle and aunt was on the scene for back-up!

“Sckat, we gotta get going before we miss the bus.” Something was wrong and I knew it, but we didn’t have time to talk about it. We just needed to go! “WHY!!!!!!” Sckat was screaming to the top of her lungs. “Why, she gotta be so dirty to us? Why she always gotta say we ought to be dead and stuff? Why she gotta do that? I ain’t going to school. I’m running away today and never coming back to this hell hole! That’s what I’m about to do! Ya’ll can stay here and let folk talk to you like they crazy, but

I ain't the one! How you come back from Grammy house to all this hell? I hate being here. She hate having me, and I hate she had me. It seems like we 'bout even!" Sckat was every bit of five years old, but had the demeanor and personality of the most ghetto fabulous teenager who was always looking for a good fight!

I was finally tired of the theatrics. "Girl, just get dressed so we can go! You know if Loretta walked through that door right now, you'd freeze on a dime. So stop acting crazy and get ready! That bus will be here any minute, and I don't plan to miss it. Let's Go!!!!!!" It was early and still a little chilly outside, but the sky was bright and school was finally in session. I loved being in school. It was a time to gather my thoughts and have some free time, I loved every minute of it. People were always complaining about how hard the work was for them, but for me it was fun. I loved the attention and the soft manner in which they spoke. I often wondered what life was like in the homes of the teachers. I wondered if they had any kids, and if so, did they like them? I don't think they did, because they all seemed so happy! If not having kids made people happy, then I was

never having any, because in my book, Loretta was absolutely miserable and mean as a rattle snake.

My favorite teacher was Ms. Jackson. She was the third grade teacher that would always sing “Jesus Loves me, yes I know, because the Bible tells me so.” She would sing that song to every class and talk about Jesus to everyone. I wanted to ask her so bad did Jesus really love everyone, and if He did, would He listen to me if I talked to Him. I remember while being in her class, I wanted to learn the song too, but thought what use would it be? She must have read my thoughts, because the next thing I know, she was telling the class to sing with her, because Jesus loves all the children and we should know Him! She went on to say how this was going to be a great year, because we were starting the year off right. I was starting to get a little lost, because I thought it was time for church or something, but it was school. I listened intently, but my mind kept going back to Sckat. I wondered if she was going to act out in class like she did at home. I prayed she didn’t, because Loretta had no problem coming to the school and showing out. Ms. Jackson was talking about Jesus loving the children, and I was praying that Sckat was included in that number.

Whenever, it crossed my mind, I said “Jesus, please keep my little sister quiet today. Help her to understand that everything is going to be alright. Help her to understand that one day our daddy is coming to take us with him and maybe all this crazy stuff will stop. If you can’t do the last part, just please keep her mouth closed, ok.”

Finally, it was lunch time and I had a chance to see Sckat in the hallway on my way to the cafeteria. She ran out of line and hugged me and then ran back. Ms. Mattie, her teacher acted as if she didn’t see her and looked the other way. After lunch, Ms. Jackson wanted me to come with her to Ms. Mattie’s classroom. I was thinking, Jesus didn’t get my prayer in time, and my stomach was in knots. When we walked in, Sckat ran to me and wouldn’t let go. Both teachers just stood there for a couple of seconds and then asked simultaneously, “is everything alright at home?” Ms. Mattie begin to explain that during play period, Sckat was shaking her dolls and slapping them in the face, saying “I wish you were dead!” All I could say was that she was missing our Grammy. We had stayed there all summer, and just came back home in time for school. I continued to tell them about the morning

episode of Sckat not wanting to come to school, because she still wanted to be on summer break. I was squeezing Sckat close to me, so maybe she could hear my heart racing and support this lie for the both of us. Finally, my little sister spoke up and lied too. She said, “that’s what the man on T.V did to his girlfriend, so she thought she would try it too.” They looked at both of us puzzlingly, but accepted the response. I was escorted back to class and thanked Jesus along the way.

Once we were on the bus, Sckat begin to tell me she was sorry for doing that. We were both quiet for a moment, and then I reminded her of what happened when some people came to talk to my auntie Josie, and we never saw our cousins again after that. We agreed that it was better to just wait until things got better, so we could all stay together. She sat up with great boldness and looked me straight in the eyes and said, “I ain’t no snitch...I just was having a moment for a minute, and that doll gave me a break. It was like....I don’t know..... it was scary at first, but then I just let go on that ole ugly doll. Why they gotta give us ugly dolls to play wit anyway? I need to ask Loretta for a new one for Christmas. I mean a really pretty one.”

Now it was my turn.....”if you decide to just have another moment like that again, Christmas will be somewhere else. We all know Loretta is a little off, but she cool when daddy at home as long as they don’t fight. They’ll get it together one day, and we’ll be ok, but we have to stay together, you hear me lil’ girl? I can’t imagine being in a house without you. You’re my little sweetheart, so stop having moments! How about I make some lemonade and cinnamon toast when we get home? “

“I hope you ain’t trying to bribe nobody with that hard toast and nasty lemonade.” We both looked at each other and laughed, because every time I made a piece of toast, it was crispy. They always complained that the lemonade was too sweet or too tart, so I just made a batch and told them to sweeten it for themselves. Toast was not my best, but bacon and eggs and rice was the main dish. I could cook that up with my eyes closed! It was cool cooking for my siblings, especially when they didn’t complain. Sckat snapped me out of my daydream. “Well, we gon have some toast and nasty lemonade or what? You sitting there like you in space. I said I ain’t gon say nothing to nobody, because I ain’t trying to live with no moe crazy folks. Loretta and Terry is

enough. You think they gon come by tonight?” Sckat was starting to miss her, but it was fine having them both out of the picture. It was quiet, and I was in charge and we had everything we needed.

Loretta received food stamps and believed in keeping the freezer and the refrigerator loaded, so we were good in that area. She really was a good person when she wanted to be, but sometimes she would start whipping on us like somebody had stolen her last dollar, and then wouldn’t let us go any place until everything healed up. I loved Loretta and believed somewhere deep down, she loved us too, but just didn’t know how to love or how to treat children. Sometimes, I thought she saw us as small animals in training. I remember the man next door had a dog name lucky that would urinate all over the house. Everyone could tell when it took place, because that dog would howl and then whimper until the beating stopped. All you could hear were the swift blows and admonishments: “you better not do it again; You better not piss on my floor ever again! Every time you do it, I’m gon beatcha!” I always felt so sorry for old lucky. So, one day when she was in the back yard and Mr. Man was at work, I let her go! She licked my hand and ran until she



was out of sight. I then prayed that nobody saw it. We never saw lucky again. I stood wondering what it felt to be free like that.....This is the beginning of Chapter Three. Use as many chapters as you need. Delete unused chapters, or copy and paste the last sample chapter as needed to add more chapters to your book.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Raging Storm!**

I never knew what Grammy said to Loretta that day, but it must have been pretty tough, because for a long time, she would look at me a little crazy sometimes and just walk away. Whatever she said was working for the moment. In fact, it seemed that things were beginning to look up. Loretta and daddy were getting along pretty good, and he was staying over a little more. I wondered what was happening. Did his girlfriend leave or something? Daddy always had his hands full. Every time, you saw him, the boy was fly!!! I use to tell my friends that my daddy looked just like Marvin Gaye, and they would always agree! You would think that a nice looking couple like that would have so much fun living in the same house and having children, but I guess that was not their way of viewing things according to my aunt Linda.

My aunt Linda was the talk of the town: cute, loud and sassy! Whenever there was a family gathering, everybody made sure Linda was there, because she was definitely the life of the party. She was great at making us laugh, and telling

everybody's business if the beers started rolling in a little too fast and too soon. Grammy always said my aunt couldn't hold her liquor. I was never really sure what she meant by that until one Saturday during a barbecue at Grammy's house. We all jumped in daddy's new Buick and rolled out to enjoy the festivities. I can remember seeing all of my cousins and having the time of my life until my aunt Linda began to direct her attention to Loretta's part time boyfriend. "I guess you feeling some type of way, because that no count is staying over there wit you these days. Look at cha, cheesing and grinning like you done hit them numbers or something." Loretta didn't say anything. She just kept cleaning the table and ignored my aunt. "Well, what's up with this?" Aunt Linda had started to get pretty loud. "Two months ago you come over here wit your eyes all swollen, and he ain't no-where to be found, now you sitting here like ya'll just one big happy family. Who you trying to fool?" Loretta started gathering us together and continued to ignore Linda. She seemed so methodical and calm as she carefully nudged Sckat out the front door. I never saw her frown or grimace at all the ugly things auntie hurled her way. She just kept moving until

everything was packed up and ready to go. I really didn't know what to think, but that quiet wind soon erupted into a raging storm.

Everybody was packed up and ready to go when Linda ran to the car and jumped in Loretta's face screaming, "don't you ever turn you back on me. I'll tell this Negro everything about yo trifling behind. Don't bring yo red behind in here like you all dat." Before aunt Linda could finish, Loretta had grabbed her around the neck, pushed her to the ground, and just above a whisper, she said, "if you ever come at me like that again, I will literally kill you." Aunt Linda sat on the ground and cried like a baby, but Loretta still had much to contend with. Grammy walked out to that car and her words almost made my heart beat stop. "Take you and these little trifling bastards with you. If I didn't kill you for what happen to this family, don't you ever think about raising a hand at any of my children again! This couldn't be the lady that hugged and kissed me all over my face, and allowed me to listen to all the gossip on the block. I wanted to come out and scream at Loretta. Shove her like you shove us: Slap her the way you slap on us...Do something! Don't just stand there! But like a pretty little doll, she just

stared at Grammy. She never smiled; never frowned; she just stood, turned around, and off we went. My insides were screaming to the Jesus Mrs. Jackson talked about, because deep inside, I knew it would be awhile before we ever saw Grammy and everybody else again.

For the first time, I felt sorry for momma. Linda wanted daddy to know that Loretta had been spoiled before they ever got together by totally humiliating her. When they were teens, Grammy's soon to be husband, came by the house early one morning while Loretta was home alone and violated her. That violation resulted in a pregnancy that changed everyone's life forever. They say Grammy went to jail for a couple of months, because when he came back to the house, she was there and stabbed him in the stomach. He died three days later from the injuries. She didn't serve much time, due to the nature of his offence. So, I guess that was Linda's way of proving she was the better choice. After all, according to her, Loretta's actions had ruined the family, robbed Grammy of a husband, had a man killed and a child whose name was never mentioned in all of the madness.

It was clear to see why Loretta was so bitter and hateful. Her happiness stopped at the age of thirteen when she was raped by her soon to be step-dad, and then gave birth to a baby that no one dared to talk about. To make matters worse, it seemed as though everybody blamed her for it all. I saw things from a different perspective and wished somehow she could remember what it felt to be loved. I wondered at that moment if she would ever love or be loved. It was weird hearing it all and wondering if there was a brother or sister floating around that we didn't know about. This seemed like a pretty good time to talk to the Jesus Ms. Jackson was always singing about in school. He heard me when I talked to Him about Sckat so we could all stay together, so just maybe my prayer for healing Loretta's heart would be heard also. I couldn't imagine something like that happening to me at thirteen. The tears begin to flow like they did with Grammy that day: full, strong and constant! I really needed to talk to that Jesus Ms. Jackson was singing about again, but all I could do was cry!

## **Chapter Five**

### **.A Method to the Madness**

**If you are going to do anything for the common man... You have to start before he becomes a man!**

#### **Author unknown**

It's amazing how the fowls of the air teach their young. You see them in formations lined up like Soldiers awaiting that preparatory command. What's more astounding is the unspoken guidance that draws the attention of every human being as they mount up and fly away, not to mention their uncanny ability to follow and mimic the image that's before them. I'm in awe at this level of innate instinct these creatures possess. Is it because they do not know any other course or were they born this way or their environment? Whatever the case, it is indeed an awesome wonder.

So much so, that as an adult, my search for normalcy began with learning more about human behavior and social environment. While, I do not profess to be a subject matter expert, it's rewarding to read the research on those who are. In doing so, more questions came: I wondered what would

Loretta's life have been like if she were the product of a loving mother and father? What would have happened if love had been fostered as opposed to fear, hurt and pain? I wondered if her attitude towards having children would have encompassed more hugs than slaps: More praises than insults, and more empowerment than crippling degradation had things been different for her. What difference does the environment make? What difference indeed????

Not only were these questions posed regarding Loretta's state of mind and parental skills, my own development and that of my siblings raised questions as well. So the research continued to an amazing find throughout this agonizing period of self-worth and identity crisis. I came across a very interesting psychologist by the name of Erik Erikson. He too felt a little confused about his identity and features. For one, he was a Jewish child who possessed very strong German attributes (tall, blue-eyes, and blonde hair). This mixture of sorts caused much rejection and isolation between him and other young Jewish children. Hence, the birthing of his famous theory of psychosocial development and the concept of the identity crisis



was formed. This was an area in which I could strongly identify with. Although we know our father, we were always identified as never family or relationship titles, but Loretta's children or Terry's children. Never my grand-baby, niece, nephew.

Now Mr. Erickson's dilemma was a bit different. He never knew his biological father, because it is believed that his father was married, so he was raised by a single mother until she married Dr. Theodor Homberger. Eric was never introduced to his biological father and often felt confused about his identity throughout his childhood. In fact, it is believed that his name is comprised of the name of the father he never met: Eric Erick's son (Erickson). Like Erickson when looking around our family system, I too felt out of place. There were times when confusion served as my best friend and had no one to assist in this area. Where did we fit into this massive puzzle? Who were we, and why did we have to struggle with such a major identity crisis?

Eric Erickson was becoming a bit of a hero in my book. Understanding was taking place, so I looked a little bit further into his teachings and found what he called the Eight Stages of Development. Now this really made my mouth fall open, because now

there was a measuring tool for comparisons and I could definitely see some definite markings along my family tree!

The more I read about his theories regarding personality and how social influences can play a key role to developing who you are throughout the entire lifespan, the more I wanted to know. I could begin applying this method to the questions about Loretta, myself, Sckat, Bullet and Spud. I could see how and why Terry acted in the manner in which he did. It was all beginning to make sense to me. I wanted others to know that there is a method to the madness! Mr. Erickson's story helped me to understand that social interaction and life experiences are major factors that influence the growth process throughout one's lifetime until the time of death, as he gives consideration to the impact of external forces such as environment, family, friends and society.

The eight key stages he described were:

1. Trust versus Mistrust: This stage occurs between the ages of birth and age two and is centered on developing a sense of trust in caregivers and world. Children who receive responsive care

are able to develop the psychological quality of hope.

2. Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt: This stage takes place between the ages of 2 and 3 and involves gaining a sense of independence and personal control. Success in this stage allows people to develop will and determination.

3. Initiative versus Guilt: Between the ages of 3 and 6, children begin to explore their environment and exert more control over their choices. By successfully completing this stage, children are able to develop a sense of purpose.

4. Industry versus Inferiority: The stage that takes place between the ages of about 5 and 11 is focused on developing a sense of personal pride and accomplishment. Success at this point in development leads to a sense of competence.

5. Identity versus Confusion: The teen years are a time of personal exploration. Those who are able to successfully forge a healthy identity develop a sense of fidelity. Those who do not complete this stage well may be left feeling confused about their role and place in life.

6. Intimacy versus Isolation: The stage that takes place in early adulthood is all about forging health

relationships with others. Success leads to the ability to form committed, lasting, and nurturing relationships with others.

7. Generativity versus Stagnation: At the stage occurring during middle adulthood, people become concerned with contributing something to society and leaving their mark on the world. Raising a family and having a career are two key activities that contribute to success at this stage.

8. Integrity versus Despair: The final stage of psychosocial development takes place in late adulthood and involves reflecting back on life. Those who look back and feel a sense of satisfaction develop a sense of integrity and wisdom, while those who are left with regrets may experience bitterness and despair.

<https://www.verywell.com/erik-erikson-biography-1902-1994-2795538> By Kendra Cherry  
Updated April 28, 2016

## **Chapter Six**

### **Unorthodox Parenting Skills**

**Children who fear their parents are driven to do some of the most amazing things.**

Upon completing this informative research, I was drawn back to Sckat's classroom episode. It was clear at that moment her environment was threatening and unhealthy. It was toxic and void of trust and love. Hence, frustration and the inability to process what was happening took its toll. That's a day I'll always remember. I wonder if I had allowed Sckat to just release and tell all what would life have been like? Would there have been unwanted pregnancies and abortions, or happy marriages and the Jesus Ms. Jackson always talked about? Is it possible that the application of this theoretical notion could have made a huge difference to this rambunctious little kindergartener?

As I tried to figure out why Loretta did the things she did, the more I heard my aunt's voice repeatedly taunting her with how she had lied on her dad and tore the family apart. I thought about the sneering tone Grammy used with her. I tried to think back to that day when Grammy was questioning me about my scars; I tried to make sense of how this could all happen to people who were supposed to love each

other, but all I could do was get a better understanding of who Loretta had become and why. I still prayed to the Jesus that Mrs. Jackson told me about, but I began to think that like Loretta, He probably wasn't able to hear me either.

I loved my siblings like they were my own breath, so I could not understand how my aunts and uncles could hurt each other in the manner in which they did. I watched my two uncles fight one day almost to their death. I was scared out of my wits, but what alarmed me the most was Grammy's actions. She protected one by stomping the other! Just like the fight with Loretta and Linda. She has a favorite and it showed. This was absolute madness, but it was life. It was Grammy's house and summer fun. Regardless of all the craziness, we had fun with each other, my siblings, cousins and friends. No one knew the definition of abuse. No one could begin to define any form of self-concept, let alone a healthy anything. This was our life; a cultural lewdness that would bring us all to tears at some point before hitting those young adult years.

Grammy had thirteen children, and only 4 remain this very day. Three sons killed before the age of thirty; one son left for a new life at 20, never

to be heard from again; one joined the military and quickly deserted; another spends countless days in and out of jail. The girls on the other hand are still around with the exception of three. One died at birth, another of siroccos of the liver and another of alcoholism, heart disease and diabetes...Lifestyle, cultural norms and ignorance can be a powerful concoction for failure.

Did this also explain the parenting style that we often witnessed? On the outside looking in, people were amazed at the discipline of Loretta's children. We were the best little crew around. I remember one day, our neighbor, Ms. Josephine came over and was just bubbling with compliments about Loretta. "Your mom is doing s great job with you guys. I've never heard either one of you ever make a sound or get into any trouble. That's how every parent should raise their child. You guys are always so clean and pretty. Just like little Soldiers awaiting orders. Oh my God, such discipline... my Lord, how does she do it? I wish I could get my children to be still and look after each other. Every time I come to the house, it is absolutely spotless! I mean clean as can be.....not a thing out of place..., not even a toy!

No, not one toy!!! Just discipline and extreme order. Oh Lord, I wish I could get my kids like that.”

She went to the living room and asked Loretta, “Girl, how do you do it?” I remained in the kitchen for a moment, so I could peak and see the expression on Ms. Josephine’s face when she answered, not to mention, Loretta’s response. I knew it was going to be crazy, but what I didn’t know is how crazy! “You have to put fear in their hearts and make them truly believe, you killl’em. That’ll stop ‘em dead in their tracks. I ain’t got time to play and be nobody’s friend. You either with me or against me. That’s the rule in this house. If they don’t like....well.....that’s not my problem. State says I have to feed ‘em, clothe ‘em and a safe place to stay. They ain’t said nothing else was required.”

That was it in a nutshell! That was Loretta, live and in charge; take it or leave it! She shifted gears to the next conversation concerning the previous night just like that! It was the saddest thing ever; probably the coldest commentary I’d ever heard from a mother. Now before sadness could truly run its course, I glanced at Ms. Josephine’s face. She sat there stoic. It was as if she had seen a ghost. She was in utter amazement. I’m not sure if she was



shocked at the response or the apathy that came along with it, but the look on her face was priceless. She appeared to be totally uncomfortable as Loretta continued to go over the highlights from last night's party. Now that was funny! I was waiting on the previous compliments, but she just sat there looking constipated and ghostly as she listened to Loretta go on and on about the party.

Although Ms. Josephine's reaction to Loretta's parenting style was comical, the fear factor was very real in deed. One night, my little brother Spud was crying uncontrollable, so I tried to console him. " Spud, what's wrong? Come here.....,why you crying like that?...,Tell me." He climbed in the bed, and as my little brother placed his head on my lap, I could see the bruising on the back of his neck. "Boy! What happened?" I was shocked, because no one was home but us, so how this could have happened was very baffling. " Spud, how did this happen?" He looked a little puzzled himself, but finally answered. "I was taking a bath before Loretta left, and she told me that my neck was still dirty and black, and better be clean when she came back. I tried so hard to clean it, but then my neck started

burning. Is it still dirty? I don't want her getting mad again!"

"It's alright Spud.... I'll put some Vaseline on it." I remember that day like yesterday. It was at that moment I knew fear could cause you to do anything; It was at that moment my mind was made up to never fear anything or anyone. It was at that moment, I figured that Mrs. Jackson's Jesus was the only person that could live safely in this house, but was sure He did not want to. If there was a way I could find out more about Him. Mrs. Jackson would always say just open up your mouth and invite Him into your heart, so I tried it: "Jesus, please come into my heart. Please take us away from this crazy place. If you can hear me, say something; do something; send someone our way, please. I'm sorry I didn't let Sckat tell the truth that day. Will you give us another chance to talk to somebody who knows how to help Loretta? Will you make sure that we all stay together? Are you listening or am I too late? Can you save Loretta? Can you send her to a doctor and make her better?" I waited on an answer, but it never came.

I Come

I come empty at heart and Asking for Love

You filled me

I come seeking your Arms

You comforted me

I come knocking at your door

You saved me

I come lost without direction

You say, I the Way, the Truth and the Life

Lolita R. Gilmore

Parenting Styles

Authoritarian Parenting

In understanding there are several different forms of parenting, I decided to research Loretta's parenting style. The style that resembled her antic is the authoritarian parenting style. This style encompasses undeniable structure, blind obedience

and authority. Was Loretta an authoritarian parent? I believe so, because we were we endowed regarding structure, boundaries, strict routines, firm discipline, and high levels of well-defined parental authority. Our opinions did not matter: we didn't have any! The decision making process was reserved for her only, We listened and obeyed, and suffered the consequences if anyone disregarded any of these rules.

Note: Many parents fall into this category, but are not abusive.

#### Permissive parenting

This type of parenting reflected my Auntie Linda's way of life. My cousins could do whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. There were no demands to include school requirements. I can remember crying when it was time to go to school, because we had to leave and my cousins could remain in bed. This parenting style was characterized by low demands with high responsiveness. Aunt Linda was their best friend. I must admit that we were kind of jealous of the relationship. Permissive parents can be handicap their children, because of the low expectations and the child like parental guidance. My cousins still to

this day have no self-control and struggle with any form of authority figures.

### Authoritative

Now this is the style of parenting I would see on television and wished my siblings and I could experience. I didn't mind having set limits, or having someone give an explanation of why things had to fall into certain categories. It would have been God sent if someone had shown the slightest interest in our emotional needs. I can remember dreaming of this type of parent, and truly believed it was only make believe and belonged only on T.V. Authoritative parents are firm in their approach as parents. They set realistic goals and inspire their children to be high achievers by equipping them with the necessary tools needed for success. Emotional support is at the top list of priorities

See more at:  
<http://www.parentingscience.com/authoritative-parenting-style.html#sthash.FpXc7lWs.dpuf>

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Terry's Folks**

Mr. Ronald had to be the tallest man in the world. He had this forward lean when he walked that appeared to be rather painful. Then again, maybe it wasn't painful, but he always had this this grimace on his face, like someone was changing a soiled diaper during his dinner. I can remember one day, we were at his house and Terry decided to run to the store leaving us alone with Mr. Giant.

The room was quiet, and everyone was watching the Rifleman, but me. I wanted to know this giant, but he wouldn't look at me. He kept his eyes glued to that television. So, to make sure that he could see me, I slid slightly in front of him, but still, he kept his eyes fixed on that television. I finally gave up and watched the Rifleman take out the whole crowd with one rifle.

Grandma Dee was in her bedroom, so it was time for another quest. Maybe she could tell me what was wrong with the big man. Before being in the room fully, I blurted out, "How come he doesn't talk to anybody?" She looked a bit surprised and said, "who are you speaking of?" Now it was my turn to be surprised, because first of all, black folks don't talk like that, and secondly, there was only one person in the house that acted like we were aliens every time he saw us. "I uhm, was talking about uhmm, Mr. Ronald." Again, she looked at me like I had a bone in my nose, and said, "You mean your grandpa?" I wasn't sure if my questions were ever going to be answered if she insisted on correcting every question to her own understanding. So again, I was like.... "yes, uhmm, I mean uhmm, I mean grandpa." This was becoming painful and boring, so I left out the same way I came in, clueless!

While outside, Bullet ran up to me and asked where was Terry. I wasn't sure, but it was a very

good question. It seemed like forever, and I couldn't let go of the glass house notion. Everything was so pristine and nice. Although it was lined exquisitely with nice furniture, everyone appeared to be out of a mystery novel. It was almost as if the atmosphere screamed "figure me out; I dare you!" A hug here and there; a quick pat on the head, and a little tickle for good measure, but the eyes.....The eyes always seemed to divert to anything but yours. The soft soothing voices were but a façade. They were soft and empty. Nothing threatening at all.....just....empty. This emptiness spoke louder than Loretta's demeanor ever could. Loretta's robotics had cause. She was the rabbit that jumped out the hat trick on a daily basis. We never knew what was coming out, but one thing for sure, it was coming.

Yes, this was a new type of crazy. It was a mystery novel with Scooby Doo and the Jefferson's all in one! These people had beautiful clothes, furniture, great food, nice music, fancy cars and a neighborhood that left me wondering if we were really supposed to be here. Bullet and I used to joke all the time about what time the "Watermelon Man" was going to roll down the street yelling watermelons for sale. This was a daily routine in Grammy's neighborhood. Bullet was a real character. He ran outside one day and just fell in the middle of the backyard. At least 10 minutes had passed, and he still hadn't moved, so I



made a start for the door, but Grandma Dee charged me with gathering certain items for her meal. I knew my brother could be a clown, but I wanted to make sure he was clowning and not hurt. So I made another attempt, and then she said, he's just being a boy. Grandma Dee glanced at the kitchen window and just kept cooking. I was sure he was going to get into some type of trouble, but instead, she gently said that I could go out and check on him after she talked with me. "You all should learn to be children for a while. Taking care of your siblings is your mother's job, not yours. Learn to enjoy things that children do. If you're always caring for everybody, all you're ever be is domesticated, and I hope you know where and what that leads to. Good girls don't have children before marriage. They wait....They go to school, become educated and successful. They have something to offer.....They know how to take care of their homes and their children....They learn how to speak correctly, and not run wild and fight all over the place. They go to church and serve God! What does your momma teach you children? Has she ever said anything about the Lord? Has she ever taught you children to read the Bible? God knows it could help! I can see you're concerned about your brother. Go ahead and check on him. We'll finish this later."

On the way out there, I wondered what was really going on in this space camp. Was that a

knock on Loretta? I wanted to tell her, your son never talked about the Lord!!! He never said anything about church, and the last time I checked, he was an unmarried man staying with the lady and all his children. It was good to have a breath of fresh air. I wanted to share it all with my brother, but he seemed to be in a strange, far off place. Bullet was just lying there with a blank stare. There was no crying, smiling, giggling or joking. He just looked at me and said, "I feel like the invisible man around here." We sat on the ground together, and I said, "I'd rather be invisible than having to be "you children" one more day!" Bullet sat up with a start, "why you say that? Did somebody say something mean to you? Why you say that Janky?" I was quiet for a minute, but wanted him to shut up before she decided to come out and investigate all the commotion. So I told him, " I don't know, it just seems like they always have something smart to say, but they don't really say it, so no one can say they did anything wrong." At this point, Bullet had laid beside me on the grass again, and said, " Janky, I know exactly what you mean. It's like they say stuff that's only meant for us. They always telling us to split up and go play. What's wrong with us wanted to stay with each other, and why we gotta talk like our cousins? Every time, she come in the room, why we have to be reminded that ain't is not a word, and this is how your words are supposed to sound. How come

we just can't have fun like we do at Grammy's house?"

"I know right! And what's really crazy is that everybody is nice about being nasty, and act like we don't know the difference! I don't get it! I know one thing, I'm about ready to call Loretta. I'm ready to go home!" I was on the verge of tears, and Bullet was begging me not to cry, because I could tell he was getting nervous and teary eyed himself. Terry must have been reading our thoughts or something, because after we finished our little bonding session, he drove up looking like a million dollars. He had on one of those Super-fly hats and a jean outfit that I know was on Soul Train last Saturday. "Hey Marvin Gaye!" I ran to him before he could go into the house. "Girl, you know what to say!" On our way inside, he began a series of rants: I'm glad ya'll having a good time. I'm glad ya'll got a chance to hang out with your cousins and the other side of your family. I'm gone make it my business to bring ya'll over here at least every other weekend. Ya'll don't need to be down there in the streets all the time or locked in the house with your ole crazy momma. That whole family is just crazy as hell. I thank God for my family, so you all will know right from wrong!" Terry was grinning from ear to ear. Every time he made a defeating statement about Loretta's family, I grew sicker and sicker by the minute, because I knew what was coming next. "Yep, I'm going to

keep ya'll away from them heathens, allow ya'll to get some sense in your heads, so you won't grow up acting like that ole crazy family. Yep, it's all working out. Go get everybody stuff together while I talk to my momma."

### **The Good men?**

Where did all the good men go?

Did they get on a ship that wouldn't float?

What happened to Pa-Pa, grandad and daddy?

Who do I talk to when feeling chatty?

I can't see my way through  
It feels like I'm just flapping  
Where did all the good men go?  
I really need them to help me grow!

Lolita R. Gilmore

## **Chapter Eight**

### **High School Days**

OMG!!! Life really does go on, with or without you! It seems like yesterday that we were literally living through someone else's pain. The broken promises of past relationships were felt by us all! It was the type of brokenness that whispered, don't touch me; don't hug me, and please don't say I love you, because reciprocation is not a feasible option! Yet in the midst of it all, the body continues to

develop whether wholeness is presented or not, producing only a fragmented replica of life. Things and people were changing and so were our family dynamics.

Elementary school was a thing of the past, and life in high school seemed to be moving at a different beat. The young girls wanted to be seen, and the boys were ready to oblige. As far as I could see, everyone appeared to have it all together; just maybe I could learn to maneuver my way around this particular maze. For the first time, I was in an area without my siblings or any other family members, so being alone was an understatement! However, there was a level of freedom that became very welcoming and giddily awkward.

I wondered aimlessly in the hallways from one classroom to the next without a care in the world. Suddenly, I didn't care if anyone spoke or acknowledged my presence. For eight hours, I was literally drama free! No one to cook or care for; no one to reject you or glare with such intensity, you hate ever stepping into the room. For once, it was just me, and I was just fine with it all! Now high school for some may have been a lot different, but for me, it was a way to escape a harsh reality. I would often find myself wondering what life was like in the homes of other students.

I began to think more and more about the possible move with Grandma Dee and tried to imagine being in a somewhat settled environment, because it seemed to be coming together whether I wanted it or not. Terry came to the house one Saturday, and just simply said, “moma said it’s best for Janky to be with her now.” What about ya’ll? That day at the house, it was ya’ll, not just me. I was ready for the fireworks, the commotion, the fight and the hell raising. I was ready for the battle of all battles, because surely, someone is going to fight on my behalf. After all, I was the one who kept Sckat quiet so the teachers would let her go back to class and not call Family Services. Surely, she was going to fight for me! None of what I just mentioned happened. I mean NOTHING!!!! It was just like the day Grammy protected Aunt Linda. Again, she just sat there like a pretty little doll and looked in the other direction.

With all the stuff happening on the home-front, school was in and this was my time to focus on a plan of escape. Different groups were in the auditorium weekly speaking on the importance of education. They would always say it was the key to our success; that it opened doors to a bright future and that no one should waste a good mind. Well, if that was the cart to escape this craziness, I was on board all the way!!! I wanted everything



they had to offer, because my future was uncertain and my emotions were becoming a little unstable, so focus, focus, focus on something that could possible change this derailing train.

Speaking of train wrecks, I couldn't remember the last time we had visited Grammy, and I was really beginning to miss her and all of my cousins. I became frustrated with Terry acting like a little weasel every time he mentioned Grandma Dee. It seemed lately she was getting her way around the house with everything and everybody. What I couldn't understand was Loretta's lack of resistance. She stood up to him when it came to Bullet and Sckat, but when it came to me, she just settled back with this bewildering look that made me often wonder if she just checked out or something. This made me long for school even more. I couldn't wait to catch the bus the next morning for school; what a sweet escape! Who could complain about an opportunity to go out into the real world? Yes, this was my ticket to success and away from crazy versus crazy.

During Government class the next day, our teacher lectured on the difference between the Senate and the House, but somehow the Feminist move was mentioned and the topic of women's contribution to military became the discussion. All this was going on while I was in the process of

contemplating my next move. Mr. Thomas continued to expound on how women in the Armed Forces were a precious commodity and should be proud of their accomplishments. Woo-hoo, a plan at last! Thank you Mr. Thomas. The military never seemed to be the option that may very well become the nucleus of my future plans, but eighteen seemed so far away, and leaving my family seemed out of the question too, but the sound of freedom was knocking at my heart. All day long, I skipped through the halls to a new beat. I skipped to the bus stop, then down the street to my house bursting with energy. I couldn't wait to share my plans with Bullet and Sckat. Yes, this was a great day of hope and excitement with only a few years away. No boyfriend, no bad behaviors just focus, focus and focus, because this girl had a plan. Walk across the stage on Friday and out of here on Monday! A plan indeed!!!

I had a smile that could brighten the sky that day only to meet Grandma Dee when upon arriving home. Now this was so out of the norm that I really thought Loretta had killed Terry, but she was smiling when I walked in, so that theory quickly went out of the window. "Hey you; come here and give me a hug!" Grandma Dee was a tall, chocolate lady with beautiful long hair and eyes

that could summons anyone. What was she doing here and when did she learn our address? This was a first of everything. Terry was looking like a greasy piece of chicken with a smile from ear to ear. Everybody had baths like it was a Sunday morning or something. Now the biggest shocker was Loretta. She actually had a smile. It looked a little crooked, but it was a smile. Sckat looked like a little princess; Bullet looked like a preacher in his dark suit, and Spud was just a little chocolate drop that was as cute as a button. A Black Adam's family is what I saw in front of me. I wanted to laugh, but the timing was totally off.

“Hey Marvin Gaye, what’s going on?” That’s all I could say to break the awkwardness of the moment. He was still looking like KFC in the midst with that nervous laugh, because momma was in the room. “Hey girl, what’s going on witcha? How was school? Go get ready, so we can head over to your grandma’s house.” Ummmm, this was a school night, not the weekend. I was thinking this, but continued to the back to get dressed. Sckat ran to me in the back and started crying and whiserping, “take me with you Janky.” I looked at her, because I was at a loss. “Girl, stop acting crazy, we’re just going to visit. Did somebody die? Why she here like this? How long she been here?” Sckat could tell some believable lies, so I had to look at her while she was talking. She started off slow, but then really fast, telling me

how Terry and Grandma Dee came over together to talk to Loretta about me moving in with her now. My heart was sinking and Sckat's words begin to trail off somewhere in the far distance. Somehow, I managed to keep moving and getting dressed. I'm not sure how, but I was ready.

The ride to Grandma Dee's house was quiet and long. It seemed that every bump in the road was magnified. Terry kept glancing at me through the rearview mirror, until I simply asked, "What?" He didn't respond, but continued to glance at the mirror again and again. This was stupid!!! Bullet was holding my hand, and Sckat was about to squeeze my arm off during the ride, and Loretta never said a word. I couldn't take this anymore. "Marvin Gaye, since ain't nobody saying nothing, am I really leaving? Will I go to the same school, and how long is this going to last? Did I do something wrong?" Terry finally spoke, "we're just trying something out Janky. You'll just be there for a little while. Momma thinks it's a good idea, because you're in high school now. She'll discuss it more with you when we get there." There it was in a nut shell. Well now, this little piggy was on her way to only God knows where! I thought about praying to the Jesus Mrs. Jackson always spoke of, but for some reason, the world around me choked the thought right out of me. All I could think about was school and reflected back on how happy I was to just have myself to care for.

Suddenly, I felt as if I was being punished for feeling free for a moment. It never occurred to me that something like this would happen, never!!

We arrived, and like always, everyone was cordial, nice, polite, quiet and uneasy. I think awkward is probably the best word. We all went to the den and sat there like little tin soldiers. Grandma Dee broke the silence. "Well it seems that we have an announcement to make. Janky, is in high school now, and we need to prepare her for the real world, so she'll be staying with me for a while. This is going to work out just fine. Now who wants ice cream?" Ice cream.....Did this lady just ask who wanted ice cream after just shattering our little world? Did she really act as if we were void of feelings and emotions? Does anyone get the opportunity to respond, ask questions, be confused or even say no? I kept trying to look at Loretta, but she just sat there with that crazy blank stare. I wanted to throw something and hit her in the head to wake her from the present stupor, but knew that would be the death of me for real, so I did what I've been raised to do: accept defeat with no questions asked. Whatever we were told, we obeyed like little robots. No time to think it through; no time for creative thoughts, just do what you're told and never, ever question anything with Loretta.



## Chapter Nine

### A Different World

This house was so still and quiet and almost frightening, except everything and everyone was nice, a bit standoffish, but nice. This was my third night with Grandma Dee and I was still confused about my new quarters and apparently new life. A different world was all I could say. On the third day, the numbness was beginning to wear off and the shock of everything was starting to subside. Since no one was talking, I began to do what I knew do to do. I cleaned my room, the bathroom, washed all the dishes in the kitchen, picked up everything in the den, and was on my way to sweep the front porch, but Grandma Dee stopped me, “what are you doing? Come here and sit down. What happened on the news last night? Did you know there was an assassination attempt on the president? Do you know who the president is and how long he serves in office? Who’s the president young lady? Education is the key to your success. We have to know what’s going on around us. We have to know what’s happening in the world. There’s more to life than just having babies, taking care of children and running after men who don’t want you. Pick up that newspaper in front of you and tell me what’s going on. Tell me what does that mean this evening when you get home. I can clean my own house and that is not your place. If I

want or need help, you'll know. Now let's stay in our place. Your grandfather will drop you off at school today, because I have an early appointment, so focus on that and get ready."

What do you say to that? I looked at the crumpled paper and read the caption. The President of United States, Ronald Reagan had been shot. Ok, was this a test or something? It was good I didn't hold the paper too long and finished dressing, because Mr. Ronald was blowing the horn like a mad man. Just when I thought my morning was going to be somewhat settling, these two shifted me into a very unfamiliar place. I wasn't sure if should cry, feel insulted, perplexed or just crazy. I didn't know what to think, what to say or what to do. The one variable that remained the same was school, hope and an exit plan through the military. This thought remained in my head and became a new focus. I had plenty of time to think, because Mr. Ronald never said a word during the entire ride. He pulled up in front of the school, and pulled away as if he had just dumped a bag of trash. Yep, this was a very different world.

School was a welcomed commodity. It was more of a refuge now than ever before. Who would have been offended, because someone was cleaning? Who would have asked questions in such an intimidating manner? I remember Grandma Dee being nice with the sweet melodious



voice that could melt the heart of an angel, but this was not the same person. It seemed as if although Loretta's name wasn't mentioned, somehow this was all about her. Who were we to these people? A Healthy Self-Concept was more like an identity crisis indeed!

## **SELF-CONCEPT**

According to Simply Psychology, self-concept is how one deems his or her self-worth. This construct begins at birth in the form of attachment. If the parent is available, nurturing and caring, an emotional bond develops, and the infant feels safe and secure. Eventually, they grow and begin to view themselves as valuable and worthy of love and respect. On the other hand, if the touch is harsh, and the environment is cold and painful, the little one does not feel safe, and the bonding phase is fragmented. Hence rejection and fear become the front runners instead of acceptance and belonging. Bottom line, one's ideology of self-worth begins at infancy and continues through the stages of development ( Mcleod, 2008).

Self-Concept is the image that stares back at you when looking in the mirror. It gives a description of who you think you are: pretty, ugly, fat, skinny, smart, dumb or just plain and simple. It can determine who one's friends will become, as everything stems from the clutches of belonging.

This nest of determination will leave the richest of men penniless, just to belong.

Research also suggests that parents are the first teacher a child will encounter. Parenting classes or Nurturing programs embrace the notion that self-concept launches itself at the time of birth, as the infant reacts to how the parent responds to them. Whether the response is negative or positive, a response is always a response. Warm and caring touches, snuggles, soft tones and constant eye contact is essential in promoting a secure attachment. Hence, love, respect and safety is reciprocated. As this process continues, self-confidence also blossoms, as the emotional environment and bond becomes stronger and stronger. The child knows beyond a shadow of doubt that they are safe and wanted.

The author further informs us that as the child grows into a toddler and preschooler, her ability to interact successfully with her environment promotes a healthy self-concept (McLeod, 2008). A child will continue to develop a healthy self-concept when a level of freedom is experienced. This freedom includes clear exploration, persistent questions and answers and an active imagination that promotes creativity.

According to Saul McCleod (2008) as the child enters school, his/her self-concept is influenced by

a myriad of factors, such as other caregivers, family, friends and classmates. Depending on the type of feedback, from many people on her physical appearance and her school, athletic, and social abilities. All of this feedback influences what she thinks of herself, or her self-concept.

A healthy self-concept does not mean that a child thinks she or he is better than anyone else. It simply means that they like who they are and what they see. What a joy to be accepted by your birth given support system. A system that was created long before entering this domain and creates an atmosphere that encourages growth and freedom to excel.

### **Why is a healthy self-concept important?**

A child's self-concept determines the outcome of many situations. For example, with a healthy view point, children are more willing to play rather than fight. There is a notion to share, as opposed to saying no and withholding everything.

Furthermore, a healthy self-concept affords a child the opportunity to accept no without becoming hostile or displaying feelings of rejection. It will enable a child's ability to receive rejection with becoming withdrawn or defeated. Not making the team doesn't send the message of failure, but suggests that more practice is needed. When the environment is nurturing and loving, relationships

and attitudes are stronger and better! The decision making process has better potential, along with the ability to bridge long lasting commitments.

## **Chapter Ten**

## **An Awkward Reality**

That had to be the longest ride ever. How do you sit alongside someone and say absolutely NOTHING. All I could hear was his breathing. No radio, conversation or acknowledgement. I was beginning to hate this man already. The only difference between him and Loretta is that he didn't hit. At the time, I wasn't sure which one was worse.

English class was very interesting, but I couldn't focus. My mind kept wondering back to home and the purpose of this move. At least at home, my family was there. We loved each other in our own special way, even Loretta. In the midst of my wondering, my English teacher mentioned the name Emily Dickinson. She talked about how she rarely left her house and became one the best poets ever. It was at that point, she had my undivided attention. I had never given much thought to writing anything, but maybe this should be my time to do some serious figuring on what I needed to do to make things better. After class, I stopped by the office and bought a small tablet that would now be my journal.

After school, I became a little nervous because MR. Grumpy was nowhere to be found, but before panic set in, Terry pulled up. "What's happening Marvin Gaye?" I was so glad to see him. I wanted

to hug him, but that seemed to be something that he nor Loretta was really good at, so just being there was working out just fine. I was grinning from ear to ear, because just maybe he was about to tell me this whole thing was a bad joke or something. “Hey girl, momma said I needed to pick you up for the rest of the week. How’s everything? Are they ok with you being there? Is anybody complaining?” For a minute, I thought he should have been more concerned about me and wanted to say exactly that, but instead I told him what he wanted to hear, everything is good. “Do you know when Grandma Dee is going to let me come back home?” This was my way of letting Terry know that I was well aware of who was in charge, and it wasn’t him! “Awww momma just need to know that my seed is good to go. She thinks everybody else is probably mine, but she know you mine.” Again, he was grinning like a skinned chicken...I mean like he was saying something funny. “Why she don’t know that we all your seed? Why she gotta think like that? Why she say all that ugly stuff about Loretta, and why you ain’t never picked me from school before?”

“Awww Janky, don’t go acting like them folks. Act like you gotta a little sense when somebody’s trying to do something nice for you. Ain’t you glad to have a nice place to stay? You have a chance to be around people who going somewhere and can teach you some things. You got a chance to be

somebody Janky. Don't mess it up by acting like them folks. Momma know what she doing, and if you listen, you'll be in college soon, so forget them ghetto folks." The whole time I was wondering, what does that make you? How can someone sit here and talk about their children and babies' momma like we were second class citizens. It was like we didn't matter at all. Now I understood, Mr. Ronald's actions. Why would he respect or care for anything that his son didn't respect or care about. It was always, momma said this or that. We never did get to the part as to why this was the first time, he'd ever picked me up from school, and what was this stuff about Grandma Dee not being sure about the rest of them? The only man that ever came in our house was him. Loretta would probably scare anybody else to death. So that's why Loretta sat there looking crazy. You just come in and take care of what you believe to be the only real grandchild, and nobody tries to stop you. This was crazy, and I couldn't believe what was being said. "Janky, you alright? Look like you spaced out over there? How you like school?" What you learn today?" If I could only tell him what I really learned, he'd probably push me out of the car. So, I told him what he wanted to hear: "everything was fine...we learned about Emily Dickinson, who was a great poet. I might try to write one day too." It was better this way, because Terry could care less about what I thought or wanted. It was all about

his folks and not them ole ghetto Negroes we called family.

Before we could get out of the car good, he was telling his momma about the conversation that had just taken place. I could have fallen through the floor. How could he do that? “Well little girl, it seems that we need to have a little talk. Your dad tells me you’re not happy here. Let me explain something to you. Black people have a hard enough time being Black, we don’t need to be silly and uneducated too. So, I guess you want to be like the rest of them: no jobs, cussing and fussing. That’s not happening to anything that has my blood, so this is how it’s going to be. Do you have any questions?” Well what do you say after that? “I was just missing my brothers and sister is all.” She looked at me for a moment, and said ever so politely: “Well you’ll get to see them this weekend.” That was it. That was the end of the conversation. Next item up to bid, because that’s all the interest she had regarding my thoughts. “Did you read the paper this morning? If not, do so before you get into anything else.” After looking through this paper that was missing the funny pages, the only thing that stuck out was that President Reagan would be in the hospital for a while. Wow, people really are crazy. After I finished the paper, dinner was ready. Grandma Dee had me to set the plates and the flatware. Every time I placed a spoon or fork in a certain



place, she'd make me move it to what she called its proper place. "Everything, has a place", she said. "If people would remember that, the world would be a much better place." I didn't follow what she meant and didn't bother to ask. All I knew was this world was different, and I couldn't wait to leave.

The weekend was here and Grandma Dee kept her word. Terry was there at 9:00 sharp. Everybody was excited to see me. For a moment, I thought Loretta was secretly happy as well. Bullet was the first one to the door. I missed him so badly. We both stood there giggling like crazy. Then Sckat came around the corner looking like a little princess. My heart was heavy and happy at the same time. We ran to the back and caught up on everything. I asked Loretta if I could cook breakfast and she said o.k. Bullet pulled the eggs, Sckat grabbed the grits, and of course bacon was the next item. Instead of toast, Sckat wanted biscuits, so we put them in the oven as well. Now this was home. No matter how crazy or dysfunctional, it was home. We loved and needed each other. Bullet would be starting high school next year and was telling me all about it. He told me Terry was staying over a lot more now, but Loretta was still mean as a rattle snake when she wanted to be. "Janky, when you coming home or when can we come there and live with you?" This was the first time I saw Sckat as a little girl. I mean

she didn't look like the little rough neck that was ready for anything, but a little girl who wanted her big sister by her side. Bullet was a little on the soft side too. "Yeah Janky, why they do it like this? How come everybody can't go over there and stay?" I definitely was not about to tell them all the ugly stuff Terry had mentioned earlier, so I told them what they needed to hear. "Ya'll know Grandma Dee know about all the fighting Terry and Loretta was doing, so she was trying to lighten the load, so they can get along better. She was talking about how if there was more help, all of us would be there. I think we're going to take turns or something. How's does that sound?" They were genuinely happy with that lie! It was all I could do, so we could continue to have a good time. Hope, they had hope for once, and I was not going to be the one to take it away! At that moment, I saw myself in the military with all my siblings with me. I saw all of us in a much better place and helping each other. It was a picture that did not include any remnants of this house or those two people in the other room. They would have me to speak for them, and stop anybody from hurting them again. Yeah, I could see the big picture for sure! There would be a place for us, and it wouldn't be based on any body's stupid terms. In the midst of my thoughts, Bullet rushed me, and Sckat followed. We had the best time ever that night.



## **Chapter Eleven**

### **The Quiet Storm**

I'm not sure how long we laughed and played, but it seemed like forever. Little did we know that this would be our last time seeing each other in this capacity. Terry poked his head in the bedroom to let us know he was heading out, but would be back soon. Little did we know that Terry would stay out all night, and Loretta would decide she was tired of being mistreated and misunderstood. Little did we know that our lives would never be the same again.

That morning seemed like a never ending dream. We woke to screaming and fussing. Loretta was screaming to the top of her lungs as if someone was trying to kill her. Had it not been for Terry's hurling results, one would have thought she was going mad. All I can remember was him calling her a crazy female dog, and saying how he was glad his mom was stepping in to take care of his child, and her and the rest could go straight to hell. I remember easing out of the room to see Loretta's face. I don't know why, but I felt the need to see her face. She stood standing there with that blank look, but this time it seemed a bit unnerving. She just stared in his direction as if he wasn't there. Terry kept taunting her with profanity and name calling. He asked her why she thought he was there. He spat at her as she just stood there with that same blank look. He laughed and called her another female dog. Without a word, she began to walk away. Her movements were methodical and robotic, but Terry moved

forward and grabbed her by the hair, and without a word, she came down with one swift swing slicing him across his face. He yelled and let go of her. Loretta headed for her bedroom while Terry ran for the front door, but it was too late. Before he could make it to the front porch, the gun was fired.

All the neighbors were outside. I scrambled to get my siblings together before anyone came into the house. I called Grandma Dee for help, but no answer. Grammy didn't have a phone, so I couldn't call her. For the first time, I was really scared and didn't know what to do. I held Spud tightly, because he was shaking like a leaf on a tree while Bullet and Sckat stood beside me like it was no big deal, but looking at their faces, they were frozen stiff. We managed to walk out of the house and far away from the crowd. After a while, Sckat grabbed my hand and began to ask if we could go back inside, but Terry was still laying on the ground awaiting help. We knew he was alive because the neighbors ran out to him. They were yelling back and forth that he was going to be alright, but needed an ambulance. Someone was saying just drive him to the hospital, and not to call the police, but it was too late. They arrived on the scene and put handcuffs on Loretta. She never said a word. She just stood there with that same blank expression. She never offered an explanation, nor did her disposition ever change as they led her away.

No one ever acknowledged the fact that we were there. In fact, after all of the commotion, we went back into the house. For the rest of the weekend, we sat with each other quietly. We ate, watched T.V and just sat quietly. No one knew what was going to happen next, so we just sat with each other. No information on Loretta or Terry. It was as if everyone had forgotten about us. I wanted to talk with Jesus. I wanted to sing that song Mrs. Jackson always sang, but for the moment, I couldn't think or sing. I just wanted to know what was going to happen to us. Monday morning came and no Grandma Dee, so everyone was dressed and ready for the school bus. We looked at one another and giggled, because it seemed that everyone was going on without us, so we would keep it going until they came back. Sckat wanted me to ride with her, so I did. It was good that this happened, because I had a chance to see Mrs. Jackson again. She saw me in the hall way and began to ask question after question. "How was high school? What are you doing here? How are your grades? What are your plans for college? It started to feel like the day when Grammy was drilling me and the flood gates of tears just opened up. I tried to walk away, but she began asking what was wrong, and before I could answer the dam broke. Mrs. Jackson placed her arms around me and held me like I had never been held before, she kept whispering "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Lord, Jesus help this child Lord. You know

what to do Lord Jesus help this family. It's o,k baby. Let go and let God. This is not your battle, it's the Lord's." She kept saying it over and over until I was able to stop the tears. I wasn't sure what any of it meant, but I felt better. I felt that things were going to get better. I forgot about school and the military. I forgot about trying to leave. All I wanted was a quiet place for all of us. I wanted my family; the only family I knew, Bullet, Sckat and Spud.

Mrs. Jackson led me to the front office and made a few phone calls. The next face I saw was Grammy's. I forgot about all the ugly things she had said to Loretta. I was so happy to see her, and she was just as happy to see me. She begin to ask about Sckat, Bullet and Spud. Mrs. Jackson also called the hospital and the County jail for information on Loretta and Terry. Terry had suffered a serious injury to his face and shoulder and would be in the hospital for quite some time. Loretta was awaiting arraignment and undergoing a mental evaluation, because she never said a word. After all this information was given, Mrs. Jackson asked if she could pray for us. After the prayer, she asked Grammy if she was saved. Grammy never answered, but did ask for the name of her church that we never attended.

On the way out, Mrs. Jackson asked Grammy if she could speak with me for a moment. I walked



back towards her classroom and waited for what she had to say. “Little girl, God has big plans for you. Don’t let this world steal that from you. I’m going to add you all to my prayer list. If you ever need somewhere to go, please, please call me. She placed her number in my hand and said, “that number has been the same for some time now, and I don’t plan on changing it, so call it, and with God’s help, I’ll answer. You’re a very special young lady. Don’t ever forget that. Don’t ever, ever forget that!

## **Chapter Twelve**

### **The Hard Truth**

Months had passed, and we still hadn't heard from Grandma Dee after all this time. It was as if once Terry was injured, she just totally forgot about us. I wanted to ask, but everyone would think it would be inviting trouble. Bullet was really beginning to bother me though. His crowd was becoming a little too mean and scary. I wanted him to have fun and be accepted, but it seemed that his idea of fun and acceptance was geared in the wrong direction. His became best friends with the biggest thug in the neighborhood. I'm not sure how that came to be, but it did. Bullet was so influenced by everything he had: money, girls, fly clothes and a very nice ride. He called Bullet his little, big man. I didn't like it at all. It was as if wherever he went, Bullet was right there in his corner and on the corner. Big Mike could have said the sky was purple and Bullet would have said, "yeah, I can see that." That was his favorite saying to everything, when he didn't want to ruffle any feathers.

One day, I couldn't take it anymore and asked what was going on? Big Mike just looked at me like I was crazy, so I asked him again. "What's going on with you and my brother?" Again he looked, but this time he answered: "Don't start

none, and it won't be none." I started to walk away, and probably should have, but something had me and wouldn't let go. "I ain't starting nothing; I'm just asking you a question about my lil brother, so what's up?" For the first time he smiled and shook his head, "ya'll ain't nothing but some lil gangsters! He alright Janky! I got him." I could see this wasn't going anywhere, so I told Bullet let's go. It was at that point I knew what he meant by, "I got him." "Now gone on home Janky. Like I said, I got him." This time he had a serious look on his face, and I knew in my heart, it was time to give this fight up. On the way to Grammy's house, my head was spinning trying to figure out why Bullet wanted to be in that gang. We had stayed in a house where somebody controlled your every move, so why on earth would you want that kind of life? I wanted to go back and go toe-to-toe with Big Mike, just to prove to Bullet what kind of person he was, but somehow I knew it wouldn't make a difference.

For the first time, I really wanted to talk to Grandma Dee. Maybe she could let us live with her for a while and things would get better. I started to think about what Terry would always say about the environment, and how everybody was going nowhere fast. Why was this happening to us, and how come nobody seemed to be paying attention to what was going on around us? Bullet and I stopped having long conversations like

before. He became distant and mean, and made little remarks like, “now, I somebody too.” It was like a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It was as if, he changed overnight. Crying was out of the picture, because anger and confusion had become my best friend. What in the world was going on?

Upon walking in the house, Sckat was standing there waiting and looking like she had the best secret in the world. “Guess what?” I was too bothered to play games, so I didn’t answer, but knew she would say it anyway. “They saying Loretta real crazy, and she might be coming home, because crazy folks don’t know what they doing?” Now that stopped me dead in my tracks! “Who is they?” Sckat looked at me like I was crazy, and yelled back, “Who you think? The doctors at the jail! Why you acting all stank and stuff? I just told you Loretta coming home, and you looking like you ready to fight somebody! What’s wrong with you anyway?” This was too much and I was tired. Sckat was still talking and I kept walking, not caring about any of this foolishness anymore. Something needed to happen, but what? I wanted help, but didn’t know who to ask or what to say. I wanted everything to just stop. Loretta coming home was everything but ok. She would probably go back to acting crazy and having us stuck in that prison again. On the other hand, she may move somewhere else and we never see our family again. No, her coming home was not comforting at

all, but it would probably save Bullet. If anybody would stand up to Big Mike without a care in the world, it would be her!

“Did you hear anything about Terry, since you seemed to know everything?” Again, Sckat looked at me and screamed, “stop being mean to me!” I realized she was right and tried to hug her, but she pushed me away and said, “Ya’ll ain’t gon treat me like he do Loretta. You can’t come in here going off on me and then give somebody a hug like it’s ok.” She was right, and I was tired of trying, so good night it was. If she wanted to tell me some more, she would have to talk to the pillows, because sleep was calling my name. Needless, to say, that didn’t last long. Before, I could close my eyes, she was on the bed talking a mile a minute. “Terry got a big cut on his face and a big hole in his shoulder, so he staying at Grandma Dee house until he get better and get his own place.” “Sckat, where you getting all this stuff from?” She squinted her eyes, and said “Janky, I told you the first time. Auntie Linda was talking to Grammy about everything. Why you acting slow?” First, she never said any of that, but I knew in her mind she did, so it was no point in trying to make sense of any of it. At this point, I just listened until we both fell asleep.

Bullet didn’t come home that night, and nobody seemed to care. I asked Grammy if anybody knew

what was going on. They all just looked and said he was hanging out with Big Mike, and he would drop him off later. Later when? It was the weekend. I told Grammy, I was going around to check on Bullet, but she stopped me and said he would be back, when he was ready to come back. Come back! Come back from where? What was going on, and why was everybody acting like it was ok? Now this was a time that Loretta would be of good use! Again, I wasn't getting anywhere, so I went on to verify Sckat's latest gossip. "Is Loretta coming home soon?" Auntie Linda was the first one to speak. "Yeah that crazy heifer coming home, but ya'll gotta stay here until she finish seeing the crazy doctor." She laughed as if someone had told the biggest joke ever, and if they did, I surely missed the punch-line. Next question: What did they do about Terry? Auntie Linda laughed again; "that fool gone be alright. He over there crying to his momma, about how ya'll momma almost took his face off. I bet he won't spit on nobody else." And that was all she had to say. That was it in a nut shell, but not for me. I had one more question. "Did Grandma Dee, say anything about us?" Now that was the straw that broke the camel's back. "Grandma who? That heifer ain't thinking about ya'll. She just worried about that grown baby of hers, and mad cause my sister ain't in jail for the rest of her life. How she gone get mad, cause Loretta got him, before he got her? How she gon tell us stay away from her

family? I wanted to tell that snobbish broad about herself, but momma wouldn't let me."

I was sick. I felt myself sinking on the inside. When did all of this happen, and why didn't we know? Gluttony for pain, again I asked, when did all this happen? Well, Auntie Linda was always one to tell the whole story, and she did, no chaser, a straight shot to the head and the heart! "Child Protective Services called to see who was gon take care of ya'll after that school teacher called them. Well, they had us downtown while ya'll was in school. First they wanted yo precious Grandma Dee, but she said it was too much to take ya'll. She tried to just get you, but the CPS lady wanted all ya'll to stay together. Momma told them ya'll could stay here. She told 'em we didn't have much, but ya'll was welcome to stay as long as it took. That Grandma Dee of yours ain't offer to help wit nothing. She sat der like a overdressed trick, looking at us like we stank. Hell, we the only ones trying to do something for ya'll, and she talked about Loretta so bad, that I was ready to out my fist in her face myself. Gon come in there talking like she got all this money, and didn't offer one flipping penny. She can kiss all my tale, and lil' girl, you better know who yo real family is. Don't be trying to act all uppity and stuff. We may not have a lot, but we take care of our own, and that's more than we can say about yo precious Grandma Dee. How you gon split up the children

and just take one? Who in the hell she think she is?  
So, don't ask me nothing else about no damn  
Grandma Dee!

In the voice of the great reporter, Paul Harvey,  
“Now you know the rest of the Story!!



## **Chapter 13**

### **The Struggle is REAL**

Things never seem to come together in the manner in which we think, but if our steps are ordered by the Lord, then the path is already ordained, no matter how hard or arduous the journey may become. The season of childhood seems like yesterday. The pain of separation and loss are areas that will remain etched throughout the surfaces of my heart and mind. It seemed that at the age of 14, so much was taken away, yet so much was given.

Aunt Linda helped with the understanding that family never has to fit within a certain framework, and regardless of lack, there was always a place to call home. Home in the sense of shelter, food, clothes and the same cultural mindset. Comfort and safety were voids that would become filled through time and a relationship with Christ. Self-concept, identity, self-worth and self-confidence would develop long after leaving the grasp of Grammy's humble, but chaotic abode. Nature versus nurture is a theory that bespeaks of having a healthy balance of both spectrums. Although the physical abuse ceased after Loretta and Terry's incident took place, the un-answered questions of acceptance, love and belonging continued to wail within my soul like a woman in labor. The

constant reminder of who was caring for us, and who had to be responsible for us became a daily message of verbal and emotional neglect that was equal to that of Loretta's and Terry if not worse.

During high-school, my refuge became the school's choir, and for some reason, the song "No Man is an Island" became my national anthem. Every time we rehearsed it, tears would sting within, no matter how I fought forcefully to contain them. The second line read, "No Man stands alone." Not sure about the life of the writer, but I always felt very alone. I longed for a mother, who didn't possess the compassion or the ability to love, and for a father who craved for acceptance within his own family that his capacity to embrace his offspring was limited and fragmented to the point of minimal to no existence. This affected Bullet more than anyone. In looking for a sense of belonging, he became affiliated with the neighborhood gang, and lived a street life that afforded him the opportunity to live up to his name, Bullet! Everyone knew that his name represented what he could and would do. Yes, he was now respected and admired the same as Big Mike; he was his right hand man in every sense of the word. I often wondered if Terry had reached out to him, if that would have made a difference in his life.

That answer came one day while visiting him in jail. As visitation was coming to a close, his gaze was piercing, as he whispered, “they never gave us a chance Janky. They never gave us a chance.” I wanted to scream, but he needed strength that day, not emotions. Not one tear past my eyelids; not one formed in the ducts; no, not one. Breathing deeply before answering, I asked if he had accepted Christ as his personal Savior. His gaze seemed to soften as he asked how Mrs. Jackson was doing these days, and avoiding the question. “I should have moved with you Janky. I remember the day you left. Gramps swore she was going to send Mrs. Jackson to jail. She swore to us that the lady had brain washed you to join a cult. I waited on her to do it, because I wanted you back at home too, but she never made the call.” “You remember when I use to say that lady was crazy? Well, it seems I should have been talking to Jesus too. I’m proud and glad you escaped, took Spud with you and never looked back. That lady was crazy to take in someone else’s children. I just wish Sckat had went with you too. They say her ole man got her turning tricks and pushing his weights. The last time I saw her, she was on her second baby, and the State was waiting at the door as soon as she gave birth. Damn Janky, we never had a chance!” His eyes were swollen with tears as the announcement came that visitation would be over in five minutes. “Tell Spud I love him and keep running that football!” As the guard came, he

smiled gently and said to him, “hey Tone, this my big sis, she’s in that ole Army. Look at her man, that’s my hero.” Tone smiled back and wished me well as he ushered Bullet to the back. I blew kisses at him until, they softly said, “ma’am, you have to leave now.” I guess for them this seen was an everyday occurrence, but for me, it was a time of rapid reflection. All I could see was our time lying in the grass, and those crazy nights when Terry and Loretta would after each other, how we would stay up and talk all night.

I never opened my mouth about what had really happened to Sckat, and why the CPS was there to take her baby. Before leaving Gramps’ house, things became really crazy. One of Aunt Linda’s boyfriends was becoming just a little too friendly towards me, so of course, I told her. He began by offering money saying he thought I was cute. When that didn’t work, he tried the old fashion way by coming and waiting outside the school, saying Linda told him to pick me up. After running home, and telling Grammy and Aunt Linda what was happening, they denied it and said I had inherited Loretta’s lying ways. Sckat was really upset with me about the whole matter, because she had grown very fond of Aunt Linda and her boyfriend. They took her everywhere. After that, it was almost impossible to do anything right. Aunt Linda would find fault in everything, and at times, became verbally abusive and emotionally draining.

She started to sound like Loretta with the insults and angry outburst. I regretted the day, I said anything about her boyfriend and prayed it would just pass, but it never did. It just became worse.



## **Chapter 14**

### **Redemption**

At that point, it was just me and Spud, because to them, he was the invisible man and so was I. Everywhere I ventured, Spud was right there with me. So much so, people began to think he was my baby. One Saturday, Aunt Linda's boyfriend came over, and was coming towards the living room, where I was sitting on the couch. Before he could take a seat, she grabbed his hand, saying "let's go on the other side, before this lil crazy heifer tell some more lies. He looked back at me and grinned wickedly. That Sunday, Spud and I walked to Mrs. Jackson's church. I had long forgotten her number, but I always remembered the church's name, New Hope Baptist Church. It was about two miles from the house, so off we went. As we walked, I didn't know what to expect. I just walked. I didn't know who to talk to. I just walked. I remembered the name, so I kept walking. With a name like New Hope, it had to represent something good and promising. Hope was all I had left.

When we arrived, they ushered us towards the front. The pastor was talking about a lady name Rahab and how she wasn't a woman of God, but respected the ways of the Lord, and because of that, her whole house was saved and protected. Wow! That's all I could say. A lady in all white,

asked to take Spud to the children's church, but he began to make a fuss. The distraction caused people to begin to look in our direction. So, I decided to walk with them. As soon we made a right towards the daycare, someone shouted, "Jalisa Jones!" I stopped dead in my tracks, because I could recognize that sweet voice from miles away. Mrs. Henrietta Jackson was right there in the flesh. Hugs, kisses and more hugs and kisses for a period of time. Finally, she asked, "who's here with you?" When I told her what had transpired, there were more hugs and kisses. She picked Spud up and hugged him too. Not one tear past my eyelids; not one formed in the ducts; no, not one. This was no time for crying. I needed to hear her advice on what to do; where to go; who to see. I wanted to know if she knew who to call again. We went home with her after church. She made a few phone calls, and her home became our home. Grammy looked at me with disgust, when CPS met us at her house. I tried to grab Sckat, but she refused to go. They allowed her to stay as long as Grammy agreed that he would not enter the house again. Walking out of that door seemed as if eternity was at a stand-still, but hope was knocking.

After a few days of being with Mrs. Jackson, Spud was so lively and active. He laughed and played all of the time. For me, fear would not allow for comfort. I didn't know how long our



time would be at this location. No answers again, so my stomach was in knots. Mrs. Jackson noticed my discomfort, and began to explain the process. “Jalisa, you are more than welcome to stay here. I’ve known your family for quite some time. Do you remember, the day I said, you were special and never forget that? Well, I meant exactly that. You are special, and God has placed you here for a reason.” My stomach settled, and sleep overcame me. It was a peaceful rest.

That move changed my life forever. I was able to watch my little brother grow in a stable and nurturing environment and mature into a successful God fearing man. Contact with my other two siblings was almost void. Bullet was doing his thing in the streets and Sckat hated me for running off Aunt Linda’s boyfriend, because she was beginning to see him as a father figure. It would take six months for everyone to learn the truth about him. During one of Aunt Linda’s weekend stays at his house, he decided to befriend my little sister. I’m told it was Sckat’s screams that woke aunt Linda and the neighbors. The police arrived and arrested him, and because Sckat was a minor, so did CPS. Aunt Linda was arrested as well and not allowed to come around Grammy’s house as long as Sckat remained there. They would find out a month later that the rape resulted in a pregnancy. To this day, I’m not sure how or where the money came from, but an abortion was

performed, and she was sent to my aunt in Macon, Georgia. She lived there for three years before we would ever see her again.

Old Ancient of Days and EL- EL YON are my favorite names for God. It was during this time that the most high God had parted the waters for this family. I will never forget hearing Sckat's voice. Tears begin to flow as she talked a mile a minute and begging me not to hang up. I remember scrambling looking for pen and paper to write down her address. It was like moving through a dream like state as I drove to her location and held her tightly in my arms with that awkward silence of not knowing what to say, until two beautiful little angels appeared by her side! These two beautiful jewels were the spitting image of Sckat. I cried even harder.

We laughed and talked and talked until it was dark. She told me all about the damage that had taken place, and the mental anguish suffered during her stay in Macon after meeting her boyfriend. My Aunt Vira had taken her in as a favor to Grammy, but was mean as a rattle snake, so when her boyfriend came along offering a way out, she jumped at the chance for freedom without knowing his background. A decision she would later regret. Many hardships occurred, but God is an awesome wonder! While completing the parenting classes directed by Child Protective

Services, she realized that things would never get better if she remained in the environment. Her case manager offered assistance, and agreed that it would be a good idea to look me up.

“Janky, I prayed for the first time in my life. I prayed that God would make a way for me and my babies. I told my case manager about the old school teacher that would always talk about Jesus, and everyone but my sister would always laugh. I told her about how she came to the house with CPS to pick up all of your stuff and I had refused to go, but regret that decision to this very day. So, I prayed that whatever God you believed in, I needed Him too, because it was time to pick up and go! Oh Janky, if you only knew the hell I’ve been through; If you only knew”....Her thoughts trailed off along with her voice.

I was quiet and careful not to interrupt her as she continued. “In the hospital they told me that my second baby tested positive for cocaine, and I didn’t know what to do as they took her away from me. No one was there, just me in that room all alone. I hated Loretta, Terry, you, Bullet and Linda. I hated everybody. I hated them for sending me away; for not keeping us safe and allowing people to hurt us like this. My heart was filled with hatred for my boyfriend, because after discovering the first pregnancy, he jumped me causing a miscarriage, because he said his money was

coming up short. They wanted me to press charges on the attacker, but you know I acted as if I didn't know who it was.

After getting through that storm, I was pregnant again, but this time, it was different. There was this lady preaching the gospel on the corner. She looked at me one day and said, go! The Lord will help you if you just go! Go to that church on 5<sup>th</sup> street and tell them you need help. He won't find you there. Janky, I went because that lady didn't know anything about me. How did she know? So I went and they placed me in a shelter for pregnant girls. They fed us and took care of us until we gave birth. We had to attend these classes on parenting and life skills development and how to find a job. They placed us on this housing list, but we could stay there until our housing became available. I told my case manager that I wanted to find my sister. I wanted to go back with my family, so she agreed to look you up.”

“To God Be the Glory!!!!” That’s all I could say over and over again. The answer was yes, yes, yes and yes. Life had dealt us an abundance of challenges, but was now moving in the right direction. We all felt like a simple leaf when it came to being part of anyone’s family tree, but God placed guardian angels along the path to guide us through the murky waters. It started with Mrs. Jackson and continues to this very day. I’m not

sure what would have happened if she had been timid about her sharing her faith on a daily basis, but this one thing I do know, this simple leaf and her family have truly been redeemed, as we too have “The Equipment” to win!

## **A Family's Confession of Faith**

**We are standing on the path of righteousness, and no one can remove us from this foundation. God is our healer! He is our protector. He is our comforter, and we are never alone in this world.**

**Our ministry is blessed and serves as a refuge for others. We are a blessed nation that stands on the promises of God! Our minds are free from depression and oppression. Our bodies are free from pain and disease. Our resources are rolling in abundance. Our eyes see clearly. Our ears hear clearly. Our hearts love tenderly. Our ministry is love, peace and blessings with whomever we have contact.**

**We are blessed and highly favored. Our accounts are overflowing with His blessings of gold and silver. We fear no man. We owe nothing to no man. His Grace is sufficient enough for us. We are walking in prosperity. We are walking for our posterity, for they will acquire wealth at a young age.**

**We are debt free! We are prosperous. All doors have been opened to us, and none will close unless God closes them. We are the lender. We are the head. We are abiding in Him in all things. This is a very prosperous year for us, and the doors of success are indeed opened forever and ever, because we believe every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God in Jesus Name!**

**Faith will always take you where fear refuses to go!**



## **About the Author**

Lolita R. Gilmore works as an Adjunct Professor in the Mental Health Services Department at Central Texas College, along with her own private practice. Her life is embraced and modeled by the Word of God, as she lives by the scripture which states, “I can do all things through Christ[a] who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13, NKJV).” As a retired Army Combat veteran with over 21 years of service, she has experience in various areas, including mental health and related services: Leadership and communication expertise; financial management, victim advocate, crisis prevention; senior instructor/alcohol/substance abuse, suicide prevention, senior trainer, business operations organization.

Ms. Gilmore continues to serve as a community Pastor and founder of Teach Them to Love Outreach Ministries where great compassion is given in providing services to prevent domestic abuse, substance abuse, and sexual assault through advocacy, education, training and awareness for the community, Soldiers; Family members and Army civilians under the Army Family Advocacy Program (FAP) as a Victim Advocate and substance Abuse Counselor.

She is the proud mother of three lovely children: Adriane Randall, Charles and Carmise Gilmore and one granddaughter, Imari Randall. The family currently resides in Harker Heights, Texas where they continue to serve the military and marginalized communities.



## **Resources**

## **Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline**

**The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse.** Serving the United States, its territories, and Canada, the hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with professional crisis counselors who, through interpreters, can provide assistance in over 170 languages. The hotline offers crisis intervention, information, literature, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources. All calls are confidential.

The hotline has received more than 2 million calls since it began in 1982. These calls come from children at risk for abuse, distressed parents seeking crisis intervention and concerned individuals who suspect that child abuse may be occurring. The hotline is also a valuable resource for those who are mandated by law to report suspected abuse, such as school personnel, medical and mental health professionals and police and fire investigators.

What to expect when calling the hotline: (If this is an emergency, call 911.)

When calling 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453), a qualified crisis counselor will answer and assist you, if you:

- Need help and want to talk to a counselor.
- Are in physical or emotional crisis and need support and encouragement.
- Need to be connected to the best possible resources in your area.
- Have questions about the signs of child abuse.
- Need to find out how to report known or suspected abuse.
- Have questions about the reporting process and what you might expect through the process.
- Want to learn about Childhelp programs that will address you or your child's needs.
- Want to learn about resources available to parents, grandparents and caregivers.
- Need emotional support as a survivor of abuse.
- Want a referral to an agency, counseling or other services near where you live.
- Want literature mailed to you. (Allow two weeks for delivery via the U.S. Postal Service.)

- Want information on how to make a donation to Childhelp.
- Childhelp crisis counselors cannot come to the home where the abuse is happening and take away the child or teen who is in danger of being hurt and put them in a new home.
- **The Childhelp Hotline crisis counselors can't make the child abuse report for you, but we are here to help you through it.**

## **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

Our phone and chat services are available to anyone who has been affected by relationship abuse, including those who are currently in abusive relationships, those who are working to heal, friends or family of victims and survivors and anyone in the community who has questions about domestic violence. We have the ability to provide phone services in more than 200 languages.

CALL 24/7

1-800-799-7233

1-800-787-3224 (TTY for Deaf/hard of hearing)

Trained advocates are available to take your calls through our toll free, 24/7 hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

## **STATE COALITIONS**

### **Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P. O. Box 4762

Montgomery, AL 36101

Hotline: 1 (800) 650-6522

Office: (334) 832-4842 Fax: (334) 832-4803

Website: [www.acadv.org](http://www.acadv.org)

Email: [info@acadv.org](mailto:info@acadv.org)

### **Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

130 Seward Street, Suite 214

Juneau, AK 99801

Office: (907) 586-3650

Website: [www.andvsa.org](http://www.andvsa.org)

Email: [andvsa@andvsa.org](mailto:andvsa@andvsa.org)

### **Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

2800 N. Central Ave., Suite 1570

Phoenix, AZ 85004

Hotline: 1 (800) 782-6400

Office: (602) 279-2900 Fax: (602) 279-2980

Website: [www.azcadv.org](http://www.azcadv.org)

Email: [info@azcadv.org](mailto:info@azcadv.org)

### **Arkansas Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

1401 W. Capitol Avenue, Suite 170

Little Rock, AR 72201

Hotline: 1 (800) 269-4668

Office: (501) 907-5612 Fax: (501) 907-5618

Website: [www.domesticpeace.com](http://www.domesticpeace.com)

**California Partnership to End Domestic Violence**

P. O. Box 1798

Sacramento, CA 95812

Hotline: 1 (800) 524-4765

Office: (916) 444-7163 Fax: (916) 444-7165

Website: [www.cpedv.org](http://www.cpedv.org)

Email: [info@cpedv.org](mailto:info@cpedv.org)

**Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

1120 Lincoln St, #900

Denver, CO 80203

Office: (303) 831-9632

Website: [www.ccadv.org](http://www.ccadv.org)

**Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

912 Silas Deane Highway, Lower Level

Wethersfield, CT 06109

Hotline: (888) 774-2900

Office: (860) 282-7899 Fax: (860) 282-7892

Website: [www.ctcadv.org](http://www.ctcadv.org)

**Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

100 W. 10th Street, Suite 903

Wilmington, DE 19801

Northern Delaware: (302) 762-6110

Southern Delaware: (302) 422-8058 Bilingual:

(302) 745-9874

Office: (302) 658-2958

Website: [www.dcadv.org](http://www.dcadv.org)

### **DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

5 Thomas Circle, NW

Washington, DC 20005

Office: (202) 299-1181 Fax: (202) 299-1193

Website: [www.dccadv.org](http://www.dccadv.org)

Email: [info@dccadv.org](mailto:info@dccadv.org)

### **Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

425 Office Plaza

Tallahassee, FL 32301

Hotline: (800) 500-1119

TDD: (850) 621-4202

Office: (850) 425-2749 Fax: (850) 425-3091

Website: [www.fcadv.org](http://www.fcadv.org)

### **Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

114 New Street, Suite B

Decatur, GA 30030

Hotline: 1 (800) 334-2836

Office: (404) 209-0280 Fax: (404) 766-3800

Website: [www.gcadv.org](http://www.gcadv.org)

### **Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence**

P.O. Box 1093

Hagatna, GU 96932

Office: (671) 479-2277 Fax: (671) 479-7233

Website: [www.guamcoalition.org](http://www.guamcoalition.org)

Email: [info@guamcoalition.org](mailto:info@guamcoalition.org)

### **Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

810 Richards Street, Suite 960

Honolulu, HI 96813

Office: (808) 832-9316 Fax: (808) 841-6028

Website: [www.hscadv.org](http://www.hscadv.org)

### **Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence**

300 E. Mallard Drive, Suite 130

Boise, ID 83706

Office: (208) 384-0419

Website: [www.idvsa.org](http://www.idvsa.org)

Email: [info@engagingvoices.org](mailto:info@engagingvoices.org)

### **Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Hotline: (877) 863-6338

Office: (217) 789-2830

Website: [www.ilcadv.org](http://www.ilcadv.org)

### **Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

1915 W. 18th Street, Suite B

Indianapolis, IN 46202

Hotline: 1 (800) 332-7385

Office: (317) 917-3685 Fax: (317) 917-3695

Website: [www.icadvinc.org](http://www.icadvinc.org)



**Iowa Coalition against Domestic Violence**

3030 Merle Hay Road

Des Moines, IA 50310

Hotline: 1 (800) 942-0333

Office: (515) 244-8028 Fax: (515) 244-7417

Website: [www.icadv.org](http://www.icadv.org)

Email: [icadv@icadv.org](mailto:icadv@icadv.org)

**Kansas Coalition against Sexual & Domestic Violence**

634 SW Harrison Street

Topeka, KS 66603

Hotline: 1 (888) 363-2287

Office: (785) 232-9784 Fax: (785) 266-1874

Website: [www.kcsdv.org](http://www.kcsdv.org)

**Kentucky Domestic Violence Association**

111 Darby Shire Circle

Frankfort, KY 40601

Office: (502) 209-5382 Fax: (502) 226-5382

Website: [www.kdva.org](http://www.kdva.org)

Email: [info@kdva.org](mailto:info@kdva.org)

**Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 77308

Baton Rouge, LA 70879

Hotline: 1 (888) 411-1333

Office: (225) 752-1296

Website: [www.lcadv.org](http://www.lcadv.org)

**Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence**

One Weston Court, Box#2

Augusta, ME 04330

Hotline: 1 (866) 834-4357

Office: (207) 430-8334 Fax: (207) 430-8348

Website: [www.mcedv.org](http://www.mcedv.org)

Email: [info@mcedv.org](mailto:info@mcedv.org)

**Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence**

4601 Presidents Dr., Ste. 370

Lanham, MD 20706

Hotline: 1 (800) 634-3577

Office: (301) 429-3601 Fax: (301) 429-3605

Website: [www.mnadv.org](http://www.mnadv.org)

Email: [info@mnadv.org](mailto:info@mnadv.org)

**Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
& Domestic Violence/Jane Doe, Inc.**

14 Beacon Street, Suite 507

Boston, MA 02108

Hotline: 1 (877) 785-2020

TTY/TTD: 1 (877) 521-2601

Office: (617) 248-0922 Fax: (617) 248-0902

Website: [www.janedoe.org](http://www.janedoe.org)

Email: [info@janedoe.org](mailto:info@janedoe.org)

**Michigan Coalition To End Domestic & Sexual  
Violence**

3893 Okemos Road, Suite B2

Okemos, MI 48864

Office: (517) 347-7000 Fax: (517) 347-1377

TTY: (517) 381-8470

Website: [www.mcedsv.org](http://www.mcedsv.org)

**Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women**

60 Plato Blvd. E, Suite 130

Saint Paul, MN 55107

Hotline: 1 (866) 223-1111

Office: (651) 646-6177 Fax: (651) 646-1527

Website: [www.mcbw.org](http://www.mcbw.org)

**Mississippi Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 4703

Jackson, MS 39296

Hotline: 1 (800) 898-3234

Office: (601) 981-9196 Fax: (601) 981-2501

Website: [www.mcadv.org](http://www.mcadv.org)

Email: [support@mcadv.org](mailto:support@mcadv.org)

**Missouri Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence**

217 Oscar Dr., Suite A

Jefferson City, MO 65101

Office: (573) 634-4161

Website: [www.mocadsv.org](http://www.mocadsv.org)

**Montana Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence**

32 S Ewing St

Helena, MT 59601

Office: (406) 443-7794

Website: [www.mcadsv.com](http://www.mcadsv.com)

Email: [mtcoalition@mcadsv.com](mailto:mtcoalition@mcadsv.com)

**Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition**

245 South 84th St, Suite 200

Lincoln, NE 68510

Office: (402) 476-6256 Fax: (402) 476-6806

Spanish Hotline: (877) 215-0167

Website: [www.ndvsac.org](http://www.ndvsac.org)

**Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence**

250 South Rock Blvd., Suite 116

Reno, NV 89502

(775) 828-1115 Fax: (775) 828-9911

Website: [www.nnadv.org](http://www.nnadv.org)

**New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence**

P.O. Box 353

Concord, NH 03302

Hotline: 1 (866) 644-3574

Office: (603) 224-8893 Fax: (603) 228-6096

Website: [www.nhcadsv.org](http://www.nhcadsv.org)

**New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women**

1670 Whitehorse Hamilton Square

Trenton, NJ 08690

Hotline: 1 (800) 572-7233 TTY: (800) 787-3224

Office: (609) 584-8107 Fax: (609) 584-9750

Website: [www.njcbw.org](http://www.njcbw.org)

**New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

1210 Luisa Street, Suite 7

Santa Fe, NM 87505

Office: (505) 246-9240 Fax: (505) 246-9240

Website: [www.nmcadv.org](http://www.nmcadv.org)

Email: [info@nmcadv.org](mailto:info@nmcadv.org)

**New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

119 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor

Albany, NY 12210

Hotline NYS: 1 (800) 942-6906

Hotline NYC: 1 (800) 621-4673

Office: (518) 482-5465 Fax: (518) 482-3807

Website: [www.nyscadv.org](http://www.nyscadv.org)

**North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

3710 University Drive, Suite 140

Durham, NC 27707

Office: (919) 956-9124 Fax: (919) 682-1449

Website: [www.nccadv.org](http://www.nccadv.org)

**North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services**

525 N. 4th St.

Bismark, ND 58501

Office: (701) 255-6240 Fax: (701) 255-1904

Website: [www.ndcaws.org](http://www.ndcaws.org)

## **Ohio Domestic Violence Network**

Hotline: (800) 934-9840

Website: [www.odvn.org](http://www.odvn.org)

## **Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

3815 N. Santa Fe Ave., Suite 124

Oklahoma City, OK 73118

Hotline: 1 (800) 522-7233

Office: (405) 524-0700 TTY: (405) 512-5577

Website: [www.ocadvsa.org](http://www.ocadvsa.org)

Email: [info@ocadvsa.org](mailto:info@ocadvsa.org)

## **Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence**

1737 NE Alberta Street, Suite 205

Portland, OR 97211

Hotline: 1 (888) 235-5333

Office: (503) 230-1951 Fax: (503) 230-1973

Website: [www.ocadsv.com](http://www.ocadsv.com)

## **Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

3605 Vartan Way, Suite 101

Harrisburg PA 17110

Office (717) 545-6400 TTY (800) 553-2508

Website: [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org)

## **Coordinadora Paz para la Mujer**

Apartado 193008

San Juan, Puerto Rico 00919-3008

Office: (787) 281-7579

Website: [www.pazparalamujer.org](http://www.pazparalamujer.org)

Email: [pplmsmtp@ayustar.net](mailto:pplmsmtp@ayustar.net)

### **Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

422 Post Road, Suite 201

Warwick, RI 02888

Hotline: 1 (800) 494-8100

Office: (401) 467-9940 Fax: (401) 467-9943

Website: [www.ricadv.org](http://www.ricadv.org)

Email: [ricadv@ricadv.org](mailto:ricadv@ricadv.org)

### **South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

P.O. Box 7776

Columbia, SC 29202

Office: (803) 256-2900

Website: [www.sccadvasa.org](http://www.sccadvasa.org)

### **South Dakota Coalition Ending Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

P.O. Box 141

Pierre, SD 57501

Office: (605) 945-0869

Website: [www.sdcedsv.org](http://www.sdcedsv.org)

### **Tennessee Coalition To End Domestic & Sexual Violence**

2 International Plaza Dr. Suite 425

Nashville, TN 37217

Hotline: 1 (800) 356-6767

Office: (615) 386-9406

Website: [tncoalition.org](http://tncoalition.org)

### **Texas Council on Family Violence**

P.O. Box 163865

Austin, TX 78716

Office: (512) 794-1133 Fax: (512) 685.6397

Website: [www.tcfv.org](http://www.tcfv.org)

### **Women's Coalition of St. Croix**

P.O. Box 222734

Christiansted, VI 00822-2734

Hotline: (340) 773-9272

Fax: (340) 773-9062

Website: [www.wcstx.com](http://www.wcstx.com)

Email: [info@wcstx.org](mailto:info@wcstx.org)

### **Utah Domestic Violence Coalition**

205 North 400 West,

Salt Lake City, UT 84103

Hotline: 1 (800) 897-5465

Office: (801) 521-5544

Website: [www.udvc.org](http://www.udvc.org)

### **Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence**

P.O. Box 405

Montpelier, VT 05601

Hotline: 1 (800) 228-7395



Office: (802) 223-1302 Fax: (802) 223-6943

Website: [www.vtnetwork.org](http://www.vtnetwork.org)

Email: [vtnetwork@vtnetwork.org](mailto:vtnetwork@vtnetwork.org)

### **Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance**

5008 Monument Avenue, Suite A

Richmond, VA 23230

Office: (804) 377-0335

Website: [www.vsdvalliance.org](http://www.vsdvalliance.org)

Email: [info@vsdvalliance.org](mailto:info@vsdvalliance.org)

### **Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

711 Capitol Way, Suite 702

Olympia, WA 98501

Hotline: 1 (800) 562-6025

Office: (360) 586-1022 Fax: (360) 586-1024

Website: [www.wscadv2.org](http://www.wscadv2.org)

Email: [wscadv@wscadv.org](mailto:wscadv@wscadv.org)

### **West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

5004 Elk River Road, South

Elkview, WV 25071

Office: (304) 965-3552 Fax: (304) 965-3572

Website: [www.wvcadv.org](http://www.wvcadv.org)

### **Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

1245 E. Washington Ave, Suite 150

Madison, WI 53703

Office: (608) 255-0539 Fax: (608) 255-3560

Website: [endabusewi.org](http://endabusewi.org)

Email: [wcadv@wcadv.org](mailto:wcadv@wcadv.org)

## **Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

P.O. Box 236

710 Garfield Street, Suite 218

Laramie, WY 82073

Office: (307) 755-5481 Fax: (307) 755-5482

Website: [www.wyomingdvsa.org](http://www.wyomingdvsa.org)

## **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

If you're having thoughts of suicide or know someone who is, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 24/7 by phone at 1-800-273-8255 and by chat.

## **National Hotline for Crime Victims**

1-855-4-VICTIM (1-855-484-2846)

## **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

1-800-273-TALK (8255) [24/7 hotline]

1-888-628-9454 (Spanish)

1-800-799-4889 (TTY)

## Civil Justice for Victims of Crime

### Any Crime Victim May be Able to File a Civil Lawsuit Against a Perpetrator or Other Responsible Party

If you are a victim looking for an attorney referral, please call 202-467-8716.

Regardless of the outcome of the criminal prosecution, or even if there was no prosecution, crime victims can file civil lawsuits against offenders and other responsible parties. Unlike the criminal justice process, the civil justice system does not attempt to determine an offender's guilt or innocence. Offenders are also not put in prison. Rather, civil courts attempt to ascertain whether an offender or a third party is liable for the injuries sustained as a result of the crime. If defendants are found civilly liable, courts may order them to pay monetary damages to victims. While money awarded in civil lawsuits can never fully compensate a victim for the trauma of victimization or the loss of a loved one, it can be a valuable resource to help crime victims rebuild their lives. Moreover, the exposure to civil liability is a powerful incentive for landlords, businessmen,

and other proprietors to enact the security measures necessary to prevent future victimizations.

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