

BLACK THEOLOGY

SLAVERY, SELMA AND BEYOND

t-t.site/20-and-odd





“ BLACK CULTURE IS VERY DIFFICULT TO
EXPLAIN TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T
HAVE ANY DIRECT CONTACT WITH IT. ”

JESS ROW, AMERICAN STORY WRITER



“SOLID” THEOLOGY

WHAT IS “BLACK” THEOLOGY?

“ **THE GOSPEL OF JESUS IS NOT A RATIONAL CONCEPT TO BE EXPLAINED IN A THEORY OF SALVATION,** BUT A STORY ABOUT GOD’S PRESENCE IN JESUS’ SOLIDARITY WITH THE OPPRESSED, WHICH LED TO HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS. WHAT IS REDEMPTIVE IS THE FAITH THAT GOD SNATCHES VICTORY OUT OF DEFEAT, LIFE OUT OF DEATH, AND HOPE OUT OF DESPAIR. ”

JAMES H. CONE, *THE CROSS AND THE LYNCHING TREE*

THE COURSE

- THE MIDDLE PASSAGE
- SLAVERY AS INSTITUTION
- RELATIONSHIP OF RELIGION & OPPRESSION
- CIVIL RIGHTS AS POLICY & AN IDEAL
- THE FACES, VOICES, AND SOUNDS OF FREEDOM
- THE SOUTHERN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS & ITS INFLUENCES
- THE ROLE OF THE "WHITE CHURCH IN AMERICA"
- THE STRANGE MARRIAGE OF CHURCH AND STATE
- AFRICAN AMERICAN WORSHIP
- JESUS IN "BLACK & WHITE"

WHAT IS YOUR ORIGIN STORY?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0IJrhQE6DZk>

IN THE BEGINNING (GATES & MCKAY)

- THE VERNACULAR TRADITION (NORTON'S ANTHOLOGY AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE, GATES & MCKAY)
 - "REFERS TO THE CHURCH SONGS, BLUES, BALLADS, SERMONS, STORIES AND IN OUR OWN ERA, RAP SONGS THAT ARE PART OF THE ORAL, **NOT**, THE LITERATE TRADITION OF BLACK EXPRESSION
 - RALPH ELLISON NOTES THAT THE VERNACULAR ACCOUNTS FOR BLACK AMERICAN'S LEGACY OF SELF AWARENESS AND ENDURANCE. IT IS THE ATTEMPT TO HUMANIZE A HARSH WORLD WITH HONESTY, TOUGHNESS, AND OFTEN WITH HUMOR
 - EXAMPLES... THE NOD
 - THOMAS JEFFERSON, "MUSICALLY, THE SLAVES ARE GENERALLY MORE GIFTED THAN THE WHITES WITH ACCURATE EARS FOR TUNE AND TIME"
 - DEFINITION: VERNACULUS, "BORN IN ONE'S HOUSE"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-8UpsV-bk8>

THE VERNACULAR TRADITION (GATES & MCKAY)

- NEGRO SPIRITUALS: RELIGIOUS SONGS SUNG BY AFRICAN AMERICANS SINCE EARLIEST DAYS OF SLAVERY. FIRST GATHERED IN BOOK FORM BY RICHARD ALLEN, 1801. WERE NOT SUNG IN CHURCH, BUT IN THE FIELDS WHILE WORKING, PLAY TIME, REST TIME AND ON SUNDAYS AT PRAISE MEETINGS. "GOD'S A-GONNA TROUBLE THE WATER", "SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT", "STEAL AWAY TO JESUS"
[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=7oFcFzJT7Tw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7oFcFzJT7Tw)
- GOSPEL: NO TRUE DEFINITION. THINK OF SPIRITUALS RITUALIZED IN THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP STILL SPEAKING TO BLACK LIFE IN WHITE AMERICA. INCORPORATES MORE INSTRUMENTS. POET STERLING BROWN, "TO FIGHT THE DEVIL BY USING WHAT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED THE DEVIL'S WEAPONS, THE DEVIL HAS NO RIGHT TO ALL THAT FINE RHYTHM, SO A JOYFUL NOISE IS MADE TO THE LORD WITH BOUNCE AND SWING."
[HTTPS://DRIVE.GOOGLE.COM/FILE/D/1KZ_XVWENCA7IKiomo7ioXSQ_9DAFESD/VIEW?USP=SHARING](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KZ_XVWENCA7IKiomo7ioXSQ_9DAFESD/view?usp=sharing)
- LITERATURE OF SLAVERY AND FREEDOM: COMBINES RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL THEMES. THEMES RESIST HUMAN TYRANNY, AFFIRMING HUMAN DIGNITY. DEMANDS FIDELITY TO THE IDEALS FROM WHITES WHOSE MORAL COMPLACENCY AND RACIAL PREJUDICE BLINDS THEM TO THE OBLIGATIONS OF THEIR OWN HERITAGE. *INT THE REALM OF SPIRIT, MOST WHITES WERE FINE WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN CLAIMS TO EQUAL ACCESS TO GOD'S GRACE, IF THIS "GRACE" OR "BLACK SALVATION" DID NOT ENTAIL A RADICAL REDEMPTION OF THE WHITE DOMINATED SOCIAL ORDER.*

MARIA W. STEWART (GATES & MCKAY)

- THE FIRST BLACK POLITICAL COMMENTATOR, 1803-1879 (YES, A BLACK WOMAN)
- FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN TO ADDRESS A MIXED CROWD (MEN & WOMEN)
- ORPHANED AT 5, WORKED AS A SERVANT GIRL FOR A MINISTER'S FAMILY
- WAS TAUGHT RELIGION BUT NOT NOTHING ELSE
- HAD A CONVERSION EXPERIENCE IN 1830. CALLED TO ACTION.

RELIGION AND PRINCIPALS OF MORALITY WERE THE SURE FOUNDATION ON WHICH BLACKS HAD TO BUILD THEIR FUTURE. THIS BELIEF DID NOT KEEP HER FROM RECOMMENDING A NEW SOCIAL ORDER THAT RADICALLY OPPOSED THE HIERARCHIES OF CLASS AND RACE IN HER WORLD. THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL DEMANDED A FUNDAMENTAL RETHINKING OF GENDER AND RACIAL IDENTITY.





EXCERPT FROM "RELIGION AND THE PURE PRINCIPLES OF
MORALITY, THE SURE FOUNDATION ON WHICH WE MUST
BUILD"

THE VERNACULAR TRADITION (GATES & MCKAY)

- RAP: 1970's AND 1980's. "VERBAL FIRE AND ICE". USE OF POETRY, DEFT RHYMES, STYLIZED VERSE PERFORMED AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF SOUNDS SAMPLED OR PRODUCED WITH LIVE INSTRUMENTS. BORROW HEAVY FROM THE VERNACULAR TRADITION AND IS SOUNDS LIKE THE "LANGUAGE OF REBELLION". [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=HUZOKVYCX_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUZOKVYCX_o)
- SERMONS: COMPLEX ORATORICAL FORM WITH MANY "FACES". BLACK PREACHERS ARE LARGELY STORYTELLERS, ACTORS, AND SINGERS WHO USE THEIR VOICES AND BODIES TO LEND TO DYNAMISM TO THE PERFORMED WORD. HAVE DEVELOPED A "REPETITION" OF THEME, **FROM AFRICA, TO SLAVERY, TO FREEDOM**...THE BLACK SERMON FOR CONVERSION AND WORSHIP BUT FOR SOCIOPOLITICAL EXPOSITION AND ANALYSIS. HUMOR IS FREQUENT!(GOTTA LAUGH TO KEEP FROM CRYING, OR BEING ANGRY)
[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=7T7QQ90JTk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7T7QQ90JTk) "REMEMBER HALLELUJAH ANYHOW?" (2:36-11:04)



WHY THE VERNACULAR TRADITION

THE CROSS AND THE LYNCHING TREE (CONE)

“UNFORTUNATELY, DURING THE COURSE OF 2,000 YEARS OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY, THIS SYMBOL OF SALVATION HAS BEEN DETACHED FROM ANY REFERENCE TO THE ONGOING SUFFERING AND OPPRESSION OF HUMAN BEINGS—THOSE WHOM IGNACIO ELLACURÍA, THE SALVADORAN MARTYR, CALLED “THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLES OF HISTORY.” THE CROSS HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A HARMLESS, NON-OFFENSIVE ORNAMENT THAT CHRISTIANS WEAR AROUND THEIR NECKS.

RATHER THAN REMINDING US OF THE “COST OF DISCIPLESHIP,” IT HAS BECOME A FORM OF “CHEAP GRACE,” AN EASY WAY TO SALVATION THAT DOESN’T FORCE US TO CONFRONT THE POWER OF CHRIST’S MESSAGE AND MISSION. UNTIL WE CAN SEE THE CROSS AND THE LYNCHING TREE TOGETHER, UNTIL WE CAN IDENTIFY CHRIST WITH A “RECRUCIFIED” BLACK BODY HANGING FROM A LYNCHING TREE, THERE CAN BE NO GENUINE UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN AMERICA, AND NO DELIVERANCE FROM THE BRUTAL LEGACY OF SLAVERY AND WHITE SUPREMACY.”

THE CROSS AND THE LYNCHING TREE (CONE)

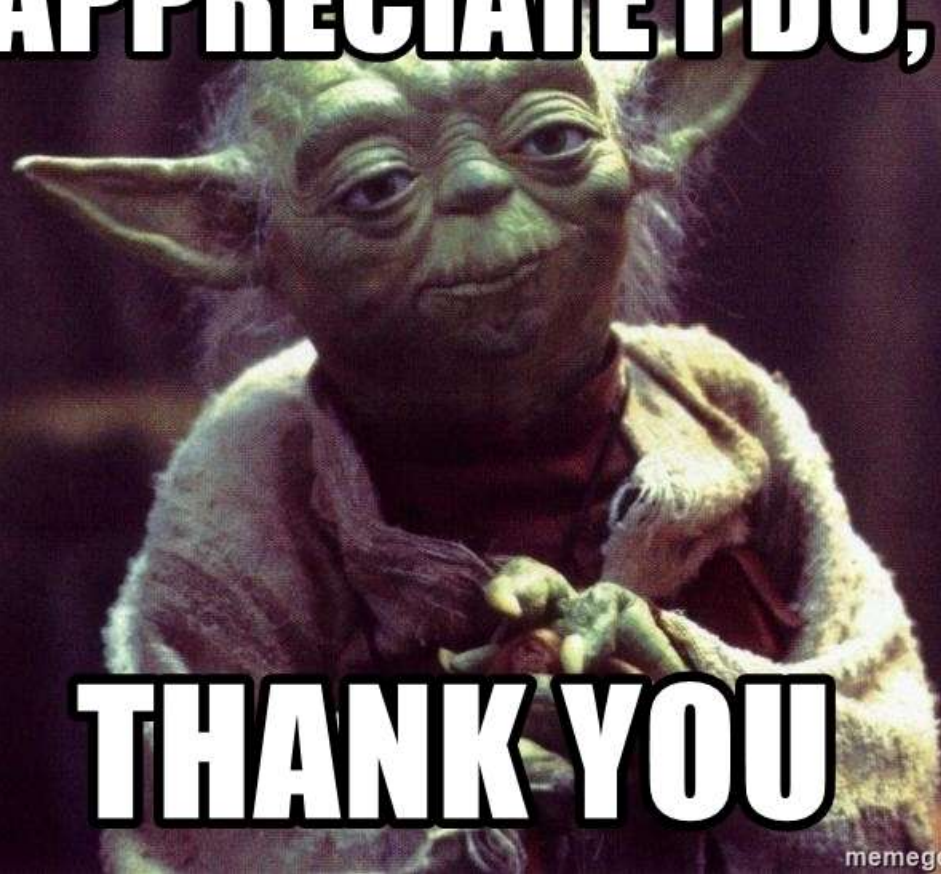
“THE CROSS AND THE LYNCHING TREE INTERPRET EACH OTHER. BOTH WERE PUBLIC SPECTACLES, SHAMEFUL EVENTS, INSTRUMENTS OF PUNISHMENT RESERVED FOR THE MOST DESPISED PEOPLE IN SOCIETY. ANY GENUINE THEOLOGY AND ANY GENUINE PREACHING OF THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL MUST BE MEASURED AGAINST THE TEST OF THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS AND THE LYNCHING TREE.

'JESUS DID NOT DIE A GENTLE DEATH LIKE SOCRATES, WITH HIS CUP OF HEMLOCK....RATHER, HE DIED LIKE A [LYNCHED BLACK VICTIM] OR A COMMON [BLACK] CRIMINAL IN TORMENT, ON THE TREE OF SHAME.' THE CROWD'S SHOUT 'CRUCIFY HIM!' (MK 15:14) ANTICIPATED THE WHITE MOB'S SHOUT 'LYNCH HIM!' JESUS' AGONIZING FINAL CRY OF ABANDONMENT FROM THE CROSS, 'MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?' (MK 15:34), WAS SIMILAR TO THE LYNCHED VICTIM SAM HOSE'S AWFUL SCREAM AS HE DREW HIS LAST BREATH, 'OH, MY GOD! OH, JESUS.'"

BLACK THEOLOGY

- JOY
- HOPE
- SONG
- FREEDOM
- DANCE
- FAITH
- FIGHT
- PERSEVERANCE...ALL FROM A PLACE OF GREAT PAIN, SUFFERING, THE ABSENCE OF LIGHT (NOT DARKNESS 😊)
- ALL EYES ON THE PERSON & "PLACEMENT" OF JESUS

APPRECIATE I DO,



THANK YOU

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