

2014 Consultation of African and African Diasporan Women in Religion and Theology



Nyame, biribi wo soro, ma enka yen nsa.

- God, there is something in the heavens. Let it get into our hands.

Texts of Terror, Texts of Empowerment: Reimagining Sacred Canon in Africana Womanhood

July 6-10, 2014

a joint program of

The Women in Religion and Culture Institute of the Talitha Qumi Centre
The Womanist Approaches to Religion and Culture Section of the American Academy of Religion

Trinity Theological Seminary ~ Legon, Ghana

Welcome from Consultation Host

Daughters of Anowa,

Akwaaba, Welcome to Talitha Qumi Centre and to Ghana. Welcome to Africa. Daughters of Anowa, the motherland says Awaa waa etuu – Africa embraces you. You are at Talitha Qumi Centre where and from where has emanated language that is empowering to women. From here the Women in Religion and Culture Institute has orchestrated and accompanied women's efforts towards gender justice and gender sensitivity.

From here women from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and other faith communities in Africa have gathered the courage and inspiration to face stigmas of all sorts. We have given voice to what violates the theological and faith communities, and persons, including men, and have come to join in singing, God help us live your future today. Two years ago we partnered with women of African descent in the USA to initiate an encounter we hope will endure the test of time. So, now, you are, again, at Talitha Qumi Centre. Welcome home and be at home.

Welcome, Bein Venue, Ekaabo,

Mercy Amba Oduyoye

July, 2014

Welcome from Steering Committee

Dear Conferencing Sisters:

The steering committee for the 2014 Consultation of African and African Diasporan Women in Religion and Theology welcomes you.

For more than a year, we have worked together, preparing and anticipating a meeting that provides space for continental and diasporan African women to get to know each other, while critically analyzing the social and political meaning of violence directed toward women and girls whose bodies are black. As a sequel to the 2012 consultation, during this meeting we ask “How do religious traditions, especially their texts, overtly or covertly interact with violence against women?”

While the sanctioned idea of sacred texts is written literature, our program interrupts this conception by drawing attention to speech and other embodied practices that have sacral authority within the community and social imaginary.

The consultation steering committee anticipates that this gathered community has something to share about sacred texts, about the meaning of our coming together, and about violence in our lives and in the lives of women and girls in our families and communities, and across the globe. We invite you to join in as we encounter each other and deliberate together, and as we, during the course of the meeting, construct a statement about what we learn.

We are glad you are here!

2014 Consultation Steering Committee

Esther Acolatse

Grace Sintim Adasi

Liz Alexander

Rose Mary Amenga-Etego

Meredith Coleman-Tobias

Marsha Snulligan Haney

April Johnson

Nashieka Knight

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Advisor

Evelyn Parker

Judith Roberts

Rosetta Ross

Eboni Marshall Turman

Beverly Wallace

Saturday, July 5

Arrivals

Pre-consultation seminar participants and other early travelers arrive and settle in.

Sunday, July 6

Pre-Consultation Seminar of Scholars

Mistress of Ceremony – Joy Bostic

- 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 p.m. **Arrivals**
8:30 – 8:45 a.m. **Trip for Yiri Lodge Residents to Talitha Qumi Centre**
- 8:45 – 9:00 a.m. **Welcome and Greetings** - Mercy Amba Oduyoye
Overview of the Day - MC
- 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. **Panel One**
Transgressing Boundaries, Overcoming Limits, Achieving Recognition: Moving beyond Traditional Conceptions of Continental and Diasporan African Womanhood
Panel Moderator – Rose Mary Amenga-Etego
9:05 *“You Don’t Have the Right to Keep Us Silent; We Have Reference in Matters of Religion and Law”*: *Voices of Ghanaian Muslim Women in Dawah*
Rabiatu Ammah
University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, GHANA
9:30 *Sposal Violence in Ghana: A Critique of Indigenous Gomoa Proverbs*
Agnes Quansah
University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, GHANA
9:55 *Say My Name: Failure to Name, Misnaming, and Renaming as Acts of Violence against African Women*
NaShieka Knight
Baltimore Hebrew Institute, Towson State University, Towson, Maryland, USA
- 10:20 – 11:00 a.m. Discussion of Panel of Papers
11:00 – 11:45 a.m. Seminar Discussion of Morning Findings and Conclusions
- 11:45 am. – 1:15 p.m. **Lunch**

- 1:15 – 2:20 p.m. **Panel Two**
 Social Structures, Cultural Practices, Political Insecurity, and Violence against Women and Girls (Segment One)
 Panel Moderator – Beverly Wallace
1:15 *Those Who Entrusted Their Affairs to a Woman Will not Prosper”: Its Implication in the Ghanaian Muslim Community*
 Fatimatu N-Eyare Sulemanu
 University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, GHANA
1:40 *“Now You Have Struck a Rock” Rizpah, Black Mama Trauma, and the Power of Shaming in the Face of Powers*
 Valerie Bridgeman
 Visiting Professor of Homiletics and Hebrew Bible at Methodist Theological School in Ohio and founding president and CEO of WomanPreach!
- 2:05 – 2:20 p.m. Seminar Discussion of Panel of Papers
- 2:20 – 2:50 p.m. **Break**
- 2:50 – 4:30 p.m. **Panel Three**
 Social Structures, Cultural Practices, Political Insecurity, and Violence against Women and Girls (Segment Two)
 Panel Moderator – Elizabeth J.A. Siwo-Okundi
2:50 *La violence faite aux femmes en Centrafrique à la lumière de la parole de Dieu : Deux études de cas (Violence against Women in the Central African Republic in the Light of the Word of God: Two Case Studies)*
 Antoinette Yindjara
 Theological School of Baboua, Baboua, Nana-Mambéré, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
 Translator: Florence Simpson
3:35 *Exploring Yoruba Proverbs with Feminine Lexis as a Tool for Reimagining African Womanhood*
 Helen Adekunbi Labeodan
 University of Ibadan, Ibadan, NIGERIA
- 4:00 – 4:15 Discussion of Panel of Papers
- 4:15 – 5:00 p.m. Discussion of Afternoon Findings and Conclusions
 Findings and Preparation of Seminar Report
- 5:00 p.m. **End of Day Departures**
- 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. **Consultation Opening Dinner**

Notes

Monday, July 7

Beginning the Conversation

Mistress of Ceremony – Fatimatu N-Eyare Sulemanu

7:00 – 8:00 a.m.

Breakfast

8:30 a.m.

Trip for Yiri Residents to Talitha Qumi Centre

Welcoming Performance – Abibigroma Resident Theatre, The University of Ghana

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Opening Ceremony

INVOCATION – Cecelia Armstrong

We invoke you,

Spirit of Unity.

Transform our divisions and reshape our vision.

All of creation, all living beings,

Cry in the midst of injustice and brokenness.

Spirit of Unity,

Reconcile your people.

We invoke you,

Spirit of Unity,

Heal the wounds of our history.

Remove from us

All that sustains our present divisions.

Unstop our ears to hear your call for unity.

Awaken in us the hunger for righteousness.

Teach us and lead us into all truth.

Spirit of Unity.

Reconcile us with the Triune God.

From “We Would Be One” by Mercy Amba Oduyoye

A LITANY OF PRESENCE – Helen Adekunbi Labeodan

Leader: Great One Who has no end, blessed are You and blessed is this time and place.

Thank You for Your African women gathered here.

Community: We are here being the women you created us to be! We praise you for creating us. We praise you for the gifts you give us to bring to the world.

Leader: Reconciling, Redeeming Creator, You are the nurturer of our spirits and the healer of our troubled minds and our broken spirits and bodies. You are the giver of gifts and the maker of justice.

Community: We are here. Heal our hearts, our minds, our spirits, and our bodies. Make justice in us, and make us bringers of your justice to the world.

Leader: Power of the Universe, Mother of All that Is, hear the cries of Your daughters of Anowa. Disarm and bind the forces that would do us harm. Give us voices that help to bring your peace and safety.

Community: Blazing light of the world, pour out your fire on us gathered here. Make our time together, Your time.

Leader: Light our way. Warm our hearts. Inspire our minds. Touch our tongues. Make us feel, conceive, and speak a word, Your word to each other, to the world, shared anew through us to bring life to the world and honor to You!

Adapted from the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend New Orleans, LA, 2006

A LITANY OF REMEMBERING – Yvette Assem

Leader: We remember our ancestors. As we call their names out loud, they are with us.

(Leader invites members of community to call out names of ancestors.)

Leader: We remember our ancestors, as we silently listen to them speak to us.

(A time of silence is observed.)

Leader: We especially remember *Maya Angelou, Annie Baeta-Giagge, Ruby Dee, and other departed women.* I invite you to *breathe* [breathe audibly], and *remember* [gesture].

(Community participates together in remembering gesture: tapping breast with palm of hand and saying “I remember you in my heart.”)

Community:

Those who have died have never, never left

The dead have a pact with the living

They are in the woman’s breast

They are in the wailing child

They are with us in the home

They are with us in the crowd

The dead have a pact with the living.

From Sweet Honey in the Rock “Breaths”

Leader: We remember our ancestors. We gather strength from their presence with us.

We subvert patriarchy.

We resist sexism and racism and homophobia.

We oppose violence against African-descended women and girls in all its forms.

We grow in mutuality and collaboration.

We inherit our mothers’ gardens.

Leader: We remember the African-descended women who have been raped, beaten, emotionally abused. We remember 200 Chibok girls and more taken against their wills. They are our mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, and grandmothers. They are us. In silence and aloud, we invoke their names. We draw strength and purpose from their cries.

Community: God calls us to remember and to act. We gather to prepare ourselves. We gather to prepare ourselves.

Adapted from Remembering Letty by Marjorie Procter-Smith
written for the AAR Womanist Approaches Group, 2007

A PROCLAMATION OF WOMEN’S POWER – Esther Acolatse

Leader:

I know women.

I know that women are strong.

The strength of women

Does hold the world in place;

The strength of women

Is the flexible approach to the world.

The strength of women

Is the solid hope for [religion].

Women, hang on!

Survive!

And the world will survive.

I know women.

Women of great strength and resilience

Firm in determination

Excelling in cooperation

Deficient in competition.

Announcing and denouncing,

Matching rhetoric and work at home,

With cries for peace and justice,
They're praising and giving glory to God
For self-acceptance and self-worth.
Probing and learning,
Saying, telling and retelling.

I know some women,
Women
Who are simply human,
TRULY,
TRULY HUMAN.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "I Know Some Women"

Leader: We are these women!

Community: We are these women, indeed!

9:45 – 10:00 a.m.

Greetings

Consultation Host – Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Founding Director, The Talitha Qumi Centre
Department Chair – George Ossom-Batsa, Department for the Study of Religions
The University of Ghana

Response – Rosetta E. Ross, 2014 Consultation Steering Committee

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Oral Texts Keynote Address

Segment Chair – Elizabeth Amoah

Introduction of Oral Texts Keynote

Keynote Address – *Akokobere So Nim Adekeye: Women's Interpretation of Indigenous Oral Texts*

Rose Mary Amenga-Etego

11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Break

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Oral Texts Keynote Q & A

12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Lunch

Small Group Work - Can We Be Different But Not Alienated?

Segment Chair – Marsha Foster Boyd

2:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Question One: Encountering Each Other

Separate Continental Small Groups – *(No group should be larger than three persons. Groups should ensure that everyone has an opportunity to share. Persons share as little or as much as is comfortable.)*

2:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Plenary Sharing of Insights from Small Groups

3:00 – 3:15 p.m.

Break

3:15 – 3:45 p.m.

Privilege/Disempowerment

Mixed Continents Small Groups – *(No group should be larger than three persons. Groups should ensure that everyone has an opportunity to share. Persons share as little or as much as is comfortable.)*

3:45 – 4:15 p.m.

Plenary Sharing of Insights from Small Groups

4:15 – 4:45 p.m.

Coming Together and Devotion *(Participants are encouraged to wear comfortable clothes and shoes for Tuesday's session in anticipation of dancing at the end of the day.)*

4:45 p.m.

End of Day Departures

7:30 p.m.

Evening Voluntary Activity – Discussion of *Africanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and/or *Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo *(See discussion starters.)*

Tuesday, July 8

Interrogating Sacred Writings

Mistress of Ceremonies – Angela Sims

7:00 – 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 a.m.	Trip for Yiri Residents to Talitha Qumi Centre
9:00 – 9:30 a.m.	Devotion, Greetings, Announcements
9:30 – 10:15 a.m.	Report from Pre-Conference Seminar
10:15 – 11:00 a.m.	Break and Tour of Talitha Qumi Centre
11:00 a.m. – 11:40	Written Texts Plenary Panel Presentation Written Texts and Intimate Violence against African-descended Women and Girls Segment Chair – Sylvia Owusa-Ansa <i>Judges 19 and the Virgin Daughter's Trauma: 'Small Voice' Implications for African Women and Girls</i> Elizabeth J. A. Siwo-Okundi Boston University School of Theology, Boston, Massachusetts, USA <i>When Caged Bodies Testify: African and African-descended Women's Memoirs as Sacred Texts</i> Liz S. Alexander and Melanie C. Jones University of Chicago and Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois, USA
11:40 – 12:00 p.m.	Written Texts Panel Q&A
12:00 – 1:30 p.m.	Lunch
	Small Group Work: Segment Chair – Andrea Walker
1:30 – 2:15 p.m.	Solidarity Mixed Continents Small Groups – <i>(No group should be larger than three persons. Groups should ensure that everyone has an opportunity to share. Persons share as little or as much as is comfortable.)</i>
2:15 – 3:00 p.m.	Plenary Sharing of Insights from Small Groups
3:00 – 3:15 p.m.	Break
3:15 – 4:15 p.m.	Report of Drafting Committee and Feedback on Conference Statement
4:15 – 5:15 p.m.	Performance by Abibigroma Resident Theatre, The University of Ghana, and Community Dancing
5:15 p.m.	Devotion and End of Day Departures
7:30 p.m.	Evening Voluntary Activity – Discussion of <i>Africanah</i> by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi and/or <i>Dilemma of a Ghost</i> by Ama Ata Aidoo <i>(See discussion starters.)</i>

Wednesday, July 9

Consultation Outing

Sites of Final Departure from Africa/Transition into Enslavement

6:30 a.m. **Gather at Yiri Lodge for Pick-up to Travel to Cape Coast Castles**

7:00 a.m. **Busses Leave for Cape Coast Castles**
Participants will purchase their own lunch during meeting outing.

7:30 p.m. **Evening Voluntary Activity** – Discussion of *Africanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi and/or *Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo *(See discussion starters.)*

Notes

Thursday, July 10

Black Female Bodies as Sacred Texts

Mistress of Ceremonies – Rabiātu Ammah

7:00 – 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 a.m.	Trip for Yiri Residents to Talitha Qumi Centre
9:00 – 9:15 a.m.	Devotion, Greetings, Announcements
9:15 - 10:15 a.m.	Community Discussion Post-Outing
10:15 – 10:45 a.m.	Break
10:45 – 11:30 a.m.	Report of Drafting Committee and Feedback on Report
11:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.	Black Female Bodies as Sacred Texts Segment Chair – Laurie Garrett-Cobbina <i>Boko Haram and the Chibok Girls' Kidnapping</i> Helen Adekunbi Labeodan and Ruth Oluwakemi Oke
12:30 – 1:00 p.m.	General Questions/Community Discussion in Plenary
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch
2:00 – 2:45 p.m.	Small Group Breakouts - Dreaming Together: What have we learned? Where do we go from here? <i>(Groups of three persons gather in conversation.)</i>
	Segment Chair – Grace Sintim Adasi
2:45 - 3:15 p.m.	Community Discussion in Plenary – Harvesting from Small Groups
3:15 – 3:30 p.m.	Break
3:30 – 4:30 p.m.	Conference Statement <i>(Final Report of Drafting Committee)</i>
4:30 – 4:40 p.m.	Break
4:40 – 5:45 p.m.	Closing Ceremony
5:30	End of Day Departures
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Closing Dinner

Friday-Saturday, July 11-12

Departures/Transitions

Announcements and Notices

Statement of Commitment to Safety and Well-being

The Consultation of African and African Diasporan Women in Religion and Theology supports the physical and emotional well-being of all persons. Focus of its work on preventing violence against African descended women and girls reflects the Consultation's commitment to education, advocacy, and activism aimed at overcoming threats against and violations of the emotional, physical, and sexual safety of all persons, especially continental and diasporan African women and girls. Two counselors are available if you wish to process consultation content.

Statement on Participation of Minors

Because of the meeting's focus on violence against continental and diasporan African women and girls, subject matter discussed during the 2014 Consultation of African and African Diasporan Women in Religion and Theology sometimes will be explicit. Participants who are younger than 18 years of age must have written consent of and be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Tailored Clothing and Jewelry: A tailor is available with fabrics for persons wishing to be measured and order custom clothing during the consultation. A vendor also will be available to sell jewelry.

Tour of Talitha Qumi Centre: The Tuesday morning break will include a tour of the Talitha Qumi Centre.

Tuesday Dancing: Participants are encouraged to dress appropriately on Tuesday in anticipation of community dancing at the end of the day.

Consultation Statement Drafting Committee: The committee members are Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Liz Alexander, Agnes Quansah, Evelyn Parker. The consultation drafting committee will gather at breaks, during meals, and in the evenings to hash through ideas and prepare a conference statement. The statement will take account of theological issues as well as social and political realities. The committee will report on its progress during the plenary sessions Tuesday afternoon and Thursday morning, and will present a completed statement draft on Thursday afternoon. The statement need not be more than one page, though it is fine if the committee prepares a longer statement. Consultation participants may participate in drafting the statement by speaking with members of the committee, or by writing ideas and/or sentences on the newsprint labeled for this purpose.

Small Group Work - Can We Be Different But not Alienated? A Discussion Process for Engaging Each Other: On Monday and Tuesday afternoons, we will work in small groups to enhance our encounter of each other. Small groups of three persons each will gather to respond to three rounds of questions. After each round, the plenary will share and receive insights from small group. A recorder will write down insights on newsprint (which will be pasted on the wall throughout the meeting). Group members should ensure that every person has an opportunity to share in response to each question. For the first round of questions, groups will meet by continent. For rounds two and three, groups will be mixed. Persons should feel free to share as little or as much as they are comfortable sharing. Participants are encouraged to write down responses after the session or meeting ends. Written memories or responses after the meeting ends should be sent to ghanaconference2014@gmail.com by July 15?

Wednesday Tour of Elmina Castles: On Wednesday we will visit the castles of enslavement at Elmina in the Cape Coast area. The trip is approximately a three-hour drive. We will leave from Yiri Lodge at 7:00 a.m. Please confirm your participation in the trip by signing the Castle Tour Roster. Seating is limited. Admission to the castles is included in your registration fee. Each person is responsible for her own lunch. We have arranged for a buffet meal at Mabel's Table Restaurant at Cape Coast (including grilled fish, barbecued chicken, jolof rice, plain rice or vegetable rice, palava sauce/spanish sauce, boiled yam or sauteed potatoes, a cooked vegetable medley, lettuce and tomato salad, sliced fruit/melon and pineapple, one soft drink or water. The cost of the meal is 40 GHc, approximately \$13.50). Food allergies and preferences have been shared with the restaurant.

Evening Book Discussions: To engender conversation and relationship, consultation participants will have an opportunity to join small groups to discuss books we are reading together for the meeting, *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the play *Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo. Discussion groups begin Monday evening. One or two copies of the books are available for borrowing during the meeting. Ideally, group composition will be balanced between continental and diasporan women. Before each discussion begins, groups should take time for everyone to introduce herself. A discussion leader may use starter questions identified below, or another method to get the conversation going. *Participants are encouraged to organize themselves in groups of four or five and to find a space for discussion.*

Some discussion starters for *Americanah*: *(Groups are encouraged to use questions members bring of discussion.)*

Which characters did you like most? Why? Which characters did you like least? Why? What are similarities and differences of the experiences of Ifemelu and other diasporan women included in the book? What are similarities and differences of the experiences of Ifemelu and other African women included in the book?

Are Ifemelu's blog posts about race believable? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Is Dike African? Are Nicholas and Ojugo's children Nna and Nne African? If yes, why? If no, why not?

What are some reasons for or sources of the tension between Ifemelu and Blaine's sister Shan?

What are similarities and differences in aspects of continental and diasporan women's identities?

What do you think about Adichie including a description of how to care for natural hair?

Do the religious iterations and practices Ifemelu saw in her mother resonate with anything in your knowledge or experience? If yes, explain.

The enterprise of sex trafficking of young women and girls is a global phenomenon that affects African-descended women disproportionately? Does the experience that precipitated Ifemelu's silence toward Obinze relate to the issue of sex trafficking? If yes, explain how. If no, explain why not.

How is Ifemelu's experience similar to or different from what may happen to other African-descended women in Africa, Europe, South America, Asia, Oceania, North America?

Some discussion starters for *Dilemma of a Ghost*: *(Groups are encouraged to use questions members bring of discussion.)*

Which characters did you like most? Why? Which characters did you like least? Why? What are similarities and differences of Eulalie's experiences with her in-laws and experiences you have had or have knowledge of?

Why does Eulalie appear to be having such a difficult time?

Where does collaboration of women across differences occur in the play?

Where does collaboration of women occur in this story?

How does Ato contribute to the difficulty Eulalie's experiences?

A certain "at homeness" and yet homelessness plagues both the African (Ato) and the African American (Eulalie) as they navigate the interstitial space between tradition and western education carved by colonialism. How did that space affect their relationship then and how does it continue to affect the ongoing relationships of African and African Americans for good or bad?

Can the issue of double identity/double consciousness ever be resolved? If so how? How can education be both the bane and blessing in this process? Is this the dilemma of the ghost at the junction? Does our gathering together aid the ghost at the junction in making up its mind?

Conference Presenters

Liz S. Alexander is a writer and womanist practitioner. She is currently a dual degree student, pursuing a Master of Religious Leadership with a concentration in Social Transformation at the Chicago Theological Seminary School as well as a Masters of Social Work with a focus on Trauma and Violence at the University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration.

Rose Mary Amenga-Etego is a Senior Lecturer in the Department for the Study of Religions. She joined the department as a Lecturer in 2003 and received a Ph.D in Study of Religions from School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, Scotland in 2008. She served as Gender and Development Coordinator for the Diocesan Development Office of the Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocese of the Catholic of Ghana. Her research interests include African indigenous religion and development, gender issues in religion and culture, theoretical and methodological issues in African Indigenous Religions, and religio-cultural identity constructions in cross-cultural marriages.

Rabiatu Ammah was appointed a Lecturer in the Department for the Study of Religions in 1989 after receiving a Ph.D from University of Birmingham. She is presently a Senior Lecturer in the department, an external examiner in the University of Cape Coast and Admissions Board representative of University of Ghana to the Islamic University College, Ghana. Rabiatu was also a Visiting Lecturer between January 1999 and June 1999 at the invitation of the United Church of Christ and Global Ministries to give lectures on Islam and Christians-Muslim Relations at Lancaster Theological Seminary – Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Andover Newton Theological Seminary – Boston, Massachusetts, Hartford Theological Seminary Hartford Connecticut, Bangor Theological Seminary – Bangor, Pacific School of Religions – Berkeley California, Lexington Theological Seminary – Kentucky, Kentucky, Christian Theological Seminary – Indianapolis, Indiana, Chicago Theological Seminary – Chicago, Illinois, Eden Theological Seminary – St. Louis and Missouri Tulsa Theological College – Tulsa, Oklahoma. Between 2003 and 2005, she spent her sabbatical leave at Islamic University College, Ghana, Senior Lecturer – Department of Religious Studies and was also a Visiting Lecturer between January 2005 and June 2005 at Birmingham University, UK.

Valerie Bridgeman is Visiting Professor of Homiletics and Hebrew Bible at Methodist Theological School in Ohio and founding president and CEO of WomanPreach! Inc., a non-profit organization committed to helping preachers come to full prophetic voice. She is also a poet.

Celesting Israimen is Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Director, University Consultancy services, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Edo State, Nigeria.

Melanie C. Jones is a native of the “Windy City” Chicago and is a young woman advocating for social transformation in the Church, classroom, and global community. A recent MDiv graduate, Melanie is currently a second year PhD student at Chicago Theological Seminary pursuing a degree in Theology, Ethics, and Human Sciences with a concentration in Black Faith and Life. Her doctoral research explores the theological and ethical complexity of Black women’s body politics utilizing womanist thought, literary criticism, and historiography.

NaShieka Knight is an Associate Minister at Greater St. John Church and the founder of Zelophehad's Daughters, Inc, a mentoring organization for teen girls. She has participated in humanitarian, theological, missionary, and women's empowerment work in Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Guyana, Ghana, and Senegal and traveled to Jordan and Israel/Palestine with the National Council of Churches to observe the effects of conflict in the region on women, children, and families. She has led non-profit organizations committed to female mentorship and creating economic opportunity for low-income persons in the U.S. and Africa. NaShieka has also engaged in interfaith dialogue across the world. She is a graduate of the University of Evansville and Howard University School of Divinity. She recently completed the Master of Arts in Jewish Studies (Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations/Hebrew Bible) program at Towson State University where she researched midwives as religious specialists in ancient Israel. NaShieka was licensed to preach in June 1995 and ordained in January 2003.

Helen Adekunbi Labeodan is a lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan. She also is the new General Coordinator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

Bolatito Asiata Lanre-Abass is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. I teach Ethics, Epistemology and contemporary Issues in Philosophy. I have published both locally and Internationally and I have also attended several conferences.

Ruth O. Oke holds the doctorate degree of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria. She is a lecturer at the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Nigeria, where she is currently the acting head of the Christian Religious Studies Department. She is a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Her interest is in Biblical Studies and Gender issues.

Agnes Quansah is a student at the University of Ghana and plans to become a teacher in religious studies and a gender advocate and mentor for young women. She did national service as a teacher in the Northern part of Ghana (Chereponi), where most young people would decline a posting. In that post she observed that most of the young people lacked mentorship, an observation that fuels her desire to teach at the tertiary level and to impact the lives of the rural people. In 2013, she won an award from the International Association of Black Religions and Spiritualities (IABRS) to go on a youth exchange program which showed that though young people from the Global South live in different cultures and countries, but face common challenges such as unemployment and poverty. She enjoys reading, writing, counseling and singing.

Florence Simpson is a French teacher and pastor in the Adenta District of the Presbyterian Church in Ghana. She is also a visiting pastor in East Legon at Faith Presbyterian Church. She is a mother of four children.

Elizabeth J. A. Siwo-Okundi, MDiv, ThM, is from Kenya. Her commitment to social justice is deeply influenced by the faithful and informed activism of her family. She is a preacher who is a passionate advocate for the “small voice.” Siwo-Okundi has earned degrees in Black Studies, African Studies, divinity, and theology. Her works have been published in several academic journals and books including the 3-volume *Preaching God's Transforming Justice: A Lectionary Commentary* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2011, 2012, and 2013). Siwo-Okundi has preached in numerous settings, served as a pastor, and is a PhD candidate in Practical Theology and Homiletics.

Fatimatu N-Eyare Sulemanu is a PhD Student of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria and a Tutor at the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon. Her research interests include Gender issues in Islam, violence against women, and Muslim women and leadership.

Antoinette Yindjara-Beanzue – *Qui est Antoinette? On m'appelle Antoinette Yindjara mariee , J' ai huit enfants a ma charge mais quatre enfants que nous avons mis au monde, je suis grand de deux jolies petites filles, Je suis Pasteur de l'EELRCA, deuxieme femme Pasteur de mon eglise, En ce qui concerne mes etudes, j' ai fait une annee de sociologie a l'Universite, je suis docteur en theologie specialite theologie pratique, j'ai recu une formation en communication, developpement sanctionnees par des attestations. Professeur a l'Ecole de theologie de Baboua et professeur visiteur a la faculte de theologie Evangelique de Bangui depuis deux ans. Voila un peu ce que je peux dire sur moi.* (Who is Antoinette? My name is Antoinette Yindjara. I am married and am responsible for eight children but only four of which we have brought into the world. I am the grandmother of two pretty little girls. I am pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic, the second woman pastor in my church. As for my studies, I completed a year of sociology at the university and completed a Doctorate in theology with a specialty in Practical Theology. I have received training in communication and received various commendations. For the past two years I have served as professor at the Theological School of Baboua and visiting professor at the Evangelical Theological School in Bangui, Central African Republic.)

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