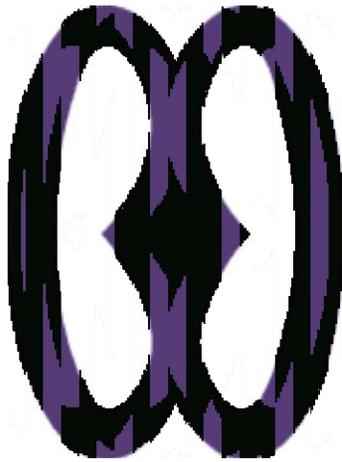


African and African Diasporic Women in Religion and Theology Conference



Nyame Biribi Wo Soro - God, there is something in the heavens.

*Theme - Hope is as Strong as a Woman's Arm:
Mobilizing Amidst Violence Against Women and Girls
in Africa and Its Diaspora*

July 8-14, 2012
Talitha Qumi Centre
Trinity Theological Seminary,
Legon, Ghana

Welcome from Mercy Oduyoye

Daughters of Anowa,

Akwaaba, Welcome to Talitha Qumi Centre and to Ghana. Welcome to Africa. Daughters of Anowah, 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 Institute of Women in Religion and Culture has orchestrated and accompanied women's efforts towards gender justice and gender sensitivity.

From here women from the Circle 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.

Welcome, bein venue, Ekaabo,

Mercy Oduyoye

Letter from Conference Coordinators

Dear Conferencing Sisters:

The idea for this gathering came about during spring 2008, when Evelyn L. Parker (as co-chair of the steering committee for the American Academy of Religion's Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Group) posed this question to the Group: "What programs or emphasis might we consider for the future?"

The roots of this gathering are much deeper, going back to 1989 and earlier, as you will read in the letters of greeting included in this program. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Brigilia Bam, Musimbi Kanyoro (in Africa), Katie G. Cannon, and Jacquelyn Grant (in the United States) are among the earliest African-descended women to make their voices heard within corridors of religion and theology, and outside those corridors as they engaged issues of the status of women in society. When they began to encounter each other – in Christian denominational meetings, in programs of the World Council of Churches, and in other international contexts – they amplified each other's voices. Several of them helped shape the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), including "irrupting" within EATWOT to develop a women's agenda. In all of their work, these women helped shape what was called a liberation agenda in religion and theology, and made room for generations of women after them to serve in a variety of religious contexts, construct theology, and engage in shaping what it means to study African, African-diasporan, and African-derived traditions within the history of religions. They also were intentional in bringing women with them. Musimbi Kanyoro notes this practice by Mercy Oduyoye in her letter. Many other women can make a similar claim about Auntie Mercy as well as the others.

When Evelyn Parker requested ideas for future Womanist program emphases, Rosetta Ross suggested that the Womanist Consultation engage African women scholars. This captured Evelyn Parker's imagination, and she spoke about it with Mercy Oduyoye, who was visiting in the United States. Auntie Mercy responded, poetically, "At last, it is going to happen."

The vision for this meeting draws on the depth referenced in Auntie Mercy's

“At last.” That generation of women who made space in religion and theology were making space for this meeting. In recommending Rose Mary Amenga-Etego (West African coordinator for the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians) to work on the program committee, Auntie Mercy made a connection back to the Circle’s founding in 1989 – where African diasporan women were present.

Although we have been separated from each other, the coordinating committee hopes this very intentional gathering of African and African Diasporic Women in Religion and Theology, “at last,” will encourage our collaborative work for African-descended women and African-descended people, and remind us always to enlarge the circle to make room for others.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye
Rose Mary Amenga-Etego
Evelyn L. Parker
Rosetta E. Ross

Letters of Greeting to Conferees

Brigilia Bam

20 June 2012

Dear Friends,

I greet you all who are gathered at the African Diaspora women's conference and am pleased that you are addressing one of the crises that are facing humanity, the issue of violence against women and girls particularly in Africa and its diaspora.

We hope the conference will achieve its objective to build and strengthen collaborations amongst you conferees as well as honour early relationships of those women who had the vision to initiate dialogue, to research, to write and to create an international platform for women advocacy. I am delighted that there is now a young generation of women, who are seeking to continue, sustain and ensure that these critical issues facing women are looked into for generations to come and the voice of the many voiceless women is always heard.

There has been awareness globally on women's repression and this awareness brought about a realization of our humanity. It has also made women acknowledge their own identity that they too are made in God's precious image and should not succumb to patriarchy.

This theme you are addressing is a global pandemic. This pandemic disables and destroys the dignity of the women. The women are viewed as property and remain subservient to men and also unfortunately subservient to other women. The violence leaves deep emotional scars on the victim and has a long term negative impact on the victim's behaviour, physical health, economic and social standing. Violence against women has far reaching consequences in families and communities and studies reveal that the negative impact is deeply felt by children who have been witnesses to this violence. In most cases this violence occurs within intimate relationships either perpetrated by husbands or partners to the women. These children may later manifest long-term negative emotional, social and psychological difficulties.

It is important to highlight that though violence is commonly associated with physical violence, it manifests in various other forms, e.g. sexual abuse, psychological and emotional abuse, as well as financial abuse. It occurs everywhere, in our homes, workplaces and even churches.

On behalf of the women who led African and African Diaspora women in developing relationship as theologians and religious leaders, I trust you will depart from this conference with a renewed sense of commitment to stand united to prevent violence against women and girls. We must create an environment which ensures that women are empowered and are able to speak freely about this widespread violation of their human rights. Women must continue to be empowered with self-help mechanisms. Legal aids and healing and support centers must be far more widespread especially in rural environments.

I wish you all the best in the conference.

God bless you.

Yours Sincerely,

Brigalia Bam

Southern African Development Coordination Conference Electoral
Commission Forum

Former Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission
Secretary-General, South African Council of Churches, 1988 - 1997

Musimbi Kanyoro

June 10, 2012

Dear Circle Friends,

On the occasion of your meeting in Accra, I send you warm regards, happy thoughts and success in all you do. I am so proud to be a Circle member. I am one of the people who was invited by our sister Mercy Amba Oduyoye to commit to make the circle happen. Her hospitality to me and other women who joined her vision enabled us to be the midwives to the birthing of the Circle. I was a Circle coordinator for 5 years during which we held a large Pan African meeting in Addis Ababa. I have stayed connected to sister Mercy and my interest in the affairs of the Circle will not waiver. I am so proud of the Center that Mercy has built in Accra, and I hope those of you that are attending the conference should take time to honor Mercy for extraordinary leadership which has been a torch for all of us women of Africa. I wanted to be present with you for this meeting, but my job responsibilities did not coincide with the time of the conference. I look to a future when I will be able to be with you all in person.

Best wishes,

Musimbi Kanyoro
President and CEO
Global Fund for Women

Katie G. Cannon

June 7, 2012

Dear Participants in the 2012 African and African Diasporic Women in Religion and Theology Conference:

In September 1989 a festive cloud of women gathered at Trinity College in Accra, Ghana for the inaugural meeting of The Circle of African Women Theologians. Amid the celebrating, we acted as an integrated, intercontinental whole. We lifted up the hard work of African women activists and religious organizations committed to ending subjugation and exploitation. We articulated ambitious goals for extending The Circle's reach throughout the continent of Africa and around the world. Thanks to an invitation from Dr. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, I was truly blessed to be present as one among many in 1989.

Therefore, with this vibrant legacy behind us, I greet you this July in the context of 23 years of significant prophetic witness in the field of women and religion. Your 2012 conference bridges the past with the work of African and African Diasporic women wrestling against socialized norms of religious communities that require women to be faithful servants by conforming to bondage in culture and submission in church.

Being as clear as possible about the impact of theological concepts and symbol systems in our past, present, and future, is essential to living responsibly. In other words, it is virtually impossible to discuss Black women's struggles for freedom apart from the corporeal sacredness in our communal religious formation. Liberation is the aperture of awareness through which women offer new horizons of justice-making possibilities. Together, we are responsible for passing on essential teachings regarding religious rituals and folk-talk of early fore-sisters.

AKWAABA,
The Rev. Katie G. Cannon
Professor of Christian Social Ethics

Jacquelyn Grant

The Interdenominational Theological Center
700 Martin Luther King Dr.
Atlanta, Georgia 30314-4143

June 25, 2012

To the African and African Diasporic Women in Accra:

The year was 1977; the context was the meeting of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) in Accra, Ghana. This was an emerging body, having met first in 1974 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The EATWOT methodology involves engaging dialogue among third world peoples beginning with analyses – social, political, economic, cultural, religious – empowering historically oppressed peoples to take seriously their own contexts. Represented were people from Africa, Asia, North America, South America and other places.

One of the workshops listed on the program was “The African Woman and Feminism.” I was somewhat surprised at the use of the word feminism...I attended this two-hour workshop. The first 45 minutes of the workshop were spent challenging the use of the word “feminism.” Responding to the negative media representations of feminism, women differentiated themselves from western white feminism. Among the many concerns were: African women are not anti-family; African women do not hate African men; and therefore, we are not against men — we love our men. After lengthy discussions along these lines, the decision was to change the title of the workshop to something like, “The African Woman vis-à-vis the African Church and Theology.” For balance of the time African women identified their issues: equality in the church and larger society; issues related to family life, including adequate and safe child care especially for the professional African women; self-naming and self-definition; recognition of women’s leadership, etc. Interestingly, they were where many of us were at that time—I’m not a feminist but...(of course always, what followed could be seen as feminist issues, but they were **our** issues).

As we interfaced in subsequent meetings of EATWOT and other places, such as the World Council of Churches (Faith and Order Commission, the Commission on World Missions and Evangelism), and the All Africa

Council of Churches, African Women's voices, as other women's voices, grew stronger and stronger.

At an early, if not the first meeting of The Circle, African women demonstrated their capacity to do both external and internal criticism. In one of the workshops, the women wrestled with the issues between professional African women and their household workers, especially female workers. They were willing to speak candidly about their complicity in women's problems regarding this issue. It is therefore commendable that those whose reality can be described as multi-jeopardous are able to challenge the larger evil, while at the same time committing themselves to eliminating discriminatory practices where even women have become perpetrators. Clearly, women are willing and able to deal with real hard questions.

The work of the women in The Circle of Women Theologians has been commendable. Women have been faithful in their challenging of patriarchy, neo-colonialism, racism, classism and other forms of injustice.

Over the years The Circle has grown in numbers and in strength...seeking the empowerment of women on all fronts--social, economic, religious, cultural and political.

This is a timely gathering — **African and African Diasporic Women in Religion and Theology Conference**. The theme is an urgent one: *Hope is as Strong as a Woman's Arms: Mobilizing Amidst Violence against Women and Girls in Africa and its Diaspora*. The Circle has not shunned difficult issues in the past; this theme indicates a continuation in this journey toward liberation.

God's blessings in your time together,

Jacquelyn Grant, Ph.D.
Callaway Professor of Systematic Theology
Director of Black Women in Church and Society
Interdenominational Theological Society
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Sunday, July 8

Day of Arrival

Participants Arrive and Settle-In

- 10:00 - 22:00 **Voluntary Activities/Informal Gathering/Sharing**
- 18:00 **Dinner** (*To accommodate weariness many participants will have after travel, seating is informal with no program.*)
- 20:00 **Voluntary Activities**
- 22:00 **Embodied Prayer and Yoga**
Joy Bostic

Monday, July 9

Theme:

Who Are We? From Where Do We Come?

8:00 - 9:00 **Breakfast**

9:00 - 9:15 **Trip for Yiri Residents to Talitha Qumi Centre
Registration at Talitha Qumi Center**

9:15 - 9:25 **Small Group Formation** (*See instructions on page 31.*)

Session One - Conference Opening

Mistress of Ceremony: Helen Adekunbi Labeodan

9:25 - 10:55 **Opening Ritual**

Leaders: Yatta Roslyn Young, Aisha Abdul-kadr, Eboni
Marshall Turman

INVOCATION

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 sustain 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

Leader: Creating God, 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! 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 broken bodies. You are the giver of gifts and the maker of justice.

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. To 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 glory to You!

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

WE REMEMBER THE ANCESTORS

Reader: Rabiata Ammah

A Reading from Islam

Every soul shall have

A taste of death:

And only on the Day

Of Judgement shall you

Be paid your full recompense.

Only [one] who is saved

Far and from the Fire

And admitted to the Garden

Will have attained

The object (of Life):

For the life of this world

Is but goods and chattels

Of deception.

The Holy Qur'an 3:185

“Wherever ye are,
Death will find you out,
Even if ye are in towers
Built strong and high!”

The Holy Qur'an 4:78

Music

“Breaths”

Listen more often, to things than to beings.

Listen more often, things than to beings.

‘Tis the ancestors words, when the fire’s voice is heard

‘Tis the ancestors words, in the voice of the water

Those who have died, have never, never left

The Dead are not under the earth.

They are in the rusting trees, they are in the groaning woods.

They are in the crying grass, they are in the moaning rocks.

The dead are not under the earth.

So listen more often, to things than to beings.

Listen more often, things than to beings.

‘Tis the ancestors words, when the fire’s voice is heard.

‘Tis the ancestors words, in the voice of the water.

Those who have died, have never never left.

The dead have a pact with the living.

They are in the woman’s birth, they are in the waiting child.

They are with us in tho home, they are with us in the crowd.

The dead have a pact with the living.

So listen more often, to things than to beings.

Listen more often, things than to beings.

‘Tis the ancestors words, when the fire’s voice is heard.

‘Tis the ancestors words, in the voice of the water.

Listen more often, to things than to beings.

Listen more often, things than to beings.

‘Tis the ancestors words, when the fire’s voice is heard

‘Tis the ancestors words, in the voice of the water

Performed by Sweet Honey in the Rock

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

with us. (*Members of the community call out the 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 our departed sister and comrade Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. 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."*)

Leader: Remember Ada Maria: “[In Cuba] I felt the same as I feel in the United States: a foreigner. I am caught between two worlds, neither of which is fully mine, both of which are partially mine.”

“I was born a feminist on Thanksgiving weekend, 1975, when over one thousand Roman Catholic women met to insist on the right of women to be ordained to a renewed priestly ministry in our church.”

“The struggle against sexism in the Roman Catholic Church has been the school where I have learned about feminism, as well as the main arena in which I have carried out my struggle for liberation....”

“Anglo feminists need to understand that as long as they refuse to recognize that power is an intrinsic element of their racism/ethnic prejudice, they will continue to do violence to feminism. As a liberative praxis, feminism has to do with radically changing the patriarchal understandings of power, which are operative even in the feminist movement. Anglo feminists need to remember that, in order to undo patriarchy, we must create societies in which people can be self-defining and self-determining. To achieve that, power has to be transformed and shared.”

“True sharing of power leads to mutuality... Mutuality asks us to give serious consideration to what the other is saying, not only to respect it but to be willing to accept it as good for all.”

Leader:

Remember “A Hispanic Garden in a Foreign Land”

Remember: “Solidarity: Love of Neighbor in the 1980s”

Remember: “Mujeristas: A Name of Our Own”

Remember: “Hispanic Women in the Roman Catholic Church”

Remember: “Creating a Liberating Culture, Latinas’ Subversive Narratives”

Leader: Remember Ada Maria: “Solidarity must replace charity as the appropriate Christian behavior – ethical behavior – in our society today. ...

Charity, the word we have used most often when talking about love of neighbor, has been implemented mainly by giving of what we have in abundance, a one-sided affair. ... I do believe ... that giving is an ethical behavior today only if it is understood and carried out within the context of solidarity. ... Solidarity has to do with understanding the interconnections among issues and the cohesiveness that needs to exist among the communities of struggle. ... Solidarity moves away from the false notion of disinterest, of doing for others in an altruistic fashion. Instead it is grounded in ‘common responsibilities and interests,’ which necessarily arouse shared feelings and lead to joint action. The true meaning of solidarity can be best understood if it is broken down into its two main interdependent elements: mutuality and praxis.”

Leader:

Remember: *En La Lucha/In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*

Remember: *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*

Remember: *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the 21st Century*

Remember Ada Maria

(A tree is planted in memory of Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz.)

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.

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

We subvert patriarchy.

We resist sexism and racism.

We grow in mutuality and collaboration.

We inherit our mothers’ gardens.

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

WE COMMIT TO OUR WORK TOGETHER

Reader: Elizabeth Amoah

A Reading from African Traditional Religions

A Reading from Christianity

So Tamar took the cakes she made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, “Come, lie with me, my sister.” She answered him, “No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel: do not do anything so vile! As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.” But he would not listen to her, and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

The Bible 2 Samuel 13:10b-14 (NRSV)

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdelene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

The Bible, Mark 16:1-2 (NRSV)

Leader: We remember the African-descended women who have been raped, beaten, emotionally abused. They are our mothers, sisters, aunties, and grandmothers. They are us. In silence and aloud, we invoke their names. We draw strength and purpose from their cries. *(The community names – silently OR aloud – African-descended women who have experienced violence.)*

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

Community: We gather to prepare ourselves.

Music “Siyahamba”/ “Marching in the Light of God” Melanie Harris, song-leader

Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’,	“We Are Marching in the Light of God”
Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’,	We are marching in the light of God,
Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’,	We are marching in the light of God,
Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwen-	We are marching in the light of God,
Khanyen’ kwenkhos’,	We are marching in the light of,
Siyahamba, hamba,	The light of God,
Siyahamba, hamba,	We are marching, marching,
Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwen-	We are marching, marching,
Khanyen’ kwenkhos’.	We are marching in the light of,
Siyahamba, hamba,	The light of God,
Siyahamba, hamba,	We are marching, marching,
Siyahamb’ ekukhanyen’ kwenkhos’.	We are marching, marching,
	We are marching in the light of God.
	South African Victory Song

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, "Know Some Women"

Leader: We are these women!

Community: We are these women, indeed!

(After ritual, the gathered community returns to the meeting room inside.)

- 9:55 - 10:25 **Who Are We? From Where Do We Come? Who Are Our People?**
(To introduce ourselves to each other, we will spend time listening to each person answer the following: (1) What is my name? (2) From where did I come? (3) What is/are the name(s) of family member(s) – alive or deceased – who I am remembering or thinking of as I come to participate in this meeting. After each person completes her introduction, the community will respond with “Asbe!”)
- 10:25 - 10:40 **Greetings**
 Greeting from President of Trinity Theological College
 Greeting from Domestic Violence Unit of the Police Service
 Greeting from Ghana Ministry of Women and Children’s Services
- 10:40 – 10:50 **Call to Purpose/Action**
 Evelyn L. Parker
 Rose Mary Amenga-Etego
 Fatima Sulemanu
 Rosetta E. Ross
- 10:50 - 11:05 **Break**
- 11:05 - 12:30 **Opening Keynote Address**
 Introduction of Segment Chair:
 Joyce Boham
 Chair: Nana Amba Eyiaba
 Krontihemaa of the Oguaa Traditional Area
- Keynote Address - “There Is Something in the Heavens:
 Mobilizing Amidst Violence against Women and Girls in
 Africa and Its Diaspora”
 Mercy Amba Oduyoye
- Conversation/Q&A led by Chair Eyaba
- 12:30-14:00 **Lunch/Break**

Session Two - Day One Small Group Processing

Mistress of Ceremony: Angela Denise Sims

- 14:00-15:00 **Small Group Convening**
(Group facilitator/ convener should ask each member to complete the following sentence: "I heard _____ say _____. This connects with my concern about _____." After each member has spoken convener facilitates the group's continuing discussion. Each small group should identify a scribe to compose a listing of five important things they heard during session one, and a listing of particular concerns participants – one per participant – bring to the conference. Lists should be written on one page and handed in to MC.)
- 15:00-15:30 **Break**
- 15:30-16:30 **Small Group Action Planning**
(Group conversation continues, discussing action plans, specifically, how to get most from the conference. A potential guiding question is "How can time we spend together enrich our local work?" Small groups formulate responses to share in plenary. Responses should be more/ other than talking or reading. Total group presentation to plenary, including participant concerns and action plans, should not exceed five minutes.)
- 16:30 - 17:30 **Small Group Reports to Plenary** *(Five minutes for each group.)*
- 17:30 - 17:35 **Closing Reflection, Summary of First Day**
- 17:45 - 17:55 **Logistical Instructions, Announcements, Check-In on Meeting Processes, Reminder to All to Write Ideas on "Idea Board," Reminder to All to Review Forum Theater Technique for Tuesday**
- 17:55 - 18:00 **Coordinators Gather**
- 18:00 - 18:15 **Return Trip for Residents of Yiri Lodge**
- 18:15 **Dinner/Free Time**

Tuesday, July 10

Theme: Hope in Times of Hopelessness

- 5:30 - 7:30 **“Hope March”**
(To make our presence known in the community, conferees will march with placards and singing, leaving Yiri lodge, going through the main campus, into the township and then return to Yiri lodge.)
- 8:00-9:00 **Breakfast**
- 9:00-9:15 **Trip for Yiri Residents to Talitha Qumi Centre**
- 9:15 - 9:25 **Small Group Formation** *(See instructions on page 31.)*

Session Three - Hope and Resources for Hope

Mistress of Ceremony: Evelyn Ahin Sam

- 9:25-10:45 **Morning Plenary - Sources and Resources**
Chair: Celestina Isiramen
- Morning Plenary Address - “Rethinking Indigenous Africana Sources of Womanist-Feminist Activisms in the 21st Century”
Dianne Diakité
- Conversation/Q&A led by Chair Isiramen
- 10:45-11:00 **Cocoa Break**
- 11:00-12:30 **Mid-Morning Group Discussion**
(Convener should lead group in responding to the following: What does “indigenous” mean from my location? What indigenous practices and sources do we regularly engage that can bring hope? What are stumbling blocks to accessing and using indigenous sources? Each group should

identify a scribe to write on newsprint and post indigenous sources.)

12:30-14:00 **Lunch/Break**

Session Four - Case Studies and Responses

Mistress of Ceremony: Beverly Wallace

14:00-15:45 **Case Studies of Violence against Women and Girls**

Nasiba Tahir - Violence against Women
Sylvia Owusu-Ansah - Girl/Child Trafficking
Diana Abbey Mensah - *Trokosi*

15:45-16:00 **Cocoa Break**

16:00-17:00 **Evening Group Discussions of Case Studies**

(MC will assign each group a case. Groups should use the forum theater technique – see page 31 – to act out cases AND to act out a strategy that includes use of indigenous resources to respond to the problem. Groups will repeat acting out the case and response to the case in plenary. Each group's presentation should not exceed six minutes.)

17:00 -17:45 **Small Groups Share Strategies with Plenary**

Joker/Convener: Evelyn Parker
(Each group is limited to six minutes.)

17:45 - 17:50 **Closing Reflection/Summary of Second Day**

Stephanie Mitchem

17:50 - 18:00 **Logistical Instructions, Announcements, Check-In on Meeting Processes, Reminder to All to Write Ideas on "Idea Board"** *(Recruit volunteers to develop/lead closing ceremony.)*

18:00 - 18:05 **Coordinators Gather**

18:05 - 18:20 **Return Trip for Residents of Yiri Lodge**

18:20 **Dinner/Free Time**

Wednesday, July 11

Theme: Remembering Our Past

6:30 **Gather at Yiri Lodge for Pick-up to Travel to Elmina**

6:30 - 6:40 **Small Group Formation** *(See instructions on page 31.)*

7:00 **Busses Leave for Elmina**

Session Five - Elmina Castles*

7:00 - 9:15 **Conversations Connect Tuesday's Highlights with Expectations about the Castles**

Bus-ride *(MC invites conferees to sit with someone new or someone she wishes to know better. Seat mates should share new insights from Tuesday's sessions, brainstorm possible courses of action through ministry, scholarship, teaching, relationships, etc. Conversations might begin by completing the following sentence: "I did not know _____." Brainstorming courses of action might include or conclude with completing the following sentence: "Now I will _____.")*

9:30 **Guided Tour of Castles****

*Program coordinators debated whether to use "castle" or "dungeon" to name the place captured Africans were last held before being taken into "New World" enslavement. The name "castle" denotes the paradox of the Church above and enslaved persons in the "dungeon" below. Coordinators decided the term "castle" to highlight this dichotomy and the Church's cruelty toward human beings since, Christian officials celebrated worship in the "castle" while persons were bound in the "dungeon." The decision to use the term suggests other tensions, such as some Africans' collaboration with capture of other Africans, some Africans – in both worlds – enslaving other Africans, and continuing participation of religious institutions in violence and other challenges women face.

**The "Litany of Lament," on page 26, will be observed after the tour of the castles, at the end of day, or before Thursday's sessions.

Session Six - Lunch Conversations after Elmina

- 12:30 **Lunch at Kakum** *(Small groups should sit at table together.)*
Connecting the Past with Gender Violence Today
(Convener should begin conversation with each group member saying a word or phrase prompted by tour of the castle. Convener will conclude with prayer and blessing the food. Convener will invite table participants to discuss experiences of the castle by focusing on their word or phrase. Before leaving, convener should invite persons to continue conversation on the bus with seat mates from a different country. After leaving table, convener's responsibility ends.)

Session Seven - Bus Ride/End of Day after Elmina

Mistress of Ceremony: Fulera Issaka

- 14:30 **Travel Back to Legon**
(MC asks persons to sit with someone from a different country. Seat mates share by completing the following sentence: "I feel _____.")
- 17:00 - 17:15 **Closing Ritual - "A Litany of Lament"*****
- 17:15 - 17:20 **Closing Reflection, Summary of Third Day**
- 17:20 - 17:30 **Logistical Instructions, Announcements, Check-In on Meeting Processes, Reminder to All to Write Ideas on "Idea Board"**
(Coordinators collect idea charts to organize around themes.)
- 17:30 - 17:35 **Coordinators Gather**
- 17:35 - 17:50 **Return Trip for Residents of Yiri Lodge**
- 17:50 **Dinner with Cultural Display**

***The "Litany of Lament," on page 26, will be observed after the tour of the castles, at the end of day, or before Thursday's sessions.

A LITANY OF LAMENT

(After Pilgrimage to Cape Coast, Elmina, Ghana)

All: We re-member YOU.

Our Mothers and Fathers and Sisters and Brothers
Our Aunts, Uncles, Grandmamas, and Granddads.
Nanas and Big Mamas, Poppas and Ba-bas, we especially remember you.
With big love.
Those who were stolen and enslaved in the Maafa.
Sometimes captured by tribesmen known
Who probably looked just like us
Maybe even spoke the same tongue;
Disrupting our African lineages
Tearing up our families beloved,
Breaking the hearts of kindred CRYING
“Where are our babies?”
“Why did YOU take them?”
“Where did our CHILDREN go?”
“Oh, MY GOD!”
“We S-A-C-R-I-F-I-C-E-D OUR YOUNG!!”
Profiting from or protecting “our own.”
Still,
Participating in horrors unseen and unknown!!!

All: We re-member you.

We re-member, too,
You who enslaved us, who raped us
Who starved us and who put us on
Slave ships with names like Jesus;
You Europeans who stole us and sold us
All for greed and wealth.
You tried to dehumanize us
And make us think and feel that
We were less than human
That God was not with us
That God didn't care and that
God did not feel our pain
YOU WERE Wrong!

All: We Re-member you.

God cried and God moaned

With us and kept us all in Her bosom
Even those of us sinking to the bottom
Of the sea with Yemanja;
Or lying in our own living blood
In dungeons called “Castles”
Or in the belly of cargo ships
Or standing on the auction blocks
In a strange “New World”
Or left behind as family of those many thousands gone.
They were wrong AGAIN
About those wretched doors of “No return.”
All: WE re-member you.

For We the daughters,
Of Anowa, Harriet and Sojourner, Essie, Yaa and Abena; Osun and Oduduwa.
(The community calls the names of saints, priestesses, leaders, ancestors, goddesses, or the names of God.)
All: We HAVE RETURNED!

We are angry; we are sad; WE are hurt.
We are disillusioned, disgusted, dismayed, dismissed but
We are not destroyed!
WE are back! WE HAVE RETURNED!
All: We re-member you.

With tears. With cries. With wailing.
With silence. *(Silence is observed for 30 seconds.)*
We beat our breasts. *(Breasts are beaten for 30 seconds.)*
We wring our hands. We holler!!!!
We raise our voices in protest!!! *(Members of the community shout words of protest like “NO,”*
with arms raised!)
We feel powerless and
We feel powerful.
We have many mixed feelings.
We are sad to be in this place!
We are proud to be in this place!
We beat our breasts.
We raise our hands and arms.
We cry aloud for them and with them
God help us!
Where are you God? Are You there!
We hug each other.
All: We re-member you.
We adamantly protest

Your filthy picking of us from your balcony perch,
To rape us
In your 'castles,' beside your chapel,
Above our dungeons!
We stand with the notorious women who
Languished in balls and chains in refusal of
Your evil wanton lust
For our beautiful Black bodies and souls!
All: WE RE-MEMBER YOU!

YES! We have come back Not only to honor you, your suffering,
Your humiliation and shame.
But to DECLARE, to all society and religious communities,
Our temples, our churches, our mosques, our synagogues
And all our edifices of praise and service and worship,
WE ARE FREE WOMEN!
AND WE ARE ACTING LIKE FREE WOMEN!
We are defining ourselves! We are being ourselves!
We are loving ourselves, and we are protecting our selves!
IN THE NAME OF GOD WE REFUTE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!
In the name of God we refute male supremacy.
In the name of God we refute white supremacy.
In the name of God we refute internalized oppression of any kind!
All: WE re-member YOU.

We are blessed and wonderfully made women of a loving God
Who will not be silenced or tolerant of "thingification,"
We are special. We are of divine origin.
Thanks to our praying mothers, grandmothers, Aunts and Big Mamas,
We are alive!
AND MOBILIZING!
Now we owe them and ourselves a commitment to renew
Our Sacred Covenant to resist any and all forces of evil,
To redefine ourselves for ourselves, to rebel against oppression,
To remain conscious,
To arise, with uplifted voices,
To ACT like and on behalf of FREE BLACK WOMEN of GOD,
In solidarity with women of color who suffer violence worldwide;
We re-member with you our SISTAHS,
FOR WE ARE YOU AND YOU ARE US – FOREVER!

Carolyn Akua LeeNettie McCrary

Thursday, July 12

Theme: Rising from the Dust

- 8:00 - 9:00 **Breakfast**
- 9:00 - 9:15 **Trip for Yiri Residents to Talitha Qumi Centre**
- 9:15 - 9:25 **Small Group Formation** *(See instructions on page 31.)*

Session Eight - Next Steps

Mistress of Ceremony: Elizabeth Amoah

- 9:30-10:30 **Small Groups Consider Potential Next Steps**
*(Small groups develop “ideas for collaboration” on projects that would further the conference’s goal of developing collaborations among African and African diasporan women in religion and theology. By lottery, each group will be assigned a context for developing projects, either **houses of worship/religious institutions, academic settings, or communities**. Group discussions should address the following question: How do we collaborate to reduce and prevent, address, and/or publicize violence against women and girls of African descent?)*
- 10:30 - 11:00 **Break**
- 11:00 - 12:15 **Affinity Groups Chart Next Steps**
(MC instructs conferees to form new “affinity” groups around “idea board” themes. Affinity groups choose a convener in first 10 minutes. Using the conference goal of developing collaborations among African and African diasporan women, and theme of “mobilizing amidst violence against women and girls in Africa and its diaspora,” groups select a category from idea board and plan specific next steps to share with plenary. Next steps

should (1) demonstrate that collaboration is occurring, (2) focus on violence against women and girls, (3) identify what agencies, ministries, organizations, institutions will be partners, (4) identify what resources already are available for this project, what resources are needed, and how needed resources will be gathered, (5) indicate a rough time-line, and (5) identify who is responsible for what. Next steps work may include any collaborative project – grand or small – that is doable. A chart of next steps should be written on large newsprint for sharing in plenary.)

12:15 - 13:30 **Lunch** (MC identifies four volunteers to serve as panelists who share their experiences – challenges and successes – with gathering resources and undertaking projects.)

Session Nine - Moving forward in Collaboration

Mistress of Ceremony: Rashida Alhassan

13:30 - 14:15 **Plenary Sharing - Affinity Groups Share Projects**
(MC will moderate brief sharing of groups projects.)

14:15 - 15:15 **Best Practices Resource Panel**
Chair: Shirley Geiger
(Chair coordinates panelists sharing – 10 minutes – and discussion.)

15:15 - 15:30 **Break**

14:30 - 17:00 **Forum Theater in Plenary**
Joker/Convener: Evelyn Parker
(In plenary, conferees use the forum theater method to work on solutions for potential challenges to resourcing and completing two projects – one from Africa and one from North America – as identified by the MC.)

17:15 - 18:30 **Closing Ceremony**

18:30 **Cultural Display**

19:00 **Return Trip for Residents of Yiri Lodge**

19:15 **Dinner**

Conference Processes & Resources

Instructions for Daily Composition of Small Groups

Small group work is intended to help facilitate the conference goal of providing a context to develop collaborations among African and African diasporan women in religion and theology.

New small groups will be formed daily. Persons are encouraged to stay with the same group for the entire day. At the initial formation of each group, members should choose a convener. After the first day, subsequent group conveners should be selected from among persons who have not yet served in this role. Specific responsibilities for groups and conveners are indicated on each day's program.

Small groups will be comprised of seven to ten persons. No group should include more than two to three persons from any one country. No group should include more than four persons who were in the same group on the previous day. All groups should be formed and a convener selected within ten minutes of arrival at the Talitha Qumi Center each morning.

Instructions for Forum Theater Technique (adapted)

www.TOPLAB.org or toplalnyc@gmail.com

The Theater of the Oppressed repertory was developed by Brazilian director, popular educator and Workers Party activist Augusto Boal during the popular education and culture movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Boal's interactive approach to theatrical expression emphasizes physical dialogues, non verbal imagery, consensus-building and problem-solving processes, and techniques for developing awareness of both external and internalized forms of oppression.

An innovative approach to public forums, *Forum Theater* is among Boal's techniques for problem-solving. The nomenclature for Forum Theater includes:

Actors – group participants.

Spect-actors – group participants who become active in creating alternative solutions.

Protagonist – person trying to overcome an oppressive situation.

Antagonists – person(s) portraying the obstacles or the oppressive situation.

Joker – The group’s convener facilitating the process.

The *Joker* reads the case study or an actor is asked to tell a story, taken from daily life, containing a political or social problem of difficult solution. *Actors* will volunteer to present a skit or improvise a scene from the case study that focuses on the central problem. The group’s work embodies possible strategies that improve on the original response by the protagonist.

When the skit is over, the audience or other group members discuss the proposed solution, and then the scene is performed once more. But now, audience members are urged to intervene by stopping the action, coming on “stage” to replace protagonist, and enacting their own ideas or solution to the problem. The antagonist remains on “stage” portraying the oppressive situation as originally presented. Thus, instead of remaining passive, the audience becomes active “spect-actors” who now create alternative solutions and control the dramatic action.

The aim of the forum is not to find an ideal solution, but to invent new ways of confronting oppression.

Plenary Speakers

Mercy Amba Oduyoye is a Ghanaian Christian theologian most known for her work in developing African women's theology. She is founding director of the Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture at Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana. Oduyoye studied at University of Ghana (B.A., 1963) and Cambridge University (B.A. 1965, M.A. 1969). Beginning in 1967 until 1979 she served the World Council of Churches as Youth Secretary. She served as WCC Deputy General Secretary from 1987 to 1994. Oduyoye also was president of the World Student Christian Federation. She has taught at the institutions across the globe including the University of Ibadan Harvard University, Union Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Emory University. Oduyoye received honorary from the University of the Western Cape in 2002 and Yale University in 2008. Although her work focuses on African women's theology, Oduyoye has long made connections across the globe. She is one of the first female members of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians and she conceived and organized founding of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians 1989, ensuring the participation of diasporan African women in that meeting. Oduyoye writes Christian theology from an African perspective and especially explores how African religion, culture, and economic oppression influence African women's experiences. Her books (and more than six dozen articles) include *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (1986), *Daughters of Anova: African Women and Patriarchy* (1995), *Introducing African Women's Theology* (2001), and *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (2004).

Dianne M. Diakité is an associate professor of Religion and African American Studies at Emory University. She obtained her B.A. from Colgate University, her M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School and her Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. Professor Diakité's teaching and research focus upon African and African Atlantic/diaspora religious cultures. She is the author of *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience* and a number of articles and essays covering a wide array of topics in African and African diaspora religious studies. She has extensive international experience in Africa, and the Caribbean, including seventeen months as a Fulbright Scholar conducting archival and ethnographic

research in Democratic Republic of Congo and thirteen years of repeated travel to Trinidad to pursue research on the Yoruba-based Orisa religion. Professor Diakité's active research agenda includes a book project examining Local and Transnational Legacies of African Christianity in West-Central Africa and the Black Atlantic World and a co-authored book-length manuscript entitled Religious Vocabularies of Africa: Obeah, Orisa and Identity in Trinidad. She is committed to studying and teaching about African religious cultures in continental and diasporic contexts.

Conference Participants

Aisha Abdul-kadr, Ghana
Amey Victoria Adkins, USA
Rashida Alhassan, Ghana
Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, Ghana
Rabiatu Ammah, Ghana
Elizabeth Amoah, Ghana
Joyce Boham, Ghana
Joy R. Bostic, USA
Meredith F. Coleman-Tobias, USA
Diane Diakitè, USA
Nana Amba Eyiaba, Ghana
Shirley M. Geiger, USA
Melanie L. Harris, USA
Celestina Isiramen, Nigeria
Fulera Issaka, Ghana
April G. Johnson, USA
NaShieka Knight, USA
Anna Kpaan, Liberia
Eunice Ktikti, Ghana
Anna Kaydor Lambala, Liberia
Helen Adekunbi Labeodan, Nigeria
Carolyn Akua L. McCrary, USA
Diana Abbey Mensah, Ghana
Stephanie Y. Mitchem, USA
Hajia Maryam Musah, Ghana
Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Ghana
Ruth O. Oke, Nigeria
Sylvia Owusu-Anasah, Ghana
Evelyn L. Parker, USA
Judith Roberts, USA
Rosetta E. Ross, USA
Hajia Ramatu Saani, Ghana
Evelyn Ahin Sam, Ghana
Angela Denise Sims, USA
Fatima Sulemanu, Ghana

Nasiba Tahir, Ghana
Hajia Shetu Tahir, Ghana
Eboni Marshall Turman, USA
Beverly R. Wallace, USA
Yatta Roslyn Young, Liberia

Thank you

Women's Division, International Ministries with Women, Children, and Youth,
The United Methodist Church

Evangelist Jackie Ross-Roy and Church Women United, Dallas, Texas

The Talitha Qumi Center

Bernita Crosland, Administrative Services, Spelman College

Carolyn Douglas, Faculty Administrative Assistant, Perkins School of Theology

Janet Kaiser at Love to Travel

Ghana Conference Program Committee (Emilie M. Townes, Rose Mary
Amenga-Etego, Meredith Coleman-Tobias, and Melanie Harris)

Georganne Mires at Colwick Travel

Constance Barnes

Geraldine Parker

Yolanda Smith

Shannon Clarkson

Nami Kim

Carolyn McCrary

Charlene Sinclair

African and African Diasporic Women in Religion and Theology Conference



Artwork provided with permission by Katie Geneva Cannon.

*Hope is as Strong as a Woman's Arm:
Mobilizing Amidst Violence Against Women and Girls
in Africa and Its Diaspora*