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**APPROVAL SHEET**

Phenomenology of the Holy Spirit: Using Narratives as a Holistic Interpreter of  
Trauma Within African American Female Stories

BY

**BRENDA JOYCE SMITH**

Doctor of Theology

AT

CANDLER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

*2015*

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**COVER PAGE**

**Phenomenology of the Holy Spirit: Using Narratives as a Holistic Interpreter of Trauma  
Within African American Female Stories**

BY

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## ABSTRACT

### *What ails you?*

Implicit within the core axiom of the dissertation-the intercession of Holy Spirit in cases of trauma-lies the deepened question of *what ails you?* The answer drawn from a trajectory of historical accounts of the Holy Spirit conflated against trauma as both a systemic and individual act, characterizes the ways in which the human soul, regardless of race, ethnicity, time or circumstance, perceive egregious acts of violence at the intersection of the holy. From a brief perusal of the Holy Spirit within the human experience, I argue the human soul disconcerted by the chaotic and unbalanced impulse of trauma responds similarly to the presence of God in the midst of trouble. Thus, the whole note is not based solely on the assault that has occurred or its residual effect of injustice though I categorically referenced these as reasons to work towards eradicating forces which may seek to perpetuate evil and suffering upon innocent others, rather the focus is on the ephemeral power of God to restore and to heal. In this regard, I challenge both physiological and psychological methods as sole proprietary agents of trauma treatment, particularly of the kind described as principle trauma care, to consider evidence of God in trauma as a suitable means for broadening the scope of trauma treatment. Herein, I advance the etiological life group of African Americans whose healing scripts about trauma and injustice have lent itself more towards embedded narrative and stories that portray the wisdom of insufferable pain and agony engrafted by heaven's glory to excel beyond the pain and live. I argue the legitimacy of the African American slave narrative and current recordings of trauma require a closer look at what constitutes treatment and healing for an increasingly pluralistic populace in modern day America. In the face of such diversity, current psychodynamic protocols may be inadequate to render a close reading to the question and response of what ails you? The study, characterized as hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, is based on a qualitative-inductive model experientially designed to detect movement of the Holy Spirit embedded in contemporary stories about trauma and suffering. Further, it serves to draw an aesthetic link between current and slave and generational and the way trauma is recounted in the human experience. The study began fall, 2011 through May 2014.

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## **In Memoriam**

*This dissertation has been written in memory of my mother, Marguerite  
Anne Simmons Smith. (2003)*

*The Rainbow in my clouds*

## Introduction

“For I have become like wine-skin in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes?”<sup>1</sup>

Throughout human history, the significance of reporting events and their impact upon those alive in a particular time and space has occurred in one form of genre or another. Whether the narrator has used the linguistic art form of song, spirituals, stories or narratives testifying of events either they have experienced or received as narrative testimony over time, the impetus has been to give voice to an experience. Sometimes suffering extended over days, years or even generations begins to take shape with the sheer utterance of a wail, a scream that serves to brush away the veil of silence associated with an event. This is particularly the case when the event is regarded by the narrator and listener as an assault, one of which has caused injury; mitigated loss to the individual or individuals confronted by it. In time, the harmed one starts to decipher meaning out of the experience, and in so doing, engage in the process of choice wording for use in song, narrative or story or another requires time. In particular settings, where trauma is described as the assaulting event, individuals and collective groups use measures most available to them, even the source of the trauma itself to begin to frame their reaction to the pain caused by it.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 119:83, Hebrew Tanakh

Often, these efforts to respond to traumatic suffering starts with their own need to affirm their humanity and selfhood in the face of brutal violence. In these instances, boundaries, particularly those described as spiritual appear to diminish as trauma's violence is executed without reproach.

For the African American slave, the experience of being forced from the security of a homeland and brought to live in a strange land was in itself traumatic, enacting a response. However, the consequential brutality of slavery caused a response to which some means to communicate, perhaps initially to themselves and those around them was made. After all, the apparent emotions of misery and shame such as they had not previously experienced provoked them to silence. Either stricken by this reality as well as the probability that they would never see their homeland nor family again, they lost their voice. When they attempted to make meaning of their situation, that is, those who chose life rather than death, their voices surfaced in mere utterances then, wails and moans. I suggest that the travail of slavery presented in such a way that misery particularized itself as unequal suffering and loss. Moreover, I believe as the second and third generation were born and reared into slavery, they, too, struggled with ways to communicate amongst themselves using language and words not of their own ancestry. However, eventually, this new and strange linguistic genre, narrative provided a means to communicate to one another but more importantly to future generations.

Grounded in belief of the Supreme Spirit/ God, a source of conscious memory about life in the homeland, Africa was also evident in songs and prayers. These songs/spirituals captured their lives held in the balance like wine-skin in smoke. Smoke, akin to their daily experience invoked a double-meaning, one in which although the condition of slavery pressed hard upon their souls it also caused them to line their narratives with teachings directed to future generations. Thereby, implicit in their stories and accounts of their suffering was found an embedded narrative about how God manifested in the Holy Spirit was present with them. In this study, I argue that these lessons were not crafted to solely reiterate experiences about slavery as an unsavory institution, more critically; these testimonies were transmitted as narratives chartered to teach sacred remembrance. Remembering God in the midst of trauma and struggle because the crucible of a people's religious narrative. These lessons are reflected today within the institution of the Black Church. According to Houston A. Baker, Jr. "narratives reveal a common pattern of representation consisting of the narrator's experiences in slavery..."<sup>2</sup>

Eventually, songs like Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen, identified an accurate recitation of African American belief in God was incorporated in the song and spiritual canon of the church and community.

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<sup>2</sup> Houston A. Baker, Jr., Editor, Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, 8.

**Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen**

Nobody knows the Trouble I've seen

Nobody knows my sorrows

Nobody knows but Jesus

Glory Hallelujah!

Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down

Sometimes I'm leveled. . Almost to the ground

Although you see me going' round

I have my troubles here below

Glory Hallelujah

If you get there before I do.<sup>3</sup>

Tell all my friends, I'm coming too. . . . .Glory Hallelujah!

In this study, narratives represent a consummate oral account of past and current events occurring in the lives of human beings. Some of which involved memories derived out of the retold experience of the Middle Passage or the plantation hush harbor prayer services that spontaneously emerged after a day of brutal labor. I argue one segment- a critical one, howbeit, involved the role of the Holy Spirit in the nature of their response to slavery and its evil effect upon the human soul.

Rudolf Otto reflects upon the almost mystical sense of communicating with the holy. He reports of his inquiry to a Buddhist when he queried him

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<sup>3</sup> 'From Slave Songs of the United States,' by Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 195.

about reaction to encountering the spirit. The monk's response was simply "Bliss--unspeakable."<sup>4</sup> Through the transmutation of the slaves' experiences narratives were used as a way to communicate about slavery but also about the Source that enabled them to survive. Whether caused by an individual or collective memory, their wails or moans functioned dualistically. One, it was a testimony of their experience and suffering and two, the movement of *something uncanny*<sup>5</sup> left them in rapturous awe. When slave owners witnessed these moments, they presumed their show of happiness and joy was sign of their acceptance and in deed gratitude to God for providing an overseer to aid them in the task of living.

The generational message is not that adversity, howbeit the condition may not occur in human life but that the means to which inner recovery occurs is the direct result of reconnecting with the Holy Spirit. To this degree of understanding, the cores of wisdom teachings were incorporated from slave narratives into African American generational stories. While at times embedded within a larger narrative about the economic improprieties of slavery, the message was even so the same, seek God's face even in suffering. The importance of which lined the text in slave songs and spirituals.

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<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 38. Notes: the explanatory conversation between Otto and the Buddhist monk is made on page 38).

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 14.

According to author, Cain Hope Felder, spirituals, similar to the one entitled herein, *Come Ye Disconsolate*,<sup>6</sup> "...reflect the process of the transformation of the Book Religion of the dominant peoples into the religion reflective of the sociopolitical and economic status of African slaves."<sup>7</sup> Critically narratives shaped the manner in which Christianity was ascribed to the slaves as their American religion because it served as an auditory conduit of what it may mean to encounter God in the world. And for the slave, there were no situations, including slavery where God- a sure Source of strength and power -was not. Subsequently, this assurance provided the foundation to the slaves' belief of the One whose Word stands in heaven and earth is humanity's eternal gift is emboldened by sacred assurance of steadfast love and faithful grace.

Struggling to reconnect within a circle of ancestral cosmic forces, slave spirituals and songs became prisms for locating cogent meaning to their present conditions. Moreover, the slaves in reconnecting with God also learned the significance of narrative as they reconstructed new prayers to aptly reflect their silence and later moans of what it meant to endure the bestiality of slavery. The hand was employed as methods to communicate in the spirit to God. Hence, the silence became another source of language

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<sup>6</sup> The New National Baptist Hymnal, 264.

<sup>7</sup> Cain Hope Felder, Editor, *Stony The Road We Trod*, 87.

and narrative used by the slaves whose ultimate objective was liberation if not realized in their lives, that it may be so for their descendants.

In this regard, the Holy Spirit is an ethereal agent-connecting trauma with aspects of positive transformation and recovery. The mystery of God's plan to step in to slave narratives and 21<sup>st</sup> century African American women's stories about trauma suggests that there is a perennial promise that contradicts evil with acts of goodness and Love. Hence, the women's stories depicted in this study will show glimpses of the Holy Spirit in living accounts and testimonies of the reality of God that revealed in the messiness and appropriateness of the human condition. Each will lend testimony to acts of compassion and care extended by unsuspected sources that just show up with the intent to serve.

These acts of kindness mediate hope for women, whose voices are recorded here, in the testimonies of particular women, as they were in the process of enduring soul pain. It is in the mutuality of the Holy Spirit that wounded women recounted herein their struggle to uncover their deepest hurt and fears from the sedentary residue of trauma and violence as they approached their own terms for accepting recovery. These stories are a kaleidoscope of trauma within both women's lives and family that represent parts of a broader narrative about embedded social and economic injustice left to fester in marginalized American households. Ignoring systemic acts of violence contribute to persistent layering of trauma with



each segment perceived as the result of personal frailty rather than wholly or partially caused by a systemic ailment. Often, acknowledgement by the broader society of harm to marginalized individuals and communities go unnoticed.

This study argues for a new set of theoretical suppositions regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in trauma treatment from which an approach to treatment alternative as accepted standards might be developed. It acknowledges trauma, critically embedded by the chronicity of violence wounds the soul causing the harmed to experience spiritual imbalance. Trauma is defined as a human tear situated within the human soul. The term “soul” describes the innerness of humanity as a place where the spirit of the created resides. The concept of the human soul interconnects with another critical component of my argument that is within the structured definition of vulnerability.

Vulnerability<sup>8</sup> is characterized here as duality of between and betwixt, a systemic suspension occurring between the horrible experience of trauma and the deliberate act of the Holy Spirit to soul- heal. Crucial to being suspended are the intentionality of two key players, the wounded

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<sup>8</sup> The term “Vulnerability” is based upon the idea purported by Martha Fineman, Director of the Vulnerability and the Human Condition Initiative, Department of Religion and Law, Emory. She argues that Vulnerability is a human condition framed within a fissure of positive and negative properties. From a positive perspective, Vulnerability is transformative act of healing whereby its initial negative impact, characterized as harm, is incorporated within a holistic inner dialogue with the Holy Spirit, then used to generate acts of resilience and recovery. “Properly understood, vulnerability is also generative and presents opportunities for innovation and growth, creativity and fulfillment.”

and God in which both position are shaped and reformed. Consequently, trauma is not left unattended, but rather is encountered by the Holy Spirit in the beginnings of initiating the critical practice of “reflexive knowing.”<sup>9</sup> Vulnerability acts as core ethic ultimately serving to re-establish wholeness and transformation.

Constructing this condition into a research problem, the study seeks to explore the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit encountering trauma through the individual and collective prism of narratives and stories. From this context, I hope to illustrate the role faith and belief played in the framing of slave narratives and going forward how the same slave narratives, i.e. spirituals, songs and prayers has been used to transform ways in which trauma is experienced and addressed in modern African American society. In addition, by carefully interrogating the women’s stories for traces of slave narratives, I wish to explore how the resistance specifically informs the manner in which they were communicated given the explicit intentionality of the storyteller.

Therein, I believe stories offer ways to express living experiences of individuals, groups and nations within a particular place and time, within this study, stories are set in dialectal tension to slave narratives, the latter of which act as a formulae for ways in which the slaves understood the importance of the Holy Spirit in aiding them to confront their condition.

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<sup>9</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Pastoral Theology and Qualitative Research*, 215.

Critically, the study examines the interrelatedness of the *holy* at the nexus of trauma wherein soul wounds contribute extensively to the material of human testimony. In response to the experience of spiritual imbalance caused by, in some cases the chronicity of trauma and violence, the study argues for a new set of theoretical suppositions regarding trauma treatment, one in which an alternate paradigm may emerge.

Accordingly, this new method underscored by pneumatology may become a consummate part of medical practice in response to a collective call for critical soul repair in post-modern America. Countering previously held Western and more explicitly American worldviews that tend to privilege rationalized anthropocentric annunciation over the construct of intuitive/non-materialism, I am advancing the argument that the study using a more pluralistic post- modern model of care is essential to reforming the normative terminology around what it means to ascribe health and wellness to a shifting Western and in particular, American populace.

The model described herein as a case study uses stories as a linguistic form to explore ways in which language and even non-language, on the one hand, is repulsed by the violence therein becoming momentarily mute and on the other, resisting the assault, thus giving voice to the injury. Hence, stories are used to begin the process of excavating the depths of inner pain and suffering of the inner soul. The scientific determinant used

is based upon an experiential qualitative inquiry. I use this method due to an enhanced probability that the reflections gleaned from the women's traumatic experiences will attend to the totality of the human experience; spirit, mind and body. This approach may offer an alternative to processing the condition of trauma and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, a more holistic view to current western practice may tend to include rather than continually exclude approaches that reflect a broader American landscape. By addressing this significant omission of critical qualitative analysis, I suggest that the process of recovery of the Holy Spirit in the incidence of trauma may be recognized by the broader western society as a critical segment of recovery in trauma treatment of the African American community. Recognizing the value of the Holy Spirit in soul wounding may elicit innovative pedagogy and practice methods of the Holy Spirit in a broader discourse. Herein the genre of narrative may be resurrected in the art form so aptly depicted and used by the slaves proving helpful to trauma treatment.

Evidenced by the case study of the two African American women's stories are traces of this same message. Together, these particular women's stories and the slave narratives form a codicil about living with the likelihood that oftentimes circumstances present as less than equitable, or for that matter just, but yet require actions on the part of souls whose call reflects the indelible image of God, to seek higher, reach deeper for

answers to live regardless of what *come or what may*.<sup>10</sup> Thus the slaves' narrative provides greater dimension to what it means for a people, namely African Americans to seek God's face in their life journey-- even in the encounter of trauma.

Wherein, I claim that slave narratives offer meaning not only to the African American community but to the broader modern society, and as such ought be included in American literature as a critical expository of American formation within the western hemisphere. In addition, the economy of the Holy Spirit enacted by slaves' in their struggle to recover holds particular meaning for souls whose experiences include similar case of violence and hardship. The use of the Holy Spirit as an experiential model for trauma treatment not only adds to but enhances the quality of care provided today in America's already pluralistic society. Because the slaves' reiteration about their kind of trauma, howbeit slavery, is verbally represented should not mitigate the significance of their experience nor the method used to heal. Hence, the slaves' narrative provides a far greater dimension to what it means to suffer injury than currently is substantiated in present day practice. Categorically, in their attempt to make meaning of slavery, they may have just glimpsed darkly the reflection of another in the abused places of their souls. God whose covenantal promise is toward steadfast love and faithfulness, the slaves understood mage experienced as

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<sup>10</sup> African American phrase –wording intended to communicate to the hearer the importance of staying the course even in times of uncertainty.

a Source of Strength, present with them regardless of what *come or what may*.<sup>11</sup>

Thereby ushering in the patterns of wisdom teaching embedded within slave narratives about the Holy Spirit and Its encounter with trauma and injury, I define trauma as extreme force sufficient to violate an individual's soul and spirit thereby disrupting understanding of their core self. Subsequently, Judith Herman, describes "traumatic events as circumstances that overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning."<sup>12</sup> Whether caused by an explicit or implicit act of violence, trauma changes behavior of those harmed in ways that alter an individual's perception of as well as the external- social world around them. These experiences may be helpful in reconstructing the collective memorization of previous generational experiences about trauma. By placing emphasis upon the Holy Spirit, God in the midst of the pain and suffering may parse open theoretical and practice doors a bit wider, allowing images of the Holy Spirit to interceded in the discursive about trauma treatment.

Thus, I argue by the acuity of slave narrative, a resilient cord runs in and through them a testimony of what the teller interpreted to be a connection with God in the misery of slavery. This remembrance of The

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<sup>11</sup> African American phrase –wording intended to communicate to the hearer the importance of staying the course even in times of uncertainty.

<sup>12</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33.

Holy Spirit in the midst of trials and tribulation is in some ways akin to what Heinz Kohut calls an “experience- near”<sup>13</sup> circumstance. However, Kohut’s meaning did not include the Spirit as the Source in which the injured could begin to re-establish their process of image building and restoration of identity, his process occurring out of the supposition that the ideal was shaped out of merely human properties. I argue instead that the ideal image of human identity and self-formation has already been imprinted upon the human soul. Its image, although sheltered and obscured by trauma and suffering, the nascent presence of the Holy Spirit is evident in the interpretative mode of spirituals, prayer and dance that together invoke an inextricable deep and internal connection with God as Spirit. Likewise, in his article entitled, “The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body.”<sup>14</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhogal notes an ancient form of narrative whose art is rendered in song and music. Illustrating the proscriptive use of song as a source of close reading between the occurrence and encounter of God/Holy Spirit, slaves were able to confront their experience of trauma, resisting silence in order to give voice to their

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<sup>13</sup> While the composite form of a Kohutian “experience-near”<sup>13</sup> describes optimal self-image is e categorically established by the reflection in physical likeness, the; meaning conveyed in African American song and slave spirituals proclaims the opposite. For the African American – an experience-near experience describes the relational nature of the human spirit in connection with the Holy Spirit through which a rich and inextricable meaningful dialectic with God occurs. The result is defined as essential to framing the core self.

<sup>14</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhopal, “The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.80, No. 4, Dec. 2012, 856.

pain and suffering. In so doing, they were able to reconnect with the Source of power. Their African ancestors now could account for what was known beforehand for as their God, whose presence was even so, in spite of their circumstances. Bhogal asserts this alternate way of knowing begins with understanding of the integral relationship between the sacred and created. This recollection described by Bhogal as an “oceanic experience,”<sup>15</sup> can be explained as experiencing God in the middle of traumatic wounds. Penultimate to the moment of trauma’s intrusive assault upon the human soul, a connection shaped in the watery bowels of maternity, is remembered. This connection reminds souls of faithful promise between the sacred and the mundane to be present even in instances of traumatic injury.

Both clinical and research data was gathered over a period of three and a half years from the women whose experience, presented as a case study informs this work. In both of the women’s accounts, I explore how the extent of aesthetic memorization is used as a topology within both subjective and generational narratives. Subsequently, each account uncovers how the human spirit searches for, locates and describes God/The Holy Spirit present in the midst of their trauma and suffering.

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<sup>15</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhopal, “The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.80, No. 4, Dec. 2012, 870.



Further, I use two models, Dorothee Soelle's, *Phases of Suffering* and Nancy Boyd-Franklin's *Generational/Family Genogram* to illustrate the chronicity of suffering and trauma revealed in the stories about encounter by the Holy Spirit

This study argues for a new set of theoretical suppositions regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in trauma treatment from which an approach to treatment alternative as accepted standards might be developed. It acknowledges that trauma, critically embedded by the chronicity of violence, wounds the soul causing the harmed to experience spiritual imbalance.

My thesis explores ways in which an encounter by the Holy Spirit is understood and then described by traumatized African American women in storytelling. The underlying claim being made here is that vulnerable persons alienated by trauma seek restoration from God. They believe that the Creator is the primary Source for healing souls. In advancing this argument, I define God as a Being whose powers alone create, sustain and heal in the encountered relationship of the human experience.

I believe stories that offer ways to express living experiences of individuals, groups and nations within a particular place and time. Within this study, stories are set in dialectal tension to slave narratives. Slave narratives act as a formula for ways in which the slaves understood the importance of the Holy Spirit in aiding them to confront their condition.

Critically, the study examines the interrelatedness of the *holy* at the nexus of trauma wherein soul wounds contribute extensively to the material of human testimony. In response to the experience of spiritual imbalance caused by, in some cases the chronicity of trauma and violence, the study argues for a new set of theoretical suppositions regarding trauma treatment, one in which an alternate paradigm may emerge.

The model described herein as a case study uses stories as a linguistic form. I will explore ways in which language and even non-language, on the one hand, is repulsed by violence and becomes momentarily mute. On the other, hand, in resisting the assault it gives voice to the injury. Stories are used to begin the process of excavating the depths of inner pain and suffering of the inner soul.

Towards this end, I record the stories of two women. Their oral histories may serve to broaden the discussion about treatment and care of persons in modern American society suffering from a plethora of traumas. Another reason is my own self-identity as an African American woman, born and reared in American. With my own story of marginalization and economic injustice, I wish to add my voice to theirs in an effort to raise a new dialogue. This new dialogue counters a predominately white discourse that clearly privileges pragmatic and empiricist thinking over intuitive knowledge.

The scientific determinant used is based upon an experiential qualitative inquiry. I use this method due to an enhanced probability that the reflections gleaned from the women's traumatic experiences will attend to the totality of the human experience; spirit, mind and body. This approach may offer an alternative to processing the condition of trauma and the Holy Spirit, which heretofore have privileged anthropocentric claims over the construct of intuitive non-materialism. A more holistic view to current Western practice may tend to include rather than continually exclude approaches that reflect a broader American landscape. By addressing this significant omission of critical qualitative analysis, I suggest that the process of recovery of the Holy Spirit in the incidence of trauma may be recognized by the broader Western society as a critical segment of recovery in trauma treatment of the African American community. Recognizing the value of the Holy Spirit in soul wounding may elicit innovative pedagogy and practice methods of the Holy Spirit in a broader discourse. Herein the genre of narrative may be resurrected in the art form so aptly depicted and used by the slaves proving helpful to trauma treatment.

To illustrate this assertion, I place slavery at the interstices of an emerging Western economic worldview, the presence of which transformed burgeoning nations. Consumed with the instinctive drive to build and control, they transformed themselves within the three to five

generations into world super powers. Slave narratives, the content of which include the consistency of sustainable teaching accounts, reveal the extent to which brute force caused by slavery is transformed by the steadfast love of God/Holy Spirit. Further, I conduct a brief comparative analysis involving three distinct models, theological, psychological and theoretical. Beginning with David Tracy's theological revisionist argument of God interpreted in the public square, I follow his theory concerning human interpretation in the pursuit of truth with Heinz Kohut's self- psychological model. Lastly, I present Judith Herman trauma approach using her model of mourning, remembrance and recovery to show how her approach in addition to Tracy and Kohut's while poignant to trauma care still remain limited when applied to categories of soul-wounding. Specifically, I show how the subjective interpretation of two African American women's trauma stories in addition to their generational narratives requires more extensive and deepened investigative of soul pain than paradigmatic analysis can alone provide.

In the following chapters I plan to take up these and other questions about God/Holy Spirit and trauma in the stories of the women and their families. Suffice to say at this point, I argue that the Triune Holy Spirit is the principal agent in a viable healing agent for women traumatized by violence. Because of the extent of the assault experienced by the human soul, moral injury of this kind necessitates the deepened healing and

restoration only God can provide. Thus, while psychologies promulgate therapies that involve selfobject mirror images as alternative representations for replicating or continuing the developmental process of the authentic self, I assert that these practices miss the point. Brokenness caused by trauma and injury of the human self needs the sanctified assurance of the Creator that we are loved in spite of what has occurred. There is Life beyond the pain. Assurance to this extent is far more profound and meaningful in beginning the process to reclaim the human self from the entanglement of chaotic doubt and despair. I assert the human soul, in renewed relationship with God, may become less alienated and disoriented as a result of trauma.<sup>16</sup> I argue that God's presence is constant, able to recover the wounded ones by the divine encounter with the *Holy*<sup>17</sup>.

There are seven basic tenets of the study. Each serves to underscore the study's premise. They are:

1. God's act of Love is principally evident in three ways; Creator, Redeemer and Healer, connecting wounded souls back into God self.
2. Because all of humanity is created in God's image, trauma cannot mitigate nor sever dignity between these two essential parties.
3. The Trinitarian nature of Oneness is the mystery.

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<sup>16</sup> Reference by Harold Ellens, *Radical Grace*, is made to Trauma as causing the appearance of a severed relationship.

<sup>17</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 80, 81 & 180.

4. God is in redeemed suffering.
5. Who is God that only human reason, may know? Taking into account all have the right to own life script and be heard.
6. To the least, The Burden of God is the more.
7. God is Love. This is the Healing Response to Soul injury and Trauma.

Threaded throughout this study are queries derived from a postmodern social constructivist<sup>18</sup> point of view that I wish to advance. These concepts will appear in a contextual frame that interrogates the manner in which contemporary pastoral counseling embraces wholeheartedly scientific analysis. It misconstrues suffering as residing in the physical body instead of the spiritual soul. This perception results in misinformed diagnoses, misinformed to the extent that soul injury is conflated within a rubric of psychological malaise in a contextual framework that does not consider the inevitability of harm to the human soul and spirit from unspeakable acts of evil. Nonetheless, pastoral counseling practitioners often opt towards the idea of privileging the physicality of human expression over intuitive knowledge gathering. Their efforts underscore the traditionalist model of psychological trauma. Indeed, trauma affecting the human brain has been promulgated in recent years by a newer division of science called biogenetics; however, investigative practice has stopped short of critically examining trauma from the standpoint of adverse intrusion upon the soul.

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<sup>18</sup> James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, Editors, *Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 158.

## **Principle Subjects of the Case Study**

MK, a native of Massachusetts, is a fraternal twin in addition having six stepsiblings; two of who are in foster care. The immediate family of MK resides in the Northeast. Both parents are alive.

AJ is a native of Alabama. She had two older siblings. After the sudden death of her mother, the elder of the two siblings, brother, assumed court custody of AJ. MJ, the brother, reared AJ until age eighteen years.

## **Definition of Key Terms (Alphabetical Order)**

In this section, I have defined key terms used in the study. There are: Spirit, Suffering, Trauma-*fractured souls*<sup>19</sup> Healing and Redemption. Because the central theme of the study is the Holy *Spirit*, I have organized the research in such a way that it illumines the current argument in juxtaposition to trauma. By that I mean the major terms listed above consist of the critical elements of my argument. However, I engage a subset group that may serve to embellish my assertion in the following way. The inclusion of the Holy Spirit as an intuitive form of practice in treating trauma which, while largely beneficial to the African American

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<sup>19</sup>This is a term I have coined in the study to mean the soul becomes separated from its core essence due to trauma. Specifically, when this occurs the inner self-experiences abrupt tearing causing a kind have disconnect from the Spirit.

community may likewise serve to assist broader American society in coping with violence -oriented trauma. Alienation is a consequence of trauma, is defined as spiritual or emotional dissonance caused by natural disaster or an act of human malice.

The Trinity is a term used to infer a tertiary relationship intrinsic to the holy. Its composite parts are characterized as three persons, the Father, Jesus- the Son and the Holy Spirit. This incarnational relationship between God and the Trinity is reflected in the manifestation of Jesus as human and the Holy Spirit as the Spiritual witness of God on earth as it is in heaven. The same triangular pattern of the Divine is also rendered in the description of human creation. Herein, a person is described as alive when the full composite of body, mind and spirit operate under the power and Breath of Life. Without God, life would cease. The unceasing power of God allows life to continue from one generation to another, pregnant with memories of joys and suffering. Precious memories that linger on in the bowels of living souls embody the voices –some unnamed and unknown among those identified are nonetheless present creating a circular motion of time. Traces of past memories line the stories of contemporary reflections which later constitute become treasured narratives for future generations.

The term Holy Spirit is used to convey one essence/Person of the Triune God. A depiction of Its role organizes around to comfort, guide,



heal and call to remembrance those threatened or harmed by violence and dissonant trauma, in so doing act in Relationship with Jesus who reconciles the lost back to God. In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is described as ruach.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, the New Testament Greek assigns the term using the language pneumatic.<sup>21</sup> Regardless of historical context, both terms are meant to describe the Power of God as being more than temporal and fixed but rather are known as a Spirit whose place, time and power is omnipresent and omnipotent. The Holy Spirit is one of the relating parties within the holy consummate that acts to remind, comfort, heal, instruct and guide believers of God's immanence in the world. By its very form, humanity is reminded of God's intuitive presence in whom divinity is made known as Spirit.

The circle represents the sacred form that signifies continuance in an asymmetrical rather than linear shape. I use the term circularity to connote a continual movement between the women's experience of trauma, but more importantly, the term is used to convey the movement of the Holy Spirit –God in their stories. Schilling describes the term 'circularity' in the following manner: *circularity*<sup>22</sup> is "the relationship between two ideas that are so utterly interdependent in that each presupposes the other and yet

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<sup>20</sup>F. Brown, S. Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 926.

<sup>21</sup>William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, 405.

<sup>22</sup>Harold Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 84.

none is a necessary logical foundation of the other.” Referencing Schilling’s description of circularity, I wish to show how the women’s account of trauma reflects the transparent nature of the Triune God experienced by wounded souls as a continuous movement of God in the midst of trauma stories past, present and anticipated future of human trajectory.

Because of the interdependent nature of the continuous back and forth movement between two forms, created and Creator images of healing are traceable even in the pain and suffering of fractured souls. Therefore, I argue that the process of back and forth movement realized in how stories are shared contributes to the function of re-connecting with the *holy* therein, enabling fractured souls to recover. Hermeneutic phenomenology is defines methodology used to qualitatively interpret an experience. Thus, based upon the subjectivity of the interpretation, a more adequate and perhaps appropriate understanding of the event and its inductive consequences can be derived.

Used in the study, the term interlocutor may be interpreted as incorporating a provocative yet liberating role. Hence, as principle researcher, I may at times incorporate the role of provocateur holding in tension thoughts, ideas and emotions that intermittently describe ways in which the participants respond to trauma and its impact upon their own self-image. I assume this position because of my own experiential

background in pastoral care and social constructivism that implicitly employs the integral function of givenness.

Givenness is a term used to define willingness on the part of the listener to hear the other's story without conscious restraint. Stories and narratives are then able to emerge with accuracy and authenticity from the speaker's mouth without the need to mollify or transform their words.

I have taken this approach because I believe the eloquence of listening lies within certain decorum of courage. In trauma cases, courage is a vital source needed to enable those struggling to survive the ordeal. An additional critical skill needed in this sequence is the capacity to remain open and honest, inviting the storyteller to share her interpretation of the experience without fear or anxiety.

The absence of such support provokes mistrust between listener and narrator that ultimately interpreted shadows the storyteller and the event. Thereby the objective is enactment of suffering is evidenced by "justice, the coming liberation, the love that occurs in the night of the cross"<sup>23</sup> becomes real for both the storyteller and listener/researcher. While engaged in the nuanced experience of walking alongside the storyteller, nuanced in the sense the researcher pauses when the spiritual weight of the story seems to momentarily become too burdensome. Then, after remaining silent, the storyteller may address a readiness to proceed when

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<sup>23</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 158.

actually in some instances no words were used. This kind act of expression between two parties serves to discover not only the extent of the pain but also the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Narrative is a term within the study that has binary meanings. First, narrative is described as a set of stories that convey to the listener salient events that have occurred in a family's generational or cultural history. Secondly, the word narrative has an explicit meaning within this study as it serves to form a diatribe of inductive interpretation and meaning-making by each of the women.

### **Outline of Chapters**

Chapter one examines the variable of story in the nomenclature of trauma and tragedy. Chapter two explores historical meaning of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Church. Sub-areas within this chapter include the cosmology of the Holy Spirit followed by the Theological and Anthropological meaning and response of the Holy Spirit in modern America. Chapter three provides a historical review of trauma through the lens of theory and practice. Chapter four explores an aspect of slave aesthetic involving ways in which language/song and silence were used to essentialize meaning of enslavement and loss of ancestral identity within a people's culture. Chapter five examines embedded slave narratives of trauma sequenced through two African American women's stories.

Chapter six presents generational narratives of the Holy Spirit and trauma as interactive forces within the women's accounts. Genograms of each of the women's histories are included in this section. Nancy Boyd Franklin's work on kinship care is used to show how identity of familial care can be harmful as well as a form of safety. Another aspect of Boyd-Franklin's work is the practice of family secrets and their use to reconstruct collective realities thereby embedded trauma in to the unconscious individual and familial mind. Chapter seven illustrates a comparative analysis of three models: Revisionist correlational, self-development and trauma theory is applied to each of the women's expressed account of trauma, to illustrate whether either one or all three methods may approach adequacy and appropriateness in the care of wounded souls. Chapter eight provides a critique of Womanist Theology and Pastoral Care in trauma treatment. Lastly, findings/conclusion—presents Smith's Proposed New Hermeneutic Model entitled "What Ails You?"

A disclaimer, I acknowledge that while my study is situated within the genre of individualistic causation, its etiological and ontological constructs are not exclusively restricted within a symptomology of subjective response to trauma. To this extent, my work draws upon the multivariate nature of trauma within the conflation of social, political, ecological,

national, and global politics in which joint efforts to eradicate it are required.

## Chapter One

### Storytelling: A Reflection of Life

Living on the socialized political and economic margin within any culture can be hard and arduous. Critically, conflict may arise involving any group, however, the condition of those who may view the American ideal from the economic bottom is particularly pertinent. Access to opportunity and success may seem far afield from day to day realities of surviving ordinary life, even under circumstances of ordinariness that reflect horrific trauma. Often these kinds of crises entrap women whose social identifiers tend to classify them as poor and inhabiting neighborhoods described as crime-ridden. Many identified under these conditions have come to know violence as an unfortunate but real part of their daily lives.

Hence, incorporated within generalized categories of subjective accounts of personal and family trauma are stories that reveal long held secrets, some of which also point to instances of injustice. Injustice was incurred by a neglectful societal system that assigned to these communities categories of lower economic and social class. In terms of the immediate family members and community, injustice is experienced by them as not having the opportunity to tell their story or have them heard by those in authority without recrimination or finger pointing.

Critically the women's accounts reported here assign responsibility to both society and family in the manner they were attended to. In some instances, their interpretations recorded neither family nor societal systems that could be counted on to provide security and care. Instead they tell of what it felt like to be blamed for an infraction that occurred to them without provocation. Silenced under the strain of trauma caused by rape and molestation, they found that fault was assigned to them within an implicit message that perhaps their behavior was promiscuous. These women were unconsciously socialized to believe that their situation was a part of life's ordinariness.

Literally, the women reported that part of their stories about trauma also included implied collusion by their families. What happened to them was "just a part of life," requiring no critical attention by them and others. Inferred here is the underlying message that their pain and suffering was insignificant even if it involved moral injury due to violence. This ordinariness of trauma caused by rape and molestation also served to critically impact their stories and the ways in which they each sought help from the Holy Spirit for soul healing and care.

Grief is trauma because it represents loss. Whether or not, the loss was expected or unanticipated, the ordinariness of life has been thwarted by the sudden absence of a family member. The following story encapsulates grief, by death or social dysfunction, i.e. addiction and criminal behavior



has resulted in the prolonged absence of a family member from their nuclear unit.

### **MK's Trauma Story**

“My mom’s mother (MK’s grandmother) passed away when she was 27 years old from bone cancer. She was the eldest child with the next sibling, age seventeen. Her survivors were my aunt Pam and Darlene; and brothers Keith and James. At the time of my grandmother’s death, all remained in the home except Grandmother Jean. Patricia, 17 years was the primary caregiver for her siblings because my great-grandmother suffered from a chronic illness. Complicating her condition was the fact that her husband, my great-grandfather, was also in poor health. Earlier in his life he had been diagnosed with epilepsy. Consequently, Aunt Patricia had under her care three siblings ranging in age from 15, 14, and 13 years in addition to her niece, my mother, Kadajah, age 12. At age thirteen the next oldest sibling, Darlene introduced her to drugs. “My Mom recalls, Aunt Debbie would sign me out of school so I could “turn tricks.”

Earlier it was because she needed money for drugs and later my mother started using. At age fourteen, Kadajah met MK’s father who functioned as her 1<sup>st</sup> pimp. Eventually, my great –aunt, Pam would assume additional responsibility for two other nieces because their mother, Darlene had become “hooked” on drugs. By age seventeen, both Kadajah (MK’s mother) and aunt (Debbie) were known to local law enforcement as

chronic drug addicts and repeated offenders. Pertaining to the history of my mother's father (MK's grandfather), his life story was particularly categorized by his perpetual struggle also with drug and alcohol addiction that seemed to accelerate according to the family, after the untimely death of my grandmother. Eventually he would succumb to his addiction, dying at age 54 of liver and kidney failure. As for my mother, she just seemed to have gotten lost and fallen between the cracks."<sup>24</sup>

### **Reflection on MK's Story: Encountering the Holy**

I contend like Mk's stories subjectively constitute a soliloquy of human testimony which explores the sacredness of human experience in encountering the wholly other.<sup>25</sup> Explicitly, the women represent communities that both the economy and class have marginalized to the point where their voices, even when heard, are not recognizable. It is with this in mind that I have sought to provide a model that calls for restorative justice<sup>26</sup> in narrative research so that these women may have their stories represented in research as well whose generational archive of suffering are a part of their soul's workings. According to James Ptacek, he defines 'restorative justice' as "a victim-centered response to crime that provides

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<sup>24</sup> MK Journal, January 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Rudolf Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> James Ptacek, *Restorative Justice and Violence Against Women*, 7. Further on in his book, Ptacek identifies goals of restorative justice; namely as follows: rehabilitation, accountability, re-connection safety, security and healing, 66.

opportunities for those most affected by crime-to be directly involved in responding to the harm caused by it.”<sup>27</sup> The reflection of *something more*<sup>28</sup> is nuanced in voices ignored and overlooked as they recount God in the midst of trauma caused by slavery.

Rudolf Otto suggested that *something more*, the *mysterium*<sup>29</sup> apparent to a “numinous consciousness...lives in the reverent attitude and gesture, in tone and voice and demeanor, expressing its momentousness, and in solemn devotional assembly of a congregation at prayer...”<sup>30</sup> In the suffering of traumatic slavery, the slaves themselves remembered God and sought the Supreme Spirit as a means of survival and recovery. Courage that was shown by them in stepping into their own suffering in search of the holy of holiest has enabled generations that followed them to do similarly.

Thus, the women’s stories are a testament to remaining’s of trauma and recovery in their souls. It is also a witness to the merciful Presence of God, whose mystery is unspeakable and whose knowing is at best a fleeting Glance. God’s grace enables the seekers to plumb the depths of their souls in search of Glory. This unspeakable awe and mystery, understood by the

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<sup>27</sup> James Ptacek, *Restorative Justice and Violence Against Women*, 43.

<sup>28</sup> Rudof Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 32.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, page 33.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, page 60.

slaves four and half centuries ago, is what the Scottish Pastoral Care theologian, John Swinton, calls “reflexive knowing.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Approaches to Trauma Care**

Increasingly, research on trauma includes a focus on reparative therapies. For example, Bessel van der Kolk, employs a therapeutic method that conflates “‘his inner world’ into three-dimensional space.”<sup>32</sup> Van der Kolk explains that by re-enacting trauma in settings involving role playing, thereby conjures up actual events and the people involved, enabling the traumatized individual to re-present feelings of anger, rage and even remorse. Van der Kolk believes by doing so, negative emotions heretofore repressed are released, transforming negative thoughts and feelings into positive ones. The effect of trauma upon the body. He posits

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<sup>31</sup> John Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 215. Note: In the case of Swinton’s writing, he uses the term “reflexive knowing” to refer to a way of being and acting for those researchers whose interest involve qualitative analysis. I have elected to use the term in a way that suggests slaves unknowingly acted in the capacity of a qualitative researcher to the extent they were interpreting their own experience through linguistic form in order to test for themselves and those around them their hypotheses about circumstances under which they being mistreated, abused, raped and murdered. Meaning gleamed from these experiences reflected back to them in expressive prayer and song became the bedrock of worship in the plantation’s hush harbor. As the researcher is able to make generalizations based upon the reliability and validity of the facts as demonstrated in orderly sequences of events, so too could the slave reliably sing spirituals of suffering and redemption, assured that the knowledge gained by a few about the truth of life in chains was the reality of many. These experiences collectivize what may have been random unconscious feelings and emotions into meaning for the entire community increasing in the process their knowledge of themselves and God’s presence affirmed in suffering.

<sup>32</sup> Jeneen Interlandi, “How to Heal a Traumatized Mind?,” *New York Times Magazine*, The Health Issue, 44.

that the cranial structure called the –amygdala<sup>33</sup> functions as a storage space for horrific emotions, thereby controlling the way in which the body reacts to negative events. Similarly, Maggie Schauer suggests that trauma is initially experienced as a physiological sequence contained by the amygdala. Her method, entitled Narrative Exposure Therapy use the didactic form of narrative to replace fearful thoughts with autobiographical “cold memories.” In many ways, both van der Kolk and Schauer’s methods resemble the 1980’s Salvador Minuchin’s methodology called Confrontational Therapy.

Confrontational therapy was a technique used by Minuchin to engage family dynamics considered threatening and damaging to the members. Minuchin would gather as many family members as available for a short term focused series of sessions targeting a critical problem whose presence family survival. After listening to the members vocalized the problem, he would reframe it in language they could commonly agree upon. Then proceed to call members who either directly or indirectly contributed to the origination of the stated problem or the continuance of it. He would then confront each member with suggestions to resolve the problem as well as their role in deriving a resolution. Different from Carl Rogers, whose method was described as non-directive, unconditional reinforcement, Minuchin argued for a directive approach, one in which the

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<sup>33</sup> Maggie Schauer, et al , Narrative Exposure Therapy, 6.

parties involved were confronted, expressively encouraged to change for the betterment of the family system.

Unlike these two approaches, I propose a model that focuses on the women's description of their encounter with the Holy Spirit within the context of trauma. Trauma is defined as a break in the human spirit's relationship with God, a tear within the soul causing doubt and shame as a consequence. Trauma evokes shame in the individual's own self, believing that they are no longer worthy of respect by God or those around them. Because of trauma, they see themselves as a reproach to other's worthiness. Shame, unlike guilt robs the individual of their belief that they can repair their lives and begin it. For individuals suffering with shame caused by trauma, they believe what has occurred to them is deserving given the less than value placed upon them by society and themselves as well. Shame reduces the inner self to a mere trace of their authentic oneness with God. In return, they streak and hide from themselves and others by isolating and separating themselves through relationships and associations that over time appear like boundaries barricaded in fear and disgust. Trauma is identified in the lived script of persons harmed by those whose concerted use of power causes injury to the individual's soul, mind and body.

In the preceding recitation, MK's trauma story seems to identify subtly with adjectival references to shame. Silence deflected Mk's shame into

places within her unconscious psyche. Over time, she learned to “push against” the pain caused by her maternal family history. Doing so allowed her to resist settling FOR its inherent collaborator, to acquiesce or to stoop in defeat. Instead of defeat, these stories reflect the extent of learning. They begin with an inward search and encounter with the Holy Spirit. Further, the women’s choice to undertake the task of healing may serve as a viable means of therapy by modern day practitioners may increasingly be confronted with cases involving societal and individual –related trauma and violence.

Practitioners who maintain psychologically- based therapies may prove to be insufficient for clients, particularly those characterized by gender and race, especially in dealing with shame. These potential clients may instead desire to initiate therapy around internal journeying to encounter the healing power of the Holy Spirit. To subscribe to an otherwise clinical set of care, therapies may seem to be out of order for those whose historic and socialized testimonies orient within a historical legacy, one part of which has been an anchor to in the indelible image and power of God.

I have selected the African American cultural group to illuminate the issues surrounding trauma, violence and the movement of the Holy Spirit. One reason in particular has to do with this community’s uncanny familiarity with trauma and violence but also their use of narrative as a form of resistance in fighting back from chaos. The African American

cultural and historic resolve concerning religion, specifically, the meaning of God in instances of trauma and suffering seems to say something about ways of knowing the Holy Spirit. I am curious to discover how the African American community remains steadfast on to their faith and belief of God, even when trauma threatens to shatter their innermost self.

In order to effectively consider this approach, I suggest that trauma needs to be perceived differently, with the difference being distinctively applied to the intuitive nature of knowledge gathered from the traumatized about the Holy Spirit's encounter. This kind of deepened inquiry may suggest that trauma need not be considered solely as a negative experience. I believe there is opportunity revealed in the generative meaning of trauma, which may provide a glimpse into the sacral relationship between God and human creation, a relationship characterized as perennial promise between human and divine demonstrates how God stands against evil. Substantively, interaction in adverse circumstances within life experiences and the holy defines spiritual enactment. Spiritual enactment is the transposition of God in the human story, responds to protect life at risk of destruction or critical harm.

The triumph of expressive theology has been to alleviate a linearly-based discourse that unconsciously promotes the intentionality of a kind of obscured erasure of an increasing majority of Americans whose life and sacred experience reflect the Oneness of God. Further, I believe the



African American experience of trauma may reveal other ways in which a people who historically have endured suffering may be able to add to the generalized meta-narrative about ways to cope and live beyond the circumstance of trauma. Dwight N. Hopkins asserts in his book, *Being Human* that this is exactly the population –poor, disenfranchised, darker hues people that God attends to and knows their sorrows. “The creative and rich realities of the black poor and their communities, real and potential, to the rest of humanity, especially to the rest of the working and poor people in the United States (and the world’s poor), exhibit exactly the God-poor encounter.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Methodology**

This study explores personal stories presented as live accounts woven within generational narratives reported by two African American women. While both share their own account of trauma, they also provide an account of closely held family secrets. In her work entitled, *Black Families in Therapy*, Nancy Boyd-Franklin suggests that there are multiple layers of family secrets. She begins with itemizing them “(1) those that are kept from ‘outsiders’ but known by most family members and (2) those that are kept from other family members.”<sup>35</sup> In presenting differences between the two types of secrets, Franklin posits that there is a

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<sup>34</sup> Dwight N. Hopkins, *Being Human*, 166.

<sup>35</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 25.

third type. This category refers to deeply embedded secrets, ones that are constituted within a historical frame, having been transmitted through oral legacies. These secrets often clouded in shame and guilt may have been chosen by the family to situate the offense within their own memory-bank as a problem that occurred but did not destroy them.

Reported as oral histories, the women's stories reveal a social demographic picture of embedded generational violence and its connection to abject poverty. These accounts are subjective by nature, meaning the basis of data shared is a direct result of their own memories. However having said that, some of their testimonies reveal closely held family secrets presented as myths or tales so as to protect certain parts of the story-secret from being disclosed to outsiders or even designated members of the family. For example, MK's mother, Kadajah's first molestation occurred at the age of ten years. The perpetrator was her maternal grandmother's "male friend" who later befriended MK's paternal grandmother. Both parents of MK migrated to her early childhood community from a hamlet in South Carolina.

An additional reason for covering secrets in shrouds of myths was due to considerable attention given to the family's source of financial survival. While not ranked as the highest consideration for maintaining family secrets, securing the family income, even when it meant obtaining services

from social bureaucracies, was considered significant. The objective was for many poor families like MK's to survive.

Ranked highest for the family was the factor of integrity principally centered on the family name over the actual lived conditions of its members securing the family name meant honoring the legacy and history of the family. This even as services agencies may not have understood or considered such an issue to be significant. An example given by M.K., one of the women in the study, involved an instance when her grandmother and the social service agency worker.

At age 1.5 years, MK's paternal grandmother sought and obtained court custody of both hers and twin brother. Both parents were addicts and had been released from prison about the same time. During an "official" visit to their home M.K.'s mother hid in the hall closet while the social worker interrogated her grandmother about her parents whereabouts. Although the social worker's seemed to badger my grandmother about my mother's whereabouts, Granny never seemed to waver in denying any knowledge about her location". Soon the social worker left and my mother came out and joined us in the kitchen. Even though my grandmother may have been skeptical about her (M.K.'s mother) "picking up things without asking," we enjoyed breakfast listening to my mother's plans about cleaning up from drugs so she could regain full custody. After the tenth time or so, when my mother would reiterate the story about" cleaning up

and doing right,” my brother and I would just smile and keep on eating our meal. Each time after my mother left, my grandmother would remind us about “holding our heads high” even though the social workers persistently came to the home unannounced, disrespecting my grandmother and causing her to feel suspect in her own home.”<sup>36</sup>

Other accounts by the women are uncanny in the sense that many reveal that at least in the early stages of violent trauma, the perpetrators were members of their immediate family and/or community. According to the women, some offenders were uncles, cousins or grandmother’s “boyfriends.” However, when the story was disclosed within the family, the choice was made to handle the matter internally. However, oftentimes- normative characterization of a matter handled internally in time became cloistered within hidden family secrets.

One way the family “handled the problem” was to restrict perpetrators from coming in close proximity to the harmed one(s). While at the time the restriction seemed to have validity most failed in the sense the probability of the violation gradually increased as physical space between perpetrator and individual narrowed.

In addition to distancing the perpetrator from the harmed was also the requirement to institute financial retribution. This meant that the offended were expected to financially support the individual’s family, particularly if

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<sup>36</sup> MK Journal account, January 2011.

molestation resulted in a pregnancy. If the outcome was pregnancy of a minor child with an adult perpetrator, care for the newborn was generally assumed by other single females (aunts) or married childless couples. Nancy Boyd –Franklin characterizes the kind of collective response by family as kinship care.<sup>37</sup>

### **Clinical Impressions: Women Encountering the Holy Spirit in Trauma Stories**

Recordings of the women’s stories about trauma, domestic abuse, addiction and kinship care reflect three and half years of data gathering, symbolizing formal encounters between the researcher and the women. In numerous accounts, the women struggled with remaining accountable to family members regardless of their dysfunction either to themselves or those directly related to them. In uncovering the holy in the stories of trauma, they also uncovered how the family as a unit sought to manage crisis over and against outside authorities. The salient areas discussed were organized in two areas: Trauma and the Holy Spirit. These accounts describe the women’s encounters with the Holy Spirit at points of shame and doubt, even neglect of themselves on their part, and how the experience reconnected them in ways that reawakened their spirit to a sacred and redemptive power.

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<sup>37</sup> Nancy Boyd – Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 52. Further explanation of the term kinship care’ is made by Boyd-Franklin in a later chapter. She references (Billingsley, 1992)“ African American families have historically informally adopted or ‘taken in ‘ children whose parents could not effectively care for them.” 258.

Pointedly, the study reflects the researcher's investigation of the ways in which encounter with the holy is transformative even to the extent the women's voice pitch is noticeably affected. Similarly, I report marked differences in their eloquence, sound and tone as they begin to recite how the Holy Spirit seemed to lift them out of their despair. These observations also illustrate the extent to which the women use hand gestures and shoulder squaring to appropriate the inward presence of the Holy Spirit. Hence, their posture displays an inner journey involving struggle and suffering while being held in dialectic tension with the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, their trauma stories reveal how silence is attributed to the actuality of the assault debilitates their voices in ways which obfuscate their ability to speak. However, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, their fear subsides whereby utterance by them is used to validate their pain and suffering. This action on their part is the first step toward soul healing in that their narrative critically enacts the beginning of their resistance to trauma. After repeated moments of speaking out about trauma, the visceral reality of the harm committed to their souls and the accompany injury to their inner self consciously surfaces as a means to reclaim spiritual balance. This sense of reconstructing normality in their lives begins to dissociate shame from their story replacing it with renewed self-esteem.

In telling their stories, the women report that often they felt that they were able to begin the process of recapturing their inner self. For these two

women, the process began out of desperation and loneliness proceeding from a place of non- caring to self- choice enabled them to garner the inner strength to not give up or settle into their pain. Instead, they chose to engage in a struggle beginning with an inward journey to find answers sufficient for the next phase of their lives.

I argue that there is an ancestral message embedded within their plea for help that allows them to confront their trauma: first by witnessing the silence caused thereby, and then co-participating in the power of the Holy Spirit to recover and redeem their core self. This is the place where the researcher enters their stories. In so doing, their stories critique modern American treatment practices that tend to exclude these individuals as a viable clientele. My goal is to present the small percentages of such individuals seen in therapy with a model that addresses their souls as a place of wounding caused by trauma. Informed by the Trinitarian doctrine,<sup>38</sup> the Oneness of God whose image is reflected upon the human soul, my treatment model involves three central components: remembrance, reflection and re-connection. Together they may serve to aide the traumatized in recalling the always present divine power of the holy image building as sufficient even if traumas presented as complex and soul injured. I argue that inattention to their soul and the harm that trauma has caused persists in sending the message that deepened suffering

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<sup>38</sup> William C. Placher, Editor, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 56-59/ David Cunningham, 80.

in their lives and histories do not matter. But when a new protocol is presented such as this one then women and the racial group they represent may begin to see the American story as finally beginning to incorporate their own. Unless all persons who experience life's tragedies and joy can articulate their interpretation of it to the external world, starting with their inner dialogue with God, then soul healing remains mired behind psychology and more recent mind-body therapies.

Significance of the human soul's cogent meaning is referenced in the New Testament canon.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, with critical insight, Rudolf Otto, in his work, *Idea of the Holy*, stated:

“When I have Thee, I ask no question of heaven and earth’. “ ... Such a statement illustrates that above and beyond our rational being lies hidden the ultimate and highest part of our nature, which can find no satisfaction in the more allaying of the needs of our sensuous, psychical, or intellectual impulses and cravings. The mystics called it the basis or ground of the soul.”<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, out of the abyss of trauma emerges a more adequate reflection of the affective injury; one that begins with silence. There is an aesthetic meaning in the rendering of silence that registers in the human

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<sup>39</sup> Mark 8:38, “For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?” KJV

<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 36.



soul that it has been assaulted. Further, injury has occurred to the soul. Mute silence is not enough, the wounded must experience fear and shame, prolongs suffering and pain. However, in the stillness of silence caused by trauma is God. The sacred begin to weave remembrance of love's meaning into sound, then wails and moans. Time passes enabling that the words spoken and heard into the ear of the wounded and those around her are sufficient to heal and recover.

### **Stepping into Suffering**

Cloistered within the ancestral narrative, a connection is made between the women's stories and their families' stories, and the slave narratives. Both reiterate either through narrations of lined hymns, spirituals, songs, or mere silence indicated by a hand wave, powerful experiences with God who is the same, yesterday, today and forevermore. From this meaning about the presence of the holy, I advance the following assertion: the vibrancy of the Holy Spirit is a crucial method for trauma treatment because it enables souls forced to step into suffering a way to step out, changed yet not defined by suffering.

The image drawn by Dorothee Soelle of "*stepping into the timeframe*"<sup>41</sup> allows, in their cases, an opportunity for the researcher to witness the pain and isolation caused by being individually subjected to their own trauma as well as the reflections on the historical nature of

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<sup>41</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 15.

trauma evidenced in their families' lives. While risky for the researcher, the process of stepping creates an image of solidarity that is active as political solvent. The stated end allows both women an opportunity to suffuse meaning of their own trauma into a space where meaninglessness eroded any opportunity for them to regain control of their lives. It begins with their choice to not remain mute or silent as a result of trauma but instead to speak out, in essence to tell their story in an effort to regain their soul balance and begin to heal. Strikingly, the choice to articulate their experience releases pain and suffering into external reality thereby setting up a protocol for social responsibility to confront traumatic violence against women. While the human soul may have at one time been illustrated as depleted, now it is redeemed and made whole. But to regain spiritual balance requires confrontation of the source or sources of trauma. I believe that a crucial part of the process towards healing and liberation involves gaining the courage to address power and its subtle antecedent, control.

Understanding how power is perceived and articulated both historically and culturally by abused individuals and/or groups is a decidedly critical step in confronting perpetrators of trauma whose silent weapon has often been power and control. Indeed, perception is crucial in the process of erecting both moral and ethical standards to address traumatic injuries. Just as important is the courage to confront trauma offenders, resolving to

use the experience to enrich rather than belittle one's life script. What I hope to show in this study is that when the wounded are able to garner the courage to respond courageously, human volition or will begins to reflect a resistance against trauma. Consequent to their restored sense of self is also the choice to not remain mute or silent. Instead, they choose to speak out, to tell their story.

### **Stepping Beyond Suffering**

Subsequently, there are three specific areas basic to my argument. One, in the study, suffering is encompassed by the potentiality of change rather than solely defined by it as a delimiting source. While trauma is the basic premise by which pain and suffering occurs, considerable emphasis is placed upon how the account of suffering upon the human soul is grossly affected by the sacred association between the Creator and humanity. In her book entitled "Suffering" the late German theologian Dorothee Soelle's presents a grid depicting stages of suffering.<sup>42</sup> The grid shows the effect of suffering upon the choice of words and, more critically, the language or non-language used by the traumatized. In chapter three, I will use Dorothee Soelle's grid on *Suffering* to explore ways in which it forms a proscription for trauma ranging from mute/silence to human expression, leading to liberating acts on the part of individuals affected as well as persons around them.

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<sup>42</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 73.

Two, trauma, while described as an unexpected violent act does not stifle life. Rather it consists of the ethereal potential to enhance life. Shulman and Meador argue, “The Christian God is a God who suffers in solidarity with the sufferings of the creation.”<sup>43</sup> Considering the logic of their argument, they continue to interject into it the concept of contemporary rapprochement<sup>44</sup> as a corollary to suffering rather than objecting to place a suffering God within the modern American story. They believed that the avoidance of suffering creates a delusion that the sufficiency of the American law ensures against violation of rights and the pursuit of happiness.

The right to be healed may be considerable an undeniable part of the American happiness sequence if health is interpreted as a benefit of religious affiliation. Schulman and Meador warned against this interpretation calling it “contemporary rapprochement.”<sup>45</sup> By that they meant the fetish objective of maintaining good health becomes the preferred end goal of Western –Americanized Christianity, even at the expense of pursuing religion as the “believer’s” ingratiating sole purpose. Both authors posit that both practices contradict the earlier biblical

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<sup>43</sup> Joel James Shulman and Keith Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 92.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, page 5.

<sup>45</sup> James Joel Shulman and Keith Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 5.

accounts of Christianity, which did not assert health as its singular nor utmost proclivity for theological practice.

Instead of the Christian Church interrogation of *suffering* as paradigmatic of what it may have meant to know God in the followership of Christ, I assert the hermeneutic phenomenological method is particularly significant in that its approach allows women, heretofore muted by the illusive force of violence, to once again take control of their lives. Seeing into their suffering offers a reflection of in Bell Hook's term "double otherness."<sup>46</sup> Double otherness is a social construction that allows women, stooped<sup>47</sup> and bent by trauma, to use the merciful power revealed in the arc of having been bent to regain their uprightness their composure and heal. Herein, the consequential act of conflating roles and cultural images, derived either within the person's own narrative or an external one can become a means to transform brokenness into healing and recovery. Though stooped and bent by the traumatic experience, the ability to manage and wear each as reflection of one's core self and being begins to grasp at the mystery of creation held within.

Countering the androcentric authority of largely men, I use the model "hermeneutic "to engage women's whose experiences are either

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<sup>46</sup> Joan L. Mitchell, *Beyond Fear and Silence*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> The word "stoop" derives its meaning derived from Second century Maximus, whose teaching of God descending " the Economy" /eschatological hope of creation responding by merciful stooping before the Eternal Mystery.

supplanted, ignored or marginalized. Often African American women's voices if heard at all, become landmines for scholastic advancement. They recede into the text, nameless and un- authored. Their narratives are no longer their own, having trading authority of ownership for a few moments of visibility.

Three, African American stories of the intermingled nature of God/Holy Spirit in the midst of their suffering caused by societal trauma and inequity may provide critical insight into how modern America may approach healing and recovery. As such their narratives serve as an unconscious reference point to the meaning of slavery and its historical depiction in their current life stories. In this regard, the manner in which Dorothee Soelle depicts suffering, as a critical construct of slave religion is particularly pertinent here as it pertains to this particular slave category. From the slaves' perspective, she argues that suffering may present with an element of opportunity.<sup>48</sup> Critically, within the state of suffering an opportunity may be appropriated for the wounded to employ injury caused by trauma in a productive way. Perhaps, one can engage suffering caused by trauma by "leaning into" the pain, consciously avoiding attempts to repress, deny or even describe it in a less offensive manner. In the long run, such a strategy may assist the wounded in finding meaningful ways to heal. To a large extent, slave religion, particularly African American slave

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<sup>48</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 155.

religion highlights the importance of striving not only against trauma and its perpetrators for purposes of justice and individual recovery but also against its supposed outcome.

In the following chapters, I will show how the spirit to survive, soul intact as redacted in slave spirituals and songs, has in many ways become a part of the slaves' constructive legacy. Hence the African American story of trauma reflects the courage to engage the mystery of God by faith in the face of trauma, thereby enabling an in-depth and meaningful experience to occur. Further, the enactment of inner strength displayed by the willingness to maintain a connection with God that has been momentarily threatened by trauma involves belief that good prevails over evil. Hence, the choice to push beyond trauma and suffering can result in a deepened understanding of the glory and grace of God.

Tucked in the struggle to believe, the African American slaves learned to look beyond suffering and pain, and love those who inflicted violence upon them. Because of this, the slave women could configure their bodies into nourishing vessels for the planters' offspring while in most instances their own children endured hunger. Thus, slave religion embraced paradox. In discussing this paradox Dorothee Soelle cites Ulrich Hedinger, who states "Where God is the paradox in an absolute sense, there he

clouds the distinction between love and misery.”<sup>49</sup> At the intersection between love and misery stands God in the midst of the human condition. Slaves understand that the penultimate promise of God is sure even in the eye of injustice.

That depiction of encountering God in the midst of seemingly insurmountable responsibilities and expectations can lead to despair and hopelessness is indicative of Mk’s story. Her story reflects life on the outside of society-the “other” with few familiar ways to connect. Her way out seems to be a connection not through traditional systems of intervention and development but rather with less constructed forms of kinship care. In a way her story is curiously scripted as binary, elastic in the sense that her perpetrators of trauma and violence are also her source of support and security.

By listening closely to stories such as MK’s enacts “a feminist hermeneutic of liberation “listens” the religious experience of women

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<sup>49</sup> In her book entitled, *Suffering*, the late German theologian, Dorothee Soelle makes a statement in reference to Ulrich Hedinger’s historical argument against the paradox of Christianity that sets suffering as a critical norm of misery and pain. Suffering according to Hedinger is needed in order for the believer to experience God. Soelle objects to Hedinger’s characterization of suffering, suggesting instead that suffering is not a causality of the cross but rather can be seen as a nominal sequence to actualized living. The reality incorporated in human life often includes circumstances under which a cross may be used to illustrate the variable adversities encountered by the living human being. But to Soelle’s point, the image of God is manifested in the human experience justifiably in acts of suffering. God presented here by Soelle is not he Barthian, transcendent God but God who is present, aligned within those actively ensnarled in the condition of suffering. Herein, lies the paradox, according to Soelle, that God’s love is bounded in the equation of today veiled and obscured by pain and suffering, is nonetheless present. 165.



today into words that can dialogue with the Gospel narrative, and claim its emancipatory truth...”<sup>50</sup> In this study, text of the Gospel is the living experience of trauma and MK or JB’s circumstances are striking similar to Tamar’s story. (Gen 38:6) Gender inequities render the wounded voiceless and vulnerable; initially silenced by authority. Women must relearn how to speak again about painful moments of their lives and in the process define ownership by telling their story using words and language of their choice. Through the expedient process of interpretation, the women in the study experience what Elaine Wainwright calls, “the interpretive process... (That) takes places in the interstices between questions brought to the text (described as story about their traumatic experience) and those text (in the study’s case, I define as the Holy Spirit) asks of the”<sup>51</sup>...speaker.

Further, I invited the women to use their voice to understand what had occurred to them as well as to name their voices as an interpretive model in their own recovery. An approach of the kind transcends more traditional mechanistic models of care into a more holistic interpretation of the human experience and its inherent frailties due to trauma and dissonance. I claim that the aesthetic nature of language becomes the initial mediating construct to articulate what it means to be human, first to oneself and then

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<sup>50</sup> Joan L. Mitchell, *Beyond Fear and Silence*, 50.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

in relationship to God. Embedded within the words and phrases are hints of knowing that are particularly understood by those within the African American culture. Wisdom may be garnered from years (if not in some cases, generations) of survival stories. Many of these stories are derived from accounts of abuse and harm. In some cultures, these narratives are infused with the relationship with God, a relationship so deep and inextricably bound together that the human experience is acutely interpreted as knowing and seeing God.

In conclusion, trauma is part of God's story in creation. It is mitigated by Love. Thus, by using the dualistic motif of the historic journey of the Holy Spirit in the early Christian Church and the story of slavery evidenced by songs and prayers, I wish to explore how meanings of both characterizations are actively reflected in generational stories and women's narratives about the Holy Spirit and trauma at the nexus of Suffering. Towards this end, I claim that the art form created in interpretive expression: the hermeneutic provides a way in which questions may be heuristically formed and answered. Some of them may be revealed inductively by questions that may attempt to describe the nature of the Holy Spirit<sup>52</sup> in the encounter of their own suffering and pain caused by trauma. How does God/ Holy Spirit become known in the narrative of trauma? What are the ways the harmed may *see* (Implied

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<sup>52</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing The Holy Spirit*, 25.

within the term “to see” is the nuanced meaning of spirit) and begin to know God in the messiness of their circumstances? To what extent does language learned in family and culture play a role in enabling the wounded ones to make meaning for themselves out of their own traumatic experience and/or the collective experience of others? When words and language can only begin to capture pain and suffering, how is non-verbal communication (e.g. wails, moans and agonized gestures), used to parse doubt and despair from faithful relationships? How can what Bhogal calls the phenomena of communication without words “In- Spoken speech,”<sup>53</sup> articulate the unspeakable.

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<sup>53</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhogal, “The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.80, No. 4, Dec. 2012, 880.

## Chapter Two

### The History of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Church

“The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”<sup>54</sup>

In this chapter, I shall continue to make the claim that narration is a form of historic and linguistic meaning making to the extent; it often acts as an inclusio—a story within a story. Historically, threads of stories about trauma and the discord it causes are held together over time by accounts that both confirm and verify its reality. As such these stories constitute narratives, which later are morphed into sources of collaborative truth telling. In parts of this chapter and those following, I will show how these truths identified as authentic recitations also constitute legitimate markings of generational wisdom stories.

The central matrix of my argument is the selfsame Spirit that moved upon the waters frames the relationship of sacred indwelling in the human spirit. This relationship syncretized in creation comprises the living sustenance and healing of souls wounded by trauma. Moreover, it is in the Trinity of the Holy Spirit that holistic recovery conflates in jury caused by malice and violence into patterns of generative reparation. Supporting my claim regarding the economy of the Spirit as creator, redeemer and healer,

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<sup>54</sup> Genesis 1:2,KJV.

I raise a second element, which relates back to the significance of narrative and story. Non-speech, such as a hand wave offering in silence or the glimpse of faith in the midst of suffering, the latter of which is symbolized in the scripture recording within the Book of Daniel, is both a source of witness and testimony to the power of God to confront and overcome evil. The scriptural backstory to my supposition being made here is the narrative involving three Hebrew men. These souls together refused to bow down to king Nebuchadnezzar's molten god. The text records that in the midst of the furnace fire, there appeared not three but a fourth figure, "like the Son of God."<sup>55</sup> I argue that throughout human history, there is the evidence of a second, third or fourth Being, in whom the initial witness thereof begins with gestures characterized as non-speech and silence. Prior to words and language beginning to frame the experience, these physical demonstrations constitute the evidence of faith-believing gestures before the ground of agony and suffering is realized as exposed trauma. In time, these gestures constitute the preliminary category of utterance whose sound ultimately resonates as guttural acts of resistance to violence and suffering. The third element of my argument is that to speak against injustice is more than human will, it take courage to risk against what may appear as power. However, to chose to act by speaking out against suffering and the horror of trauma is to participate in the

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<sup>55</sup> Daniel 3:25, KJV.

revelation known as the mystery of God present in conditions of human evil against innocents.

To derive at sound reasoning in making my case for the Holy Spirit colliding with trauma, I use scripture to draw out its historical sequence in human narratives sketched across centuries of human experience. These types of exposition will illumines how the church understood God in the stories of their own members' lives. Further, I illustrate how the Holy Spirit is present and understood in human creation. The intent is to support my claim that the perennial presence of the holy is in the human story regardless of era, condition or circumstance, confirming the Oneness of God in all human creation. The epistemological nature of cosmology illustrates how John Polkinghorne and Dwight Hopkins connect their understanding of God/Spirit in all realms of knowing and existence. Their understanding of cosmology of the Holy Spirit informs the theological understanding of the economy Holy Spirit in African American lives, and in particular two African American women.

### **Scripture and the Early Church**

Reference to the Holy Spirit within the ecclesiastical order is made apparent as early as the First Book of the Torah. In Genesis Chapter 1:1*d* record as follows “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The Hebrew interpretation of the Spirit recorded as *wind* is also referenced similarly in the New Testament first century early Church.

Similarly, The Books of Acts: 2:1-2 records the following “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.” While identifying the Spirit as wind another biblical interpretation of the Spirit seems to surface in Jesus’s time in both NT texts, Mark 1:10 and John 1:32. The first record reads, “Just as Jesus came up out of the waters, the heavens were torn and the Spirit descended as a dove.” And the second John 1:32 “And I saw the Spirit descending like a dove coming down on Him.”

Since the earliest recording of the human experience, trauma on the one hand and the encounter of God’s Spirit in suffering on the other, language and words in particular have seemingly been inadequate to tell the whole story in a way that suggest a composite rendering of the experience. To some authors reflections about God and suffering may seem illusive. But, I argue that such a space is often where wounds are made more visible and vulnerable in order to better form a sense of commonality between the harm caused by trauma and transformative healing. Rudolf Otto termed such an experience as awe.

Rudolf Otto observed in the Old Testament periscope that the ...

“... This numinous experience, with its mystery and awe-its *mysterium tremendum*– exhibited as Christ’s Agony in the night of Gethsemane must be viewed, if we are to comprehend or realize at all in our own experience what the import of that agony was. What is the cause of this “sore amazement” and “heaviness,” this soul shaken to its depths, ‘exceeding sorrowful even unto death,’ and this sweat that falls to the ground like great drops of blood? Can it be

ordinary fear of death in the case of one who had had death before his eyes weeks past and who had just celebrated with clear intent his death-feast with his disciples? No, there is more here than the fear of death; there is the awe of the creature before the *mysterium tremendum*, before the shuddering secret of the numen. And the old tales come back to mind as strangely parallel and, as it were, prophetically significant, of Jacob who wrestled with God ‘until the breaking of the day.’<sup>56</sup>

John, the Synoptic writer, described the Spirit as the “Comforter, Who will abide with you forever.” (John 14:16). This biblical edict was later morphed by religiosity and its patristic order that consigned to silence any hint of the intuitive power of the holy for a more outward appearance of ritual and power. Thus, the disciplistic teachings of Jesus Christ and his immediate followers slowly faded into episcopal memory of the organized church, and with it the diminished capacity of the Holy Spirit receded with it as well. It was not until the third century that, Origen (c. 185-c.254) began to define God in terms of “the One.” Here he taught that the inherent duty of human creation is to consciously associate with God thereby affirming sacred oneness held in the Trinity. God’s Love intertwined with human creation as one with the holy.<sup>57</sup>

Origen teachings about that equal placing of three in one with God, constitutes the idea of the Trinity- meaning “*una substantia,*” *hypostases*, ‘*homoousious*’<sup>58</sup> or three substances in one. Even still today, the image of one substance veiled in three is mired in cognitive reasoning about equivalency of the soul in relation to the mind and body.

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<sup>56</sup> Rudolf Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 85.

<sup>57</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, 28.

<sup>58</sup> William C. Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, Volume 1, 48.



## Mysticism and The Holy Spirit

Beginning with the moral ethic of God who sought to know all creation including the commoner, Simeon, born at the cusp of the schism burgeoning between the Eastern and Western Church saw that God was not merely available to the elite of clerical church. Contrary of the approach of earlier mystics, Simeon believed that God's presence and grace was freely given to all regardless of economic status or social class. Grace, as articulated by Simeon, was a salvific gift available to all. In *Standing in God's Holy Fire*, John McGuckin describes Simeon's contribution "The mystic, in his understanding is thus the ordinary Christian who has supreme confidence to stand in God's presence, trusting entirely in penitence, not in good deeds."<sup>59</sup> From a relational deepened perspective, Simeon attending to the Church community with acts of kindness and compassion, faithfully preparing to walk alongside them irrespective of circumstances.

I wept; I shed rivers of tears from my eyes, and cried out with  
inexpressible  
Groans  
And from your ineffable heights you heard me  
Where I lay in the depths of the abyss...  
And leaving all the Powers that surround you  
You passed in haste through all the visible Cosmos

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<sup>59</sup> John Anthony McGuckin, *Standing in God's Holy Fire*, 114.

To stoop down to the place where I was lying,  
 Straightway bringing me your light, casting out the darkness  
 And reviving me with your divine breathes....  
 You captivated me with your beauty and your love.  
 How you wounded me, transforming utterly.<sup>60</sup>

Simeon's prose defies past declarations of Medieval Byzantine mystic hierarchy, whose emphasis was weighted heavily onto the holy and elected ones as having the premier favor of God. McGuckin posits that he (Simeon) railed:

“Against theologians or Christians who think that a relationship with God is only for the saints, and usually for saints of a different, previous age; that this generation cannot expect to have the charismatic gifts of God readily accessible to it, and ought to rest content in a faithfulness to the memories of the great acts of God in the past.”<sup>61</sup>

Simeon's Testament of God's Love abounds in grace. Such a testament could have dually been spoken instead into the ears of seventeenth century American slave planters. Accordingly, the slaves hearing Simeon's words might believe that God had heard their prayers thus rendering in the mystic's prose a reminder that there is a balm in Gilead. Another critical

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<sup>60</sup> John Anthony McGuckin, *Standing in God's Holy Fire*, 115.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid* 115.

lesson taught by Simeon was the prayer of hesychasm.<sup>62</sup> Hesychasm, means prayer in the form of inner dialogue between flesh and the Holy Spirit, interjecting silence into devotion. In this sense, silence is not contained in a similar modifier associated by trauma and shame. In this sense, well presented in Dorothee Soelle's *Phases of Suffering*, silence is perceived as agency of meditative stillness. This vulnerable, "liminal experience"<sup>63</sup> that mystics described as stillness.

Collectively, the meaning of silent stillness embodied within the Hesychasm Prayer could similarly be used to remind the slave of an oceanic experience wherein the silence of life could be jointly experienced with God. Evidence of this can be found in the slaves' spiritual "Blessed Quietness," (1<sup>st</sup> Stanza).

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<sup>62</sup>Hesychasm is a word whose root is *hesychia*,<sup>62</sup> meaning stillness. The language ascribed to the monastic movements of Symeon, Gregory Palamas and Gregory of Syria marked the Byzantine and Eastern Orthodox Church even as it began its ecclesiastical separation from the western Church. The West, characterized by the secularization of the religious scholarship promulgated by Thomas Aquinas, believed in a formalized religion, which in effect situated the experience of God in a rational and mechanistic fashion. Nonetheless, the Eastern Church remained steadfast in the believed that the experiential nature of God was part of the human narrative in what it meant to know God. Thus the Spirit offered to all creation, regardless an opportunity to become as Christ, The Logos, and Word made Flesh in the Eucharist reflects the Spirit in communion with the human condition. To arrive at the state required on the part of seekers a kind of quietness, as an offering to the Spirit in the stillness of their soul. Thus, hesychasm became the sacred mediating ethic by which souls could reconnect with God as Spirit.

<sup>63</sup>James L. Griffith and Melissa Elliott Griffith describe "Liminal experience---like that found in art, play, and religion—is creative, fluid, and cannot be grasped by the logic and categories of everyday life."

*Blessed Quietness*

Joys are flowing like a river since the  
 Comforter has come; He abides with us  
 for-  
 Ever, makes the trusting heart His home.  
 Blessed quietness, holy quietness—What  
 assurance in my soul! On the  
 Stormy sea He speaks peace to me-How  
 the billows cease to roll!<sup>64</sup>

Coinciding with mystics was the work of thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). He was a Dominican who advanced a sort of theology that heavily weighted depended upon Aristotelian and Augustinian thinking. Stressing the organic physicality of life rather than the contextual origin/nurture, Aquinas saw natural law as the authenticated source of human reasoning to uncover truth in God. Knowledge of the source of empirical observation required consistent and objective data gathering in which to prove and validate truth. Undergirding the epistemological praxis of rational approach was the intent by Aquinas' court to critically insulate ecclesiastical scholasticism into the emerging scientific movement of the 14 an 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Hence, a foundation was based in theological understanding, which emphasized scholasticism anchored by reason as slighted superiority to intuitive knowing.

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<sup>64</sup> The New National Baptist Hymnal-21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition, song no. 130.

Consequently the approach interpreted as *a priori*<sup>65</sup> not only influenced religion but also the field of both medicine then and even today.

The fourteenth century German theologian Meister Eckhart would expand on the way the topic of mysticism was approached in the emerging scientific age. Eckhart would do so by arguing that the perennial pastoral message concerning God required that one emphasized yearning by the Spirit to be in relationship with all creation.<sup>66</sup> Eckhart practiced the belief that the Spirit is transfigured as a Creature groaning to be in relationship with creation. This sacred longing extends beyond goodness to human sin and trauma. Even there, God manifested in Christ is portrayed as Suffering, both in the nomination and active meaning of the word. God becomes suffering, or for that matter sin and trauma, in order to reconcile with all humanity.<sup>67</sup>

Eckhart's ministry underscored the penultimate resolve of God to restore and heal despite of human condition. (Psalms 23 and 30) John McGluckin describes this way: "It is the sacramental, incarnational mystery of how the divine Lord lifts the one who prays into the transforming presence of his own holiness, just as the Logos once took

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<sup>65</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, 95

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 94.

flesh in time and space, and continues to take flesh across time and space in the mysteries of the Eucharist.”<sup>68</sup>

In his article entitled *The Animal Sublime: Rethinking The Sikh Mystical Body*,<sup>69</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhogal makes several cogent statements regarding the nature of the Cosmic Body/ God and its inherent four stage mysticism. Beginning with a description of the term “mystic” as one whom is radically awakened to a state of non-dual witnessing or awareness in, of, and through the body by overcoming the dualistic “I/mind”<sup>70</sup> broadens narrative to include the Spirit in relationship to the penultimate promise of God. In so doing, the argument is advanced to reflect a connection with the Cosmic Force/God and humanity.

Regarding these and other theories, I believe cosmology of the Holy Spirit is found to be inherent in the idea that One God is the Composite of Three. Moreover, the cosmology of God in the Holy Spirit bespeaks of a Cosmic Being whose Presence is timeless. This means that yesterday, today and tomorrow as such consigns sacristy as a gift to humanity. Accordingly, the communal nature of God is both immanent and transcendent emphasizing God is the Author and Finisher (Hebrews 12:2)

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<sup>68</sup> John Anthony McGuckin, *Standing in God's Holy Fire*, 121.

<sup>69</sup> This article appeared in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 80 Number 4 December 2012, 856-891.

<sup>70</sup> Balbinder, Singh Bhogal, “The Animal Sublime: Rethinking The Sikh Mystical Body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 80, No. 4, Dec. 2012, 861.

of humanity in whose incarnate self –Jesus Christ is Bishop of Our souls.

(1 Pet 2:25)

### **Cosmology, Narrative and Stories**

Cosmology is a term often associated with science, in particular areas of science whose basis is situated around a specific inquiry or stated hypothesis. In this section, I make the case for associating the cosmology of the Holy Spirit within the human experience. Of note is the identity of those whose human experience is identified, herein. Particularly, why the Holy Spirit’s markings are visible throughout African American individual and intergenerational accounts as legitimate claim against diminishing the dignity and rights of whole classes and groups of people.

However, Nancy Murphy and George Ellis<sup>71</sup> would argue that cosmology has a much to do with science as it does with theology. Hence their co-joined work focuses on the efficacy of moral constituency in theology, ethics and cosmology. In his book, *Defining Love*, Thomas Oord argues that cosmology, in addition to its application to microcosmology,<sup>72</sup> quantum physics or macrocosmology,<sup>73</sup> astrophysics, and the nature of metacosmology<sup>74</sup> applies to factors surrounding the non-physical world.

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<sup>71</sup>Ian G. Borbour, *Religion and Science*, 313.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas, Oord, *Defining Love*, 138.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, page 138.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, page 137.

Thus, the possibility of associating the words cosmology and love in the same phrase is not so strange after all.

That the evidence derived from the big bang theory on the one hand or entropy on the other does not in and of itself answer the age- old question of who started it. If a big bang indeed occurred, then who ignited the first spark? In terms of evolution, out of who or what did the first seed derive? Oord goes further in his argument that cosmology and love are two parts of the same Author's equation. However, this is the point where I connect with cosmology and the Spirit. It bears attention to John Polkinghorne's theory that argues "the human soul is the carrier between this world and the next,"<sup>75</sup> and in so doing reaffirms what others over the centuries both in this country and the around the globe have held as truth that the power of God is both immanent and transcendent Spirit. This communion between Creator and created abides always in our souls is the Creation / *ex nihilo*.<sup>76</sup> Polkinghorne posits that God, and not the kinetic function of chaos bear witness to the prevenient factor of holy in the human experience.

This same experience of God is also portrayed in the African American culture as song, wail, moan and testimony the term Holy Spirit' encounter in suffering. Accordingly, understanding of the Word made flesh and

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<sup>75</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in the Quest for Truth*, 104.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Oord, *Defining Love*, page 155/ William C. Placher, Editor. *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 86.



Spirit has become the root of the African American theological anthropological understanding of God in life situations that addresses evil, suffering or trauma. In this regard, the agential grace of God associates *cosmology* and *Spirit* in the theological understanding of “...the earth being uniform and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water.”<sup>77</sup>

Polkinghorne observed “in the seventeenth century it was common thought to say that God had written two books, the books of scripture and the book of nature. Both were read together to see if this were done correctly there could be no contradiction between them since both were written by the same Author.”<sup>78</sup> His response suggests that while traces of both “books” remained in the on-going argument within modern American, discourse about the beneficence of imposing the scientific – laden rubric over religion and in particular theology, the latter category is critically significant. It is significant to the degree that while science probes for answers to sets of questions which overtime may serve as building blocks in the search for truth, religion offers a similar view. Its focus is the continuous explanation of the mystery of God revealed in the human experience. Rudolf Otto raised the same kind of critical description in his work, *Idea of the Holy*. Awe that occurs when the

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<sup>77</sup> Genesis 1:1 JPS-Hebrew \_English TANAKH

<sup>78</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in the Quest for Truth*, 32.

humanity encounters the holy is located “in the light of, and with the background of, this numinous experience, with its mystery and awe—the *mysterium tremendum*—that Christ’s Agony in the night of Gesthesame must be viewed.”<sup>79</sup>

Hence, with awe and silence on the one hand and curiosity intertwined in both science and religion on the other, I wish to probe the question of how the Holy Spirit’s cosmology survived in life stories and narratives of women and men sufficient enough to author the beliefs of slaves more than ten centuries later. Notwithstanding, in the earlier centuries of the Christian Church, debate ensued among the Cappadocia fathers about how to incorporate the Nicene Creed-Three substances in one, in the magisterial order since creedal developments suggested a God the Father and Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior are one. Although all three were considered equal, the significance of the Holy Spirit remained relegated to the rear of Western Trinitarian epistemological thought so much so that the Eastern Orthodox broke with the Roman Church in 1054. The sense that God was the head with Jesus, the Son as the Word made Flesh, obscuring the role of the Holy Spirit as Comforter, influenced twentieth century theologians, prompting Karl Barth to assert the transcendence of God was above all knowing and understanding of human kind. Countering Barth was Paul Tillich believed the immanence of God in the human condition

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<sup>79</sup> Rudolf Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 84.

so inspired humanity that they sought to ground their faith in the sought after Being of God.

In his book, entitled *Being Human*, Dwight Hopkins addresses the nature of this line of thinking to “nineteenth –century anthropology conflated and therefore identified social inequality with natural inequality; social differences followed the laws of nature in the new racial science of man.”<sup>80</sup> This interpretation became a model for an emerging world nation in which people deemed inferior and of little or no value were considered useful in driving a wealth-asset based economy. This group of people comprised largely of the servant and worker classes were on the surface limited by those individuals and families who owned and invested in America particularly at the beginning of the nineteenth and on into the twentieth century. From the owners, oil oligarchs and railroad titans, meaningful knowledge was of the kind that was quantified as the objects of land, material or even cash was. To think, act or operate from an intuitive perspective was immaterial to the goal of winning and building empires.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *Being Human*, 146.

<sup>81</sup> Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 282.

## Theological Interpretation of the Holy Spirit

Associating stories with the terms “Holy Spirit” and theological anthropology is intended to the message to the reader what I consider significant to the trauma narrative. In articulating the meaning of the trinity in the human experience, the human voice is made more effective in its demonstrative and resistant power. At the intersection of the Holy Spirit’s encounter with human brokenness is the moral ethic of Vulnerability.<sup>82</sup> Vulnerability is a kind of mediating instrument through which the moral and ethical sacrament of God is exposed by the movement of the Holy Spirit. Vulnerability acts as a “narratological double”<sup>83</sup> or double consciousness<sup>84</sup> visible in the pain and suffering, alongside the Promise of joy and recovery. Especially within the African American experience of terror and trauma, tracing of God/ the Holy Spirit

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<sup>82</sup> The term “Vulnerability” is based upon the idea purported by Martha Fineman, Director of the Vulnerability and the Human Condition Initiative, Department of Religion and Law, Emory. She argues that Vulnerability is a human condition framed within a fissure of positive and negative properties. From a positive perspective, Vulnerability is transformative act of healing whereby its initial negative impact, characterized as harm, is incorporated within a holistic inner dialogue with the Holy Spirit, then used to generate acts of resilience and recovery. “Properly understood, vulnerability is also generative and presents opportunities for innovation and growth, creativity and fulfillment.”

<sup>83</sup> Anthony Read, *Another Map of the South Side*: Native Son as Postcolonial Novel IN *African American Review*, 45.4 (Winter 2012): 603-615@ 2013 The John Hopkins University Press and Saint Louis University.

<sup>84</sup> Reference to WEB Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* concept of “double consciousness” made in a recent book by Henry Louis Gates, JR. entitled *Life Upon these Shores*, 1513-2008, page 234.

lines the text of spirituals and stories of ancestral slave narratives.

Beginning with the intuitive understanding of God, the African American storyline involves imagery of an active and creative Healer, One who restores to wholeness broken parts of their lives. This meaning, which is confirmed in the African American Church and community, is radically different from rational- oriented empiricism of America. It remains even more so in today's inner city communities. William Edward Burghardt DuBois's prophetic words suggested that the African American story of life has had to take into account different conceptual realities.

Hence, DuBois crafted the phrase "double consciousness"<sup>85</sup> to underscore the reality confronted by African Americans church and community whose perceived their survival as dependent their upon astute capability to manage two disparate identities honed within two societies. Thus, while attending to the passion and worth of individual member's inner self, the church had to also incorporate the meaning of a collective conscious out of which a community's legacy and identity could be honed. I argue by emphasizing what it may mean to encounter God, the word *holy* is stressed in order to enhance the experience of encountering God in the midst of life's trauma.

An earlier writing by poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, entitled "We Wear the Mask" would address the issue in a slightly different way. Conscious

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<sup>85</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 63-64.

that in order to survive in America, African Americans had to remain vigilant in knowing the terms of engagement in white society and also within their own respective African American community. Misstep caused by either confusing boundaries or misguided confidence could result in death or at the very least dismantling of one's place often depicted as meager servant status in broader society. Knowing the rudiments of appropriate language, demeanor, and behavior in either society was necessary in order to be successful. Vulnerability meant boundaries had been breached or ignored causing the individual to experience being in a liminal space without a sufficient rudder to navigate.

The consequence of an ongoing dialogue between African Americans and God re-engenders the Holy Spirit in the living legacy of life. Stories and Narratives comprise the crucible of theological understanding of God thereby promoting a particular way of knowing. -Hence knowledge gathering in the cosmos. Anthony Padovano asserts that "man lives not only by certitudes of reality but also by intuition,"<sup>86</sup> The unction of Holy Spirit to reveal knowledge does not mitigate or obscure the value of scientific inquiry, it "(intuition) makes man aware of his situation in existence."<sup>87</sup> This situation requires an association with God even within the moral boundary created by trauma so as to allow both mystery and

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<sup>86</sup> Anthony Padovano, *the estranged god*, 48.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

“Being”<sup>88</sup> to commune towards the sacred purpose of healing and restoration. Thus, I advance the claim regardless of time or space; the persistent presence of the holy connects the human narrative in deeper and more extensive way. Whether the record affirm the presence in the soul and spirit of female followers of Christ, the monastic and Reform followers, African American slave narratives or more recently, traumatic agony heard in the voice of Lesley McSpadden, the penultimate Love of God is made real in the expression of hope.

The twoness<sup>89</sup> of vulnerability is a symbiotic ethic employed by the Holy Spirit as a source of critical resilience in the human story and a sacred perennial vow to humanity. Likewise, this twoness of vulnerability on the hand acts in the form of a sacred dyad between God as Spirit and the created self and on the other, brokenness-violation of the human soul. As a tool to interrogate trauma, vulnerability becomes a part of the sacral encounter, simultaneously embodying both the voice of anguish and the

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<sup>88</sup> Anthony Padovano, *the estranged god*, 49.

<sup>89</sup> The word “two-ness” refers to a binary referenced by W.E.B. DuBois in his early 20<sup>h</sup> century work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, as the manner in which an individual may perceive the phenomena of reality, 9.

Dubois argued for the black person, survival dependent upon their ability to see into two worlds, their own and the broader white society. Based upon an accurate assessment, an individual could then act or re-act to whenever or whomever they might encounter with agency and assurance. This “double-consciousness” was necessary if the intended outcome of the person was to secure a faithful living in an environment in which he or she found himself or herself otherwise, powerless.

salvific response by God. Consequently, I assert that there is ascribed to vulnerability a palimpsest two-sided coin describing traumatized narrative and liminal space in which the Holy Spirit transforms pain and alienation into wholeness. A theological encounter occurring between the suffering Spirit and the recovered strengthens and reconciles the human soul back to God.

### **AJ's Expression of the Holy Spirit**

#### Narrative

I experienced the Holy Spirit as a child at age 3 or 4 when my 2-year-old nephew died. Some may call this imagination; however, it was a healing experience for me. I don't know if this happened in my dreams while awake or asleep, however, I saw a silhouette of a Spirit come down to earth and take my little nephew's body up towards the sky. As I reflect and remember this incident even now in my adulthood, I believe it was God's way of helping me to grieve and accept my nephew's death at a young age. This was healing which in turn lessened the trauma and devastation of losing a loved one at a young age. I don't remember crying about his death. I just remember the tragedy around the circumstances. He took a blow to the head from my sister's boyfriend that shook his brain and killed him. I was no older than 4, and he was 2. God communicated to me through a visual spirit, the silhouette of a Spirit taking my nephew's body ascending towards the sky.<sup>90</sup>

This description of the Spirit's presence recurs repeatedly in AJ's stories as well as in her multi-generational reflections. Her narrative echoes the kind of quietness that seems to occur when the human spirit once again is reminded of God's Promise never to leave or forsake them.

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<sup>90</sup> AJ Journal Reflection, January, 2014



The African American spiritual entitled “Blessed *Quietness*” expands this imagery. The spiritual captures this provocative image of what it may mean to encounter suffering of such an extent that the Spirit of God is the only salve that can heal. Through this process, the wounded are able to bear the weight of traumatic horror by subsequently leaning into the Holy Spirit and away from despair. Hence, by this song and so many others that the phenomenon of trauma assumes a different meaning for the wounded reminding them of a sacred connection that transforms souls from disruption to one of cathartic soul repair.

Joan Mitchell observes that “people whose social locations are on the margins typically have double or triple vision; they know themselves through their difference from one or more dominate social groups.”<sup>91</sup> I believe that Mitchell has put her finger on the proverbial import of narrative. But more particularly, Mitchell locates the way in which narrative is named, assigned, interpreted and articulated. In particular, inner disclosure of what the narrator sees in the spirit and experiences as real and verifiable is as its base, an attempt to understand and make meaning for both themselves and those around them, of what it may mean to encounter the Holy Spirit in the context of trauma.

In summary, from second century Christianity to mystic communities and later slave and contemporary testimonies witnessed to the presence of

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<sup>91</sup> Joan Mitchell, *Beyond Fear and Silence*, 51.

Holy Spirit in a religious community known as Christianity. To feel God moving in one's soul, to witness the Holy Spirit's movement in the chaos and confusion caused by trauma is to promote concreteness as a living sacrament within human testimony. Paul Tillich described this experience as ground of being.<sup>92</sup> A life script that is not constrained by trauma or suffering either in the beginning or middle, but rather is chosen to act as gathered wisdom, has become a means to transform evil into a renewed story of grace, mercy and the Love of God. Such a story speaks to God's power to step into suffering therein being present with souls melding recovery with a foretaste of the coming kingdom. To this extent, soul-healing requires belief in order to enter into a deepened discourse with God. This belief begins with hope. An inquiry about what it may mean for believers to "peer through a glass dimly, we shall know as we are known."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 156.

<sup>93</sup> 1 Coriinthians 13:12, KJV.

## Chapter Three

### A Review of History and Practice of Trauma Treatment

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”<sup>94</sup>

The previous chapter addressed the historical movement of the Holy Spirit documented in the early Christian church movement followed by the effectual nature of cosmology. In this chapter, I trace the history of trauma as a principle of therapeutic intervention from mid-twentieth century to current time. The ancient Greek linguistic definition of trauma is prescribed as “wound” giving<sup>95</sup> consequent meaning to acts of violation. Trauma is inflicted upon the body by an act which poignantly segments the horrific event into three stages: mourning, remembrance, and framing a new beginning as a means to *see* life beyond the trauma. In effect, life becomes imagined restored, moving past the trauma.

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<sup>94</sup> Psalms 27:1, KJV.

<sup>95</sup> J. Jeffery Means, *Trauma & Evil*, 65.

## A Review of Contemporary Trauma Theory

In presenting her work, Judith Herman challenged the then current scholarship that physical, emotional and spiritual trauma can extend over time causing deep and unconscionable wounds to the human psyche. Her model underscores the plethora of scholars I have studied/researched/presented. Anne Harrington and her theories related years later to theorists like Maggie Schauer and colleagues, and Bessel van der Kolk, whose work involves solely mind-body dualism and healing. “Do we humans divide neatly in two?”<sup>96</sup> Dan McAdams struck an interesting and provocative note regarding trauma and the emergence of redemption in ‘traumatic scenes.’<sup>97</sup> He argues that in the repeated telling of trauma, the narrator becomes skilled in teasing trauma’s pain from lessons learned. The later becomes the embedded inclusion of stories and historical narratives that serve to lay claim on generativity in the human script. Unlike Jerome Brunner, McAdams in his analysis of meaning and its role in redemptive healing from trauma and tragedy, cites slave narratives as a way to procure “psychological themes that also figure prominently in the life stories of the Black adults who have participated in ...studies of generativity (and narrative identity)”<sup>98</sup> empirical, rationalized model to make his case. Brunner, on the other hand, asserts that while the

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<sup>96</sup> Anne Harrington, *The Cure Within*, 251.

<sup>97</sup> Dan McAdams, *Redemptive Self*, 193.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 177.

modernist prerogative of paradigmatic analysis is considered sacrosanct in American society the “imaginative application”<sup>99</sup> provides a broader opportunity in which to categorize the meaning of stories and narratives. But John Swinton counters this argument with his analysis of knowledge. Swinton claims: narrative knowledge is perceived to be legitimate, rigorous and valid form of knowledge that informs us about the world in ways that are publicly significant.”<sup>100</sup>

Defining trauma as a wound caused by the unwarranted act of one individual directed at another is categorically ascribed to Judith Herman whose theories will be discussed in depth in a later section. Why? Judith Herman’s work comprehensively examined the phenomena of trauma evidenced by unvoiced psychological pain and suffering. While others before her characterized trauma as a disruptive source, particularly the violent disruption experienced as numbness, they considered the residual effects of trauma as temporary. Stephen Roberts’s uses the term, *disequilibrium*<sup>101</sup> in his work, drawn around Disaster and Recovery.

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<sup>99</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Language, Culture, Self*, 168.

<sup>100</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 38.

<sup>101</sup> The term “disequilibrium” is derived from consensus implying that the ultimate preferred state of human consciousness is one that is both stable and balance. When balance happens, the individual experience consensus of behavior, mores and socialized norms. Along with Caplan, Roberts, too inferred that disequilibrium occurs when a crisis or unexpected disaster happens causing a change in one’s homeostatic state of being. –Lee Ann Hoff, *People in Crisis*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 12.

Beginning with trauma documents within the context of the Korean War to current trauma research, I attempt to draw similarities between the manner in which trauma was described and the consequent treatment modalities that were offered to affected persons by it. In effect, the methodology of the late twentieth century perceived trauma as a malady that could be corrected by physiological –medically oriented care, as opposed to methods, which might address deeper wounds of the soul. Intermittently referred to by theorists in the field, soul wounds were absent from new models to begin that began surfacing in the field. This omission occurred even as modern American both referenced the increasingly pluralistic demographic landscape and began the recovery of narratives and wisdom teaching of Americans whose absence from analytic discourse was glaringly apparent.

In particular, African American scholars, theologians and theorists began to emerge onto the public stage. Nonetheless, academic, economic or political discussion of soul wounds and its impact upon the rewriting of trauma began to alter the dialogue about inclusion of the concept, its variant descriptors, as well as types of treatment ascribed to it and by whom.

Recently, the prevailing approach of paradigmatic -based trauma treatment, heretofore deeply concentrated in psychical –based mechanistic methods, is being increasingly challenged. Who gets to name trauma and

why? To who is the benefit ascribes regarding its applied method and at what costs? When is the constraint caused by trauma a responsibility of the public/social institution that may bear some ethical and economic responsibility about the wider context and applied use of the term? An underlying assumption of my study is whether or not specialists identified as medically trained (professionals, psychiatrists, psychologists, crisis care workers, pastoral counselors) have enabled a metanarrative regarding trauma treatment to continue in the face of questionable results. The medically- biased model renders diagnosis of trauma which assigns injury to the mind and body without reference to the soul. Thereby soul wounds caused by violence can be said to people, debase causing injury of the kind and nature that warrants intervention by the Holy Spirit.

In her book, *Wounds of the Spirit*, Traci West makes a similar point about the kind of injury identified as trauma. Trauma requires acknowledgement of a broader meaning, particularly when applied to a variety of persons harmed.

Moreover, I assume that spiritual concerns are present within and amidst all the personal and political dimensions of the experience of violence. It is an axiom of my Christian theological understanding that attention to diverse realms of human experience is required for a full and normative vision of human wholeness.<sup>102</sup>

Taking a slightly different view of trauma from Traci West, I consider it to be a duality of chaos and opportunity. Trauma wounds

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<sup>102</sup> Traci West, *Wounds of the Spirit*, 3.

unexpectedly and suddenly. Its effect can be experienced as chaotic. But when chaos is dismantled by inner resolve to move past the pain and sorrow created by trauma, generative energy can emerge from *something within*. This tendered power inspires souls towards recovery and redemption. The result can be expressed as cathartic wholeness, meaning that a deepened imaging of God has occurred within the suffering and agony caused by traumatic events. The wholeness of which I speak tends to author an element of generative growth and recovery. This occurs neither in the avoidance nor in the repression of trauma, but rather in the conscious embrace of what has already occurred. Rejecting the reality of the experienced trauma would only serve to obfuscate any hint of recovery and transformation permitting the trauma to permeate the conscious and unconscious soul throughout life. There is the more. It is found *in* the silence of trauma and despair.

Before proceeding, I believe it is necessary to reiterate the four critical terms used in my study. There are: The Holy Spirit, trauma, suffering, healing and narrative. Conflated against the modernist discipline of pastoral counseling and womanist theology these concepts present an interpretative quagmire. Indeed, what constitutes trauma in pluralistic American society today? How are individuals and communities heretofore held invisible and marginalized provided trauma care?



In addressing these issues and more, I began with a brief discussion about the Holy Spirit. I will now turn to trauma, its history and practice in the West.

### **Holistic Trauma Care**

As medical practice had begun to influence treatment not only of the physical body but also of the mind, the proscriptive direction of trauma care seemed to be lacking. Lacking from the standpoint that trauma perceived solely as wounding of the body and mind. The mind also interpreted narrowly,<sup>103</sup> limited meaning and characterization of both-trauma and mind resulting in medicine's failure to fully address ailment of suffering soul. Objective practices of scientific-oriented medicine Anton Boisen argued against because he believed they precluded understanding of the entirety of inner suffering and the manner in which it afflicts the soul. Rather than objectivity, he argued for a more appropriate acumen --the subjective interpretation. Subjectivity would allow a person's own agency to recover from the onslaught of fear caused by the at times the sudden disruption of trauma. I believe, in these cases, the experience of suffering is elevated in that the human voice is muted silenced of trauma. According

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<sup>103</sup> Reference the definition of the mind in Solomon and Siegel's book, *Healing Trauma*, Daniel J. Siegel, describes the definition of the mind within the Webster Dictionary as "1.the soul;; 2-the intellect and 3...functional entity , based ultimately upon physical processes.." 8.

to Gerkin, the *givenness*<sup>104</sup> occurs at the point the person is able to reclaim his or her power to act and chose. In this regard, I argue that it is at this point the soul and Spirit co-joins with the holy to transform injury to wholeness.

Bosien,<sup>105</sup> a patient in a psychiatric hospital would pose these questions to a set of professionals who needed to understand that objectified knowing in itself could not fully address existential questions raised by wounded souls. Wounding of the kind Boisen posited was caused by a breach in making meaning between human experience that resulted in insufficient answers about moral and ethical rightness. For this reason, Boisen contended that medical practice was deficient in addressing care caused by deepened inner wounds, further requiring seminaries to include in its own pedagogy training which support pastoral care *turn towards* its theological base.<sup>106</sup> Boisen self- diagnosed his condition as trauma caused by uncontrollable life situations and in response began to draft a new method described according to the primary subject of injury. His method, based on the “living human document,”<sup>107</sup> became the textual model to explore the human experience.

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<sup>104</sup> Charles Gerkin IN Robert C. Dyksra, *Images of Pastoral Care*, 37.

<sup>105</sup> Anton T. Boisen, “The Living Human Document,” IN *Images of Pastoral Care*, 22.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid,33.

## Interrogating Trauma Care

Trauma defines its victims by the sudden onset of unanticipated and unwarranted acts of force. The violence inherent in trauma *ignores* God's power in the human experience, attempting by its very nature to circumvent it. Trauma disrupts humanity's relationship to God.

“Trauma is often expressed in terms of what exceeds categories of comprehension, of what exceeds the human capacity to take in and process the external world. To think of this historically entails thinking about ways in which events like genocide, mass natural disasters, wars, foreign occupation of territories continue to shape and reshape communities and nations in the aftermath.<sup>108</sup>”

My study examines the ways in which the Holy Spirit is revealed in the current and historical lived experience concerning trauma. My premise extracts traced accounts of God/The Holy Spirit's presence in the African American stories and histories of women and families. Situated at the interstices of my study's ethos are four core themes: The Holy Spirit, trauma-violence, story, and narrative. In spite of trauma's disruption, individual accounts reveal the sacred presence of the holy consistently prevalent in acts of healing and restoration.

I present four research questions that explore qualitatively the participants' stories of trauma and violence. My questions are: To what extent is evidence of soul healing directly the result of a *holy* encounter?

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<sup>108</sup> S.Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 4.

How does trauma/violence connect to the human soul in such a way that it becomes a reflection of God in the midst? Furthermore, how does the brutality of violence serve to broker connections with the Holy Spirit? What descriptors might be traditionally passed through generations which might render glimpses of opportunities to obstruct trauma's narrative, providing a forward proscription into family legacies?

Finally, to illustrate trauma's instrumentality of predatory maleficence and systemic violence and injustice, I employ the African American female voice as a purveyor of adequacy when apportioned against soul wounding. Therefore, I make the claim these women's experiences are authentic and thus ought not be subject to reducibility, instead placed in legitimate standing alongside traditional voices of theology and interpretative practice about trauma in the human story.

### **The Development of Trauma Theory**

However, we find that in earlier trauma research (particularly concerning its effect upon the common human experience), there was considerable discussion about what constitutes trauma and how its basic components are applied. Widely considered a classic crisis study, E. Lindemann's work focused on trauma victims and their perception of loss as a consequence of trauma. Those persons to whom tragic circumstances occurred seemed to suffer severe psychotic pathologies. Recovery did not significantly include ample opportunity to acknowledging their loss.

Lindemann's theory would prove to be beneficial to Hoff's research, significant in underscoring her interest on crisis theory, Lindemann examined the phenomena of loss in relation to grief and bereavement. He conducted a quantitative investigation of the 1942 Coconut Melody Lounge fire.<sup>109</sup>

The catastrophe claimed 422 victims.<sup>110</sup> His findings illustrated how people involved in the tragedy tended to avoid the grief stage of bereavement because of the enormity of their repressed feelings of guilt as survivors. The suddenness of enormous loss of human life tended to block adverse memories of the event. Lindemann posited that the situation created by the fire not only was unanticipated but created feelings of disequilibrium, that when left unattended, may have lead to chronic personality and psychic disorders.

In the nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud embarked upon a scientific journey whose emphasis involved the careful and systematic excavation of the unconscious as a ubiquitous player of psychopathology. Freud surmised that psychic conflict was largely caused by intrusion of negative external experiences rather than the instinctual nature of the human

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<sup>109</sup> Lee Ann Hoff, *People in Crisis*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 11.

<sup>110</sup> Reference is made here to a study by E. Lindermann on crisis caused by human error IN Lee Ann Hoff's book, *People in Crisis*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 11.

mind.<sup>111</sup> However, Freud would later shift his theory to focus solely on the aspect of nature as the qualifying agent in psychopathology. For Freud, trauma represented the caustic balance between disruption and profound order. Even today, trauma acts the forklift in psychoanalysis in ascribing what area of reality causes the greater pain and suffering? The interior strivings between desires and moral good afforded by social accountability tenets or is it the societal conditions and its impact upon the human experience that configure the image of suffering caused by trauma? Freud's later claim of nature as the precipitating factor of trauma- meaning illumined instinctive, primitive as the forces of human drives may have been largely due to his unbridled resistance to tight-lipped Victorian Europe.<sup>112</sup> Categorically, Freud argued that human drives energize and pulsate its way into the ego's unconscious, causing a form of desire that later find its way into the id and superego's own unconscious. When drives are allowed to operate without the regulatory accountability standards set by the superego, disequilibrium ought to be experienced.

Decades later, theorists such as Lindemann would argue the opposite from Freud. His theory supported the argument of nature or environment as the principle agent of trauma. Moreover, in cases where trauma was so profound as in the incidence of the Coconut Melody Lounge life, chronic

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<sup>111</sup> Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J. Black, *Freud and Beyond*, 208.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 208-214.

repression caused by sudden crisis served to make psychic conflict and mental and emotional maladies even more complex. Lindemann found that if individuals were willing to counteract their repression by confronting their grief, they could then become enabled in order to address underlying emotions, causing a recovery that would be highly authentic and sustainable.

Signified by suddenness as a prevailing tenet of loss related to crisis, Lindemann laid the foreground for exploring crisis on the basis of individual conditions and community. He leads the way for others to follow in the exploration of the interpretative nature of crisis and its impact upon the individual, family and community. Lindemann concluded that without the critical processing of bereavement and grief, the intricate nature of healing is severely curtailed.

In 1957 J. S. Tyhurst<sup>113</sup> used the term *crisis* to address chaos caused by natural disaster. He argued that crisis occurs as a result of disaster due to explicit and implicit disconnections, which often disrupt normalcy within individual and family patterns. Tyhurst further claimed that the state of disequilibrium or a lack of homeostasis (Ludwig von Bertalanffy, 1968)<sup>114</sup> was often caused by a crisis because disruption usually results in relocation from physical surroundings. Relocation causes discontinuance

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<sup>113</sup> Lee Ann Hoff, *People in Crisis*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 11.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

of familiar landmarks thereby leading to causing heightened anxiety and imbalance.

Some years later, Gerald Caplan's<sup>115</sup> theory emerged. His analysis of environment research included spirituality as a dynamic operating within community. Caplan gathered data related to social-cultural determinates correlated by individual's demonstrated mental and emotional coping skills. Substantially, he found that who did not have support individuals who experienced crisis either denied or confronted their trauma, based upon visible support from the community. Caplan found that those who did not have support often encountered greater difficulties in successfully re-entering society. Caplan's work expanded the notion of how to clinically attend to a crisis by establishing the integrative systems of support, within community, locating them within local (just as importantly), social, economic and ethnic-cultural resources. By this interjecting his theory into later crisis and trauma care approaches, he may have extended conversation into nuanced ways in which to attribute meaningful change and generative recovery.

Building to some extent on Caplan's work, Jennifer Hillman's<sup>116</sup> research revealed two critical determinates of trauma. Hillman suggested

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<sup>115</sup> Lee An Hoff, *People in Crisis*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 13-14.

<sup>116</sup> Jennifer Hillman, *Crisis and Intervention and Trauma: New Approaches to Evidence – Based Practice*, 73-75.



that history and longevity have separate and distinct impacts upon the manner in which trauma is defined. Hillman surmised that by using the term ‘posttraumatic stress syndrome’,<sup>117</sup> thus emphasizing the after-effects of trauma, attention by researchers and practitioners would be extended to include repressed psychological conflicts that might reveal deepened soul wounds. Hillman suggests that immediate reactions only address surface wounds. However, the individual begins to adjust to the initial reaction of the trauma, merely assessing life-threatening wounds to their physical body, spiritual and cognitive damage may begin to surface over time. At this point, Hillman posits, a modicum of direct attention is both necessary and beneficial. Hillman’s research and later research by Lee Ann Hoff, would jointly come to view trauma in relationship to longer-term psychic ailments.

However, the work of the aforementioned researchers did not reference spirituality until Rosalyn Karaban introduced it in her book, *Crisis Caring*.<sup>118</sup> Her research findings explored at length the importance of spiritual care in trauma cases.

Adding to the narrative about trauma and crisis is *Disaster Spiritual Guide*, the work of Rabbi Stephen B. Roberts and Rev. Willard W.C.

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<sup>117</sup> Jennifer Hillman, *Crisis and Intervention and Trauma: New Approaches to Evidence-Based Practice*, 63.

<sup>118</sup> Roslyn Karaban, *Crisis Caring*, 41.

Ashley. They introduce a new adjectival descriptor of unexpected events, using the term disaster, as “an event that causes serious loss, destruction, unhappiness, or death.”<sup>119</sup> Although similar to some extent to the meanings given by earlier researchers to the topic, both Roberts and Ashley make the point that in previous research, the two terms had not been nominally interpreted or associated with the events, crisis and trauma, even though, the probability of loss, death and grieving were significantly heightened in either of the two prior conditions. Furthermore, Ashley and Roberts concurred that a significant factor concerning disaster was its element of surprise and given the context, perceived inevitability. Surprise in the sense a disaster can and often does occur without warning and is unwarranted occurrence without regard to person, region or location.

Disaster raises the realness of trauma to the forefront of human consciousness because it disrupts abruptly lives leaving the residual of soul- wounding in its aftermath. Ultimately trauma’s affect depends largely upon whether the individual perceives that what has occurred to them is either minimal or is extremely intensive. If disaster is viewed an act of nature then the probability of fault placed on another human being would prove baseless. But if disaster is perceived as a traumatic, act of violation no matter the cause (God or human maliciousness), prompt and

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<sup>119</sup> Rabbi Stephen B. Roberts and Rev. Willard W.C. Ashley, *Disaster Spiritual Guide*, 141.

critical assessment is required to avert a deepened psychological and spiritual ailment.

Brief historical tracing of trauma reveal that as the term became synonymous with varied descriptors signifying chronicity of ailments, reactions by both persons directly affected and by their immediate community. More than one factor, later researchers noted phases of trauma conflated by reported findings of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross stages of grief.<sup>120</sup> Ross suggested that grief encompasses five basic steps: (1) denial, (2) anger, (3) bargaining, (4) depression and (5) acceptance, which may directly or indirectly affect how trauma is perceived. Roberts and Ashley clearly noted that disaster while separate and distinct of trauma, may encompass major life changing reactions. When left unnoticed and without critical attention these reactions can involve into long-lasting and potentially debilitating conditions for both individual and community.

Both psychological and sociological research has presented different approaches based upon whatever terminology is being used. Lee Ann Hoff in her groundbreaking work entitled *People in Crisis*, 4<sup>th</sup> situates her work within the rubric of crisis. She bases its core determinants upon sudden, unexpected, temporary occurrences with no long-term residual effects. According to Hoff,

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<sup>120</sup> Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*,160.

“Crisis is an acute emotional upset arising from situational, developmental, or sociocultural sources resulting in a temporary inability to cope by means of one’s usual problem-solving devices.”<sup>121</sup>

By her definition, Hoff establishes a clear distinction between crisis and trauma presupposing a modicum of normalcy before the crisis. She also assumes that in time, normalcy will return after the suddenness of the event have been absorbed in to an individual’s life narrative. From her perspective, the individual immersed in a crisis experiences a break in their homeostatic balance. This causes disparate emotional and mental, anxiety, and then has the potential to regain control of their environment by recapturing their previously held positive emotive state.

Hoff’s contribution to the field of crisis care is clearly depicted in her rubric entitled “Crisis Paradigm.”<sup>122</sup> Here she outlines areas, that both describe and underscore tested protocol and approaches to crisis restoration. She identifies four general areas: (1) crisis origins, (2) personal crisis & manifestations, (3) aids to positive resolutions .The fourth area includes (4a) Positive crisis resolution and (4b) Negative crisis resolution. Both categories (1) and (3) show integrated circles while (2) and (4) are composites of linear divisions. Each of Hoff’s section is illustrated, with arrows interprets the message of dependent continuance between each sub-category of the crisis.

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<sup>121</sup> Lee Ann Hoff, *People in Crisis*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 39.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

The first set of integrated circles are meant to convey both the volatility and transparency between the situation (trauma event), the social dynamic, and the generalized condition of living phases endemic to any and all life scripts, regardless of the situation. Under heading three, aids to positive resolution, Hoff advances the idea that by using integrated circle, the traumatic situation can be attended to with proper professional and social aid. Hoff also points to the confluence of values held by traumatized individual, the supporting community, and the researcher. She asserts that when taken together, these factors implicitly influence positive outcomes. Her final heading, depicted in linear terms, illustrates how the attention that is afforded a lead to positive or negative results. The negative component is classified as an object of vulnerability, heightening the probability that the individual may encounter another sequence classified as trauma in later life. Lee Ann Hoff's contribution tended to avoid the concept of spirituality as a reference point within her research

Woolen and Wolin 1993<sup>123</sup> named resilience as the ability to respond to a crisis without falling apart, emotional, physically and perhaps spiritually. Hoff, like Caplan /would argue that the way to avoid prolonged and chronic stagnation is to provide support. Support attends to loss specifically, to how the individual understands and interprets loss. In critical grief counseling, and bereavement counseling attention is drawn

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<sup>123</sup> Lee Ann Hoff, *People in Crisis*, 6th edition, 10.

toward the phenomenon of loss and recovery. However, the record clearly indicates it would take decades (2008's) before the field of crisis theory and trauma would expand to include spirituality as a legitimate treatment module. Hillman asserts "spirituality continues to be one of the most overlooked patient resources in both psychotherapy and crisis<sup>124</sup> intervention per se."<sup>125</sup>

### **Judith Herman's Contributions to Trauma Literature and Practice**

A ground breaking work in the early nineties by Judith Herman entitled *Trauma and Recovery* defined, characterized and confirmed treatment of trauma from a basis of psychological injury.<sup>126</sup> Herman's thesis derived from a classic psychoanalytic theory, situating pathology as a key ailment in assessing and diagnosing trauma care and crisis. She also recognized that some wounds caused by trauma involve the soul. Her approach to crisis care is primarily based on psychological principles and practices. "The most powerful determinant of psychological trauma is the character of the traumatic event itself. Individual personality characteristics count for little in the face of overwhelming events. There is a simple, direct

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<sup>125</sup> Jennifer Hillman, *Crisis Intervention and Trauma: New Approaches to Evidence-Based Practice*, 271.

<sup>126</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 7.

relationship between the severity of the trauma and its psychological impact, whether that impact is measured in terms of the number of people affected or the intensity and duration of harm.”<sup>127</sup>

Herman’s claim suggests that the instrumentality of defense mechanisms such as denial, repression and introspection are instituted as a measure of assisting the individual to cope with adversity caused by trauma. Informed by Freud’s earlier work on hysteria and trauma, Herman situates her hypothesis concerning psychotic ailments. By situating her own research squarely within the psychoanalytic sphere, she sheds light on Freud’s political decision to shift from a analytic position of ascribing hysteria in women caused by sexual assault to a malleable diagnosis of fantasy. The move away from factual accounts to subjective interpretation which may or may not be true had, according to Herman, a great deal with Freud’s attempt to remain pertinent in the sense his theories were key to the emerging therapeutic analysis about the mind. Freud may have considered the risk to his career had he gone ahead and continued to pursue the facts surrounding hysteria in women of nineteenth century Vienna, Austria.<sup>128</sup>

In articulating her approach to psychological trauma, Herman established three basic areas of trauma, (excluding a preliminary category

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<sup>127</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, 12-15.

of a typology of trauma within historical time periods). Implicit within these divisions is the extent to which interpretations are made. Who makes the determination or authors its validity goes a long way to privilege voices of authority. Their task, historically and also currently defined an adverse act like trauma, naming it in the minds of those wounded by it, family, community and society in large. The remaining three categories refer to generalized descriptions of trauma by projected experts in the field. Herman's categories listed as Traumatic Disorders, establishing safety, mourning/ remembrance, and reconnection as critical phases which the traumatized individual's experience on the road to recovery. In particular, safety functions as basic guidepost for addressing key point for arresting trauma.<sup>129</sup>

Memorization is the conscious act acknowledged in the significance of the human voice. At first, it is muted in silence. Then it engages the agency of sound, heard in the human ear as wails or moans. Dorothee Soelle, *Phases of Suffering*,<sup>130</sup> articulates that the value of these initial efforts act as seedlings for remembering, pushing against the horror of trauma and pain. The wounded one, begin their process of recovery by acknowledging a significant part of themselves. Their soul has been violated, torn by the violence of trauma. However while momentarily

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<sup>129</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 155-156.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, *Suffering*, 73.



muted in pain and suffering, they begin to recover scant traces of themselves in the oneness of God. Given this power, they then refuse to keep silent and to remain captured by the perpetrator. Instead, pronouncements of the event start to take form in their new reality. Remembering who they are and whose image they are formed and created in inspires souls to try again, regaining their homeostatic balance. The act of articulation enables change to occur beginning at the initial stage of internally confronting the experience with the guidance and compassionate love of God.

Mourning is a dualistic term because it represents the presence of God in the midst of suffering. Indeed, the Spirit of God is also experiencing the pain and suffering in connection with traumatized souls. In the Spirit the sin of trauma is held and transformed from evil to a source for good. Good refracted as revealed strengths and capabilities not otherwise known now is incorporated into formulae for generated growth. Through the act of debridement of one's spirit and mind of the actual tragedy and the shame and guilt that accompanies trauma, reconnection happens. Reconnection is manifested by encountering the Holy Spirit, obscuring fear and shame, replacing them with gracious hope and recovery.

Judith Herman makes a further point that violence against women consists of two basic identifiers; fear and shame "Women were silenced

by fear and shame, and the silence of women gave license to every form of sexual and domestic exploitation.”<sup>131</sup> In the approach I am advancing, I make the claim that there is a more proximate cause for silence; one that emerges out of a plea for help. The result in a renewed connection with the Holy Spirit. My approach addresses these and other theories because they all appear to ignore the third essence of the human condition: the soul. Moreover, by ignoring the human soul and spirit as having suffered a plausible injury through trauma, they crucially miss the import of the Holy Spirit as a fixture within the trauma healing narrative.

In conclusion, Herman’s model continues to have a discernible impact upon the field of trauma and recovery. For example, noted authors<sup>132</sup> all continue to reference both Judith Herman’s theory and her approach as a basic starting point in which to present their arguments. Each of the authors presented here, as well as countless others, situate their research of trauma from a body-mind dualistic model.

For Herman and her cohort, the stated hypothesis identifies psychological trauma as a primary indicator. Even though they each etched out their particularities in method and approach, they tend to understand trauma as a disruptive force to the mind and body. For

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<sup>131</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 28.

<sup>132</sup> For example, noted authors like Dan McAdams –*The Redemptive Self*, 2006 and 2013, Barbara McClure – *Moving Beyond Individuation in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Richard B. Ulmann and Doris Roberts, *The Shattered Self* as well as an earlier work by Roslyn Karajan, *Crisis Caring*.

example, in *Crisis Caring*, Roslyn Karaban uses a subtitle: A Guide for Ministering to People in Crisis. While cogently referencing the importance of faith in a listing of areas to cover when performing tasks related to crisis management, Karaban does not explicitly acknowledge trauma as causing soul-wounding nor does she offer the necessity of inviting the Holy Spirit as a critical therapeutic point.<sup>133</sup> Again, while the soul is addressed by some, the residual effect of trauma is hidden or supplanted within arguments that may seem more paradigmatically aligned with empirical quantifiable research.

### **More Recent Contributions to Trauma Literature**

*Soul Repair*, co-authored by Rita Nakashima-Brock and Gabrielle Lettini explores trauma within the militarized context of war. These authors situate their view of trauma within a setting of military combat. The stories of war veterans Camillo “Mac” Bica, re employed by the authors to describe the experience of military combat and the effects trauma has had upon combatants. While *Soul Repair* is written in response to the wounds and injuries of trauma, it differs from other recent texts whose authors tended to focus on psychological / physical effects without critical attention to injuries to the third element of human creation: the

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<sup>133</sup> Roslyn A Karaban, *Crisis Caring*, 46.

soul. Thus, the authors argue for the inclusion of *moral injury*<sup>134</sup> as a subjective form of assault caused by trauma.

Similarly, Maggie Schauer and colleagues have presented research as evidenced in a recent work entitled, *Narrative Exposure Therapy*. Here Schauer and colleagues advance the argument that while trauma affects three areas of human condition, (social, psychological and physical), trauma is addressed from the standpoint of psychological stressors located/somafocused in the cranial part of the body. Essentially, the argument of Schauer et al. is post-traumatic stress, their term for the central trauma identifier enacts key psychological determinants, which are then relayed to the brain's cortex as fearful or non-threatening emotions. The linguistic form of narrative is used to explore the effect of trauma upon the amygdala and frontal cortex. The Schauer team argues that adverse "hot memories"<sup>135</sup> considered endemic of trauma are located within the amygdala, which separates bad memories from assimilated 'cold' reflections. The assimilation process whereby "autobiographical"<sup>136</sup> cold memories"<sup>137</sup> are located in the frontal lobe cortex prevents negative memories from fully exploiting the capacity of individuals to derive a

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<sup>134</sup> Lettini and Brock, *Soul Repair*, xiii.

<sup>135</sup> Maggie Schauer et al, *Narrative Exposure Therapy*, 11.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>137</sup> Maggie Schauer, et al, *Narrative Exposure Therapy*, 19.

modicum of subsistence. Findings from Schauer and colleagues indicate that embedded hot memories remain in the unconscious repressed mind. The amygdala merely ensures space for the brain to accommodate them within a hair-breath of neurological triggers. Countering this condition is an approach Schauer and colleagues have put forth. They believe that in order for an individual to function sufficiently, a process of clinical integration must occur. This may allow the hot memories stored in the amygdala to be incrementally transitioned into cold memories held within the frontal lobe. When the integration occurs, human cognition is maximized due to a lower instance of negative memory interference. Not until the hot memories have been wholly integrated within the autobiographical memory bank<sup>138</sup> can the individual reasonably expect to reasonably function at optimal levels in society.

On the other hand Bessel van der Kolk's theory engages a dialectic model using narrative as a way to extrapolate negative memories. He advocates instituting methods involving play-acting or role mirroring. His method counters Schauer and colleagues, emphasizing the effect of trauma upon the mind versus the biogenetic human syndrome. Parting from Schauer and colleagues, van der Kolk<sup>139</sup> imposes a longer-term therapy as a way to recover the traumatic incident embedded in the repressed area of

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<sup>138</sup>Maggie Schauer, et al, *Narrative Exposure Therapy* 19.

<sup>139</sup> Marion F. Solomon and Daniel J. Siegel, *Healing Trauma*, 168-171.

the unconscious. He believes by imposing a method which allows adverse memories to surface in the safety of compatriots, some of whom are willing to assume the role of the actors within the original trauma, a second opportunity to approach the situation is possible. Such role-playing creates a stage for deriving reconciliation and forgiveness from the harmed ones. The dissociative behaviors associated with the trauma may cease or become severely curtailed and ameliorated. Van der Kolk's practice seems to target the perpetrators and the agony experience as a result of the trauma. The methods of Schauer et al and van der Kolk both tend to use memory as a cathartic praxis in attempting to derive a meaningful recovery.

Arguably, there are clear similarities between identifiers of psychological and somatic trauma. However my argument is based on the efficacy of the Holy Spirit at the intersection of recovery and soul healing. In that regard, the key issue remains whether broadening of trauma treatment can occur in such a way as to significantly include intuitive knowing as a legitimate source of care. Implicitly, the question to be asked is, whether ways of knowing remain circumvented by mechanistic rational motives or whether curiosity can intercede to parse new avenues from more characteristically traditional ones? It is a question raised by minds in previous decades. For example, Anthony Pandovano argues that "knowledge derived from empirical reasoning, objectively validated or is

knowledge as the<sup>140</sup> the Canadian Catholic theologian of the sixties, describes it as Encounters with Silence:

Only knowledge gained through experience, the fruit of living and suffering, fills the heart with the wisdom of love, instead of crushing it with the disappointment of boredom and final oblivion. It is not the results of our own speculation, but the golden harvest of what we have lived through and suffered through, that has the power to enrich the heart and nourish the spirit...<sup>141</sup>

Here Anthony Padavano's effort to highlight Karl Rahner's distinction of the kinds of knowledge, is a wise insight. One that seems to suggest that there may be other ways to gain knowledge, which might be as legitimate and fruitful as empirical methodology.

To the extent that the wounded experience mute silence and shame, they are confronted with the choice to garner strength by recognizing an inner Source to face their pain, to dare to speak out. Concerning shame, Jill McNish in her book entitled, *Trauma and Shame* argues:

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<sup>140</sup> "Karl Rahner, German Jesuit... embodied a correlational method in producing a theological apologetics that represented a return to Thomist theology informed by contemporary philosophy in general, and the work of Martin Heidegger, in particular. Rahner's clear advocacy of a model of divine revelation in which God did indeed speak through 'intellect, nature, and history within the Roman Catholic Church that came to fruition in the *aggiornamento* or 'openness' to modern world of the Second Vatican Council.'

<sup>141</sup> Elaine 1 Graham, *Theological Reflections*, 140.

<sup>141</sup> Also referenced in Anthony t. padovano, *the estranged god*, 257.

“The defenses of shame take the individual out of the vortex—the place of tension that feels like a godless place but is in fact a place where grace enters. Still, it may be the exquisite suffering with that very intensity which ultimately leads some individuals in desperation to seek transformation”<sup>142</sup>

Hence the suffering one’s voice names the trauma as the source of their pain and agony, thereby beginning the process of being released from shame and guilt. I do concur that the critical determinants of both aspects of knowledge- gathering are required to glimpse the Love of God, restoring torn spirits and wounded souls. I believe this to be so because of the interwoven nature of God in all creation, spirit and cognition. Using the analogy of petitioning prayer to draw similarities between religion/science and the theistic God, John Polkinghorne raises the point “There is a genuine instrumentality in prayer because things become possible when human and divine wills are aligned with each other, which would not be possible if they were at cross-purposes. Using a scientific metaphor, one may say that prayer seeks a laser-like coherence between divine and human wills”.<sup>143</sup> In the sense that language conveys a generalized audience in which the words used convey understanding, coherence is a term research would quickly interpret as having meaning related to the way in which waves are aligned, enabling power to occur when forces are united focusing upon one particular point.

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<sup>142</sup> Jill McNish, *Trauma and Shame*, 112.

<sup>143</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in Quest for Truth*. 92.



Finally, Chapter Three examined the nature of Trauma and its origin identified as “therapeutic” in an emerging Industrial Age in Europe and the Americas. The effect of social conditioning advanced by the psychological models, particularly those originating in the period between the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each served to affirm the medical- based model as the preferred care praxis for contemporary practitioners such as pastoral counseling providers. With the advent of the autonomous self as the core of the healthy self in the twentieth century Philip Cushman in his work *Constructing the Self, Constructing America*, argued that

“owning to certain sociohistorical forces especially those that move psychotherapy to present itself as an objective, scientific technique, these moral commitments have been forced out of the discipline’s unquestioned embrace of self-contained individualism and its unknowing support of the consumer ethos, there are also moral understandings unknowingly communicated to patients that are contrary, perhaps antithetical to the values listed in the previous paragraph.”<sup>144</sup>

In summary, during the past thirty years of trauma and crisis research, theories have developed that have explored the scope of trauma from crisis to disaster to post-traumatic stress. Most of the approaches derived from these studies have followed a similar pattern to psychoanalytic –self- psychologies. In Judith Herman’s research, long considered the classic

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<sup>144</sup> Philip Cushman, *Constructing the Self, Constructing America*, 290. Cushman’s last statement referring to values are mutual respect, compassion for neighbor cooperation, seek to enjoy rather than destroy life and to recognize and embrace difference, seeing the later as an opportunity to grow and develop.

foreground of trauma care, herself has remained critical of expression as a legitimate form of healing and care. This critique is offered in light of her acknowledgement of the kind of systemic violence: slavery and its severe impact upon the human soul. Still, she resorts to the efficacious model of rationalized treatment to establish recovery from trauma. I disagree with her and other interpretation of one, the ways in which trauma affects human beings and the manner of care currently provided. Countering Herman and others, I make the claim that the example shown in the slaves' narrative provide a keyhole view into narratives in which the depiction of God/The Holy Spirit is evidenced in the still moments of slavery's violence. Enacted generational stories of victory in the midst, of horror transcend logic and physical prowess into reflections of God in the image of redeemed brokenness.

Hence, the accounts presented in Chapter four *push against* the traditionalist research-quantitative model for accounts that claim soul injury was an experienced of persons held in in slavery. Further wounding occurred as a result of slavery addressed by the Holy Spirit in recovery and soul-healing. The slave narratives survived lining the text of generational stories like the kind referenced herein by the women's case history. Their lessons counter approaches of psychoanalysis or psychologies of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries because of their inherent reliance upon the steadfast love and faithfulness of God whose presence

they glimpsed in the bowels of their suffering. Though illiterate and unnamed in the annals of American history, their lives are memorialized in the lived experience of their descendants, who dare to believe in the Spirit as the holy edifice of God, concretized in the being of their souls. The following chapter bears witness to the perennial power of the Holy Spirit. Encountering brokenness in the misery of trauma has become for many the eternal narrative, wherein evil does not have the last word.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Psalms 126:5 "They that sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy." JBS Hebrew – English TANAKH

## Chapter Four

### Slavery: An Aesthetic Narrative

This chapter addresses three primary components: the language of trauma, narratives and stories, slavery, and the aesthetic slave narrative. Inherent within each is the embedded trauma narrative. The narrative transmission of trauma causes physical time to be shaped as a mutated erasure of people and their consummate life experiences. All of which when invoked together into spirituals and songs reveal the consistency of the Holy Spirit in the collective human narrative. Even in the midst of narratives of trauma and enslavement the Holy Spirit offers affirmation by its presence, portending the eternal pattern within all creation.

In this chapter, I show how narratives and stories are linguistic forms that slaves used to resist oppression. In their voices, enslaved African Americans affirmed remembrance of themselves, the Creator and community. To the extent they never forgot themselves to be children of God, they were recipients of endowed and inalienable right and dignity as human beings. Consistent with these beliefs and their stories are reflections of the depths of human will expressed in the hope of survival. This ancestral treasury of resilience comprises the generational strains in which these women's stories reflect the wisdom to endure life's tragedies, with God as keeper of their soul.

There are two points I wish to address in this section. One: the institution of slavery, while intended to demean a people to the point of being only a material resource, became instead the crucible out of which a people remembered their ancestral teachings about the meaning of God as the author of justice. In the prayer moment of learning how to stand still and know that God is, they came to know themselves as a people who refused to go missing in the story of human history on earth. In other words, they learned the meaning of authentic self, the core of their being before they were formed in their mothers' womb (Jeremiah 1:5). They formed called into a world with its layers of caustic identity and standards of being. By surviving the deprivation of slavery accompanied by the Holy Spirit, they were taught how to lay aside every sin and weight that so easily besets and how to run with patience the race set before them<sup>146</sup> (Hebrews 12:1). Believing in God provided the source of exponential value to their faith. This faith afforded the logic of patience when there was no seemingly evidence of rational meaning or purpose to life. Nonetheless the slaves' unrelenting power of belief in the face of injustice empowered them to be able to shoulder the weight of slavery's torment. The victory came in the silence of their suffering. They met the Holy: communing with God whose redemptive power eternally *pleads* their cause for freedom.

My second point is that the critical lesson conferred by an enslaved people is simply this: God is. And because God is, the Promise is made sure by the

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<sup>146</sup> Hebrews 12:1, KJV.

power and presence of a faithful God. Rudolph Otto termed this experience as knowing of “something”<sup>147</sup> within. The assurance that the immutable power of God is present amidst pain and suffering even in slavery is their tactile lesson to their descendants. Thus, the songs entitled “Steal Away to Jesus” or “God Put a Rainbow in the Cloud,” became cantabile reminders of the immanence of God in the human condition.

### **Language of Trauma**

The linguistic interpretation provided by the palimpsest allows layering over to occur, to the extent an original written text can be recovered. Memory uncovers the stories embedded in the soul as healed over wounds that now begin to surface as historical accounts. From the standpoint of approaching the promised divine in the human story, language acts as the mediating force to accomplish this. Language fueled by words that recover the experience of trauma now form narratives that both teach and tell of life in the midst of struggle. Anderson and Foley suggests “that narrative is a primal form of human expression.”<sup>148</sup> The supposition marries together faith and belief in order to devise points of inevitability in events like trauma and subsequent recovery can happen and souls can once again heal.

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<sup>147</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 17.

<sup>148</sup> Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories and Dangerous Rituals: Weaving The Divine and Human Narrative*, 67.

By engaging the human voice, language recovers historical memory. It is the means through which trauma stories embedded in memories are able to surface again. Although the enslaved are gone, their stories depicting their lives and the conditions they suffered have become living texts for later generations. These stories form narratives. Capturing events like trauma, its use assists to affirm that a people did exist within the human cord of history and these are the conditions they lived under. Such is the case of enslaved people who used reclaimed symbols of their ancestry as well as newly derived ones to embed their language, hence their narratives and stories with accounts of their lives as slaves. Though at first, raw and unfermented, over time it became the bases of a new method of communication one in which held lined message of wisdom and survival in both literal and implicit sense.

### **Prayer Moments**

Examples of types of prayer moments are reflected in an ancient practice of speaking in the spirit, i.e. “having a little talk with God. These and other similar practices enabled the African American slave to push back providing a counterbalance to a living discourse of the time that considered the slave to be less than human. This view resulted in their experiencing acts of violence under the then legal institution of slavery. But their remembrance of God as Helper in whose image they too were

created was sufficient enough to allow them to engage suffering as a source of recovering.

Moreover, in exploring suffering due to the violence of slavery, their recitations of the Holy Spirit became for them a living text of the Word and a testament to their descendants' of God's perennial presence in the midst of pain and injustice. At the intersection of each generation stands the covenantal promise in whose eschatological meaning a reading of the Holy Spirit is found.

### **A Proscription for Survival: Slave religion in Contemporary Song**

This selection by the all-female African American, Sweet Honey in the Rock is an example of recovered memory of trauma and the force of slaves to believe. This song is used in study section to evoke generational remembering about trauma and the redemptive grace of the Holy Spirit.

#### **I Remember I Believe**

I don't know how my mother walked her trouble down

I don't know how

My father stood his ground

I don't know how my people survived slavery

I

Do remember, that's why I believe

I don't know why the rivers

Overflow their banks



I don't know why the hurricane sweeps through

The land

Every

Now and then

*Standing in the rainstorm, I believe*

I don't know

Why the angels woke me up this morning soon

I don't know why the blood

Still runs thru my veins

*I don't know how I rate o run another day*

I am here still running, I believe

My God calls for me in the

Morning dew

The power of the universe knows my name

Gave me a song

To sing and sent me on my way

I raise my voice for justice I believe.<sup>149</sup>

## **Narratives and Stories**

### **The Significance of Language**

Before going forward, I should like to pause and raise two specific issues related to language. Language can be described as a collection of words systematically used by a people to represent and assign value to events within their individual and collective life script. In many ways,

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<sup>149</sup> Written by: Sweet Honey in the Rock. Reprinted with Permission.

language established phonetically, assists in framing stories within prayers. Centuries ago language permitted the African American people to characterize their historical reality into a social construct called “critical remembering.”<sup>150</sup> In this regard, it is reasonable to suggest that language generally characterized in the African American culture encompasses distilled as well as explicit word patterns. These word patterns to a large extent operated dualistically. “Double meaning” involved two or more types of listeners of a story. Listeners whose proximity to a culture or group was distant would be less likely to understand the “between the lines” reading of a story than those more closely aligned in culture and language.

A historical example is the gospel hymn “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”.... To the outsider, it might convey the singer’s longing for afterlife or home going. But to the slave it was a cogent message that “Moses,” (Harriet Tubman) was in the area; those seeking freedom should watch for the North Star.<sup>151</sup>

There are also instances when language fails to accurately account for give meaning to human conditions like trauma or ecstatic joy. Whether in the case of a slave or for the writer of this work, the experience is indescribable. When you have had such an experience, you understand the

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<sup>150</sup> Term used by bell Hooks, in her earlier work. Depicts the foray of remembrance as a historical signifier within class, culture.

<sup>151</sup> Dorothy Winbush Riley, editor, *My Soul Looks Back*, “Less I Forget,” 148.

meaning of the words, “my soul was kept when I could not keep myself.”<sup>152</sup> Having learned the value of the forms language can take- first as an object of one’s voice, enabling speech to occur —and second- when language is of another sort. Its author uses another, more nimble source to communicate- the spirit. Here words are not needed or expected in the space wherein the Holy Spirit encounters souls wounded and frayed by violent trauma.

Key to story making and narratives is how human beings use language linguistically as a way of communicating what has occurred or is occurring. Citing intentionality as a factor by the speaker whose use of language may be interpreted as an individual versus group perspective, Robert Bellah in his book, *Habits of the Heart* cautions against a solely individualistic approach to language. “The ‘language of the self-reliant individual is the first language of American moral life’ while the ‘language of tradition and commitment in communities of memory are ‘second languages’ that most Americans know as well, and which they use when the language of the radically separate self does not seem adequate.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> The words, “my soul was kept when I could not keep myself,” represent oral teachings out of the Smith generational narrative, traced back to Valdosta, Georgia.

<sup>153</sup> Donald Capps, *The Depleted Self*, 111-112.

Given these considerations, I have taken an alternate stance about phenomena, stories and narratives. Whether intentional or unconscious on the part of the speaker, the factor of myth making ought to be included as part of the analysis and interpretation quotient. It should not blur the intended meaning of these stories or discount the narratives of women as being inherently factual and honest.

I believe the stories and narratives are inherent treasures in people's lives. Each speaker's stories and generational narratives hold a modicum of tacit understanding of ways in which they articulate present and past realities as they strained to cope with life in all of its complexity. "If experience has the narrative quality attributed to it, not only our self-identity but the empirical and moral cosmos in which we are conscious of living is implicit in our multidimensional story."<sup>154</sup> "Life scripts"<sup>155</sup> becoming the venue by which the sequential nature of historical and contemporary time is inextricably tied across boundaries of human testimony and scripts. Jerome Bruner ascribes 'stories' as a particularized linguistic method "that achieve their meaning by explicating derivations from the ordinary in a comprehensible form by providing the 'impossible

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<sup>154</sup> Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," IN *Why Narrative?* by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, 83.

<sup>155</sup> Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self*, 115.

logic.<sup>156</sup> Part of the genius of the storyteller, particularly in cases of trauma, is that while the appearance of the event to the hearer may be either a recent or past occurrence, stated emphasis upon utterance and language can cause the event to seem nascent alive for both the witness and the teller.

“Stories are living, local and specific.

Narratives

are templates; they provide us with tropes  
and

plot lines that help us understand the larger import of specific stories we hear, read, or see in action.” They also help us construct specific stories of our own—including ones about our own experience—that others can recognize and affirm. We learn these narrative templates from our culture, not in the way we might formally learn the rules of grammar at home—by being exposed to multiple individual examples of living stories that rely on them.<sup>157</sup> Hence, the power derived from telling story causes a response in the chronicity of identity of not

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<sup>156</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 47.

only the teller but also their respondent generations.”<sup>158</sup>

In research, data gathering is considered more credible than story telling as a means to acquire knowledge, but the use of scientific analysis in data gathering employed attenuates its content in three ways. One, data is tangible and verifiable. Second, generalization of data adds to its standing as both reliable and valid. Three, uniform replication of data may be considered standard. While stories reflect the storyteller’s affect and cultural experience, any alteration to the core text may give the appearance that the message and meaning have been drastically changed.

Stories gain value within church, community or family when they are observed by members or by an external source to generate similar or the same responses. Hence, the construct of the response to a song or story is considered by the owners of such material as equal to empirical findings and /or observations. At the interstices of African American stories is the belief in the power of the holy, whose mystery challenges justice as a moral duty of all humankind, to each other and to the Creator.

These sources, when considered together, offer wise guidance as the family in question continues to navigate its ways towards the future. For example, in my own family, the wise saying of “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket” is often woven within the preparation narrative as one

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<sup>158</sup> Anne Harrington, *The Cure Within*, 25.

prepares to leave the home attending college or getting a job and living independently. The lesson embedded within the saying is to think carefully before initiating any action assuring yourself that you have reviewed all perceived options carefully before making a decision.

To the degree that stories or parts thereof may not exactly reflect their origin is perhaps due to memory loss or intentionally acts of subsuming family secrets from the surface glare of shared stories. However, there remains a modicum of respect for the story itself as a way they of transmitting the family's sociological imprint into the next generation. In some ways stories used in the African American culture become selfobjects<sup>159</sup> whose sufficiency as the mirrored idealized image of the family's self are reflected in their values and mores. Hence, at annual reunions or holiday events these stories are told and retold enabling the process of transmuting internalization<sup>160</sup> to occur for each member of the clan.

On the other hand, narratives may include a series of stories, secrets and myths, all syncretized to reflect who a family or group of people have become over the course of time. Specifically, narratives may present what

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<sup>159</sup> Richard B. Ulman and Doris Brothers, *The Shattered Self*, 226. Selfobjects is a term coined by self-psychologist, Heinz Kohut, to mean, those relations ascribed by one seeking to form or continuing to form their own individual autonomous self. Selfobjects are external persons whose image provide internal mirrored image . As the self reaches autonomy, affirmed in the external environment, the self is separated from the affirming object, signaled by a dash sign.i..e. self-object.

<sup>160</sup> Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J, Black, *Freud and Beyond*, 160.

obstacles they've confronted in the past and overcome. Most importantly, they transmit the means they could use to avoid succumbing to tragedy or other kinds of adversities. These lessons comprise the narrative script, presenting meaning that in turn commands attention from the listener. Narratives encompass values, customs, culture of a people determined to be the core around which the narrative is woven,"<sup>161</sup> according to Martha Nussbaum. She stresses the significance of social condition that informs narratives, later becoming a means of empowerment. Heinz Kohut does not address religion in his scholarship but does refer to "cosmic narcissism"<sup>162</sup> which takes the narrative of shame and transforms it into hope and recovery. Critically, Nussbaum argues that stories act as peripheral carriers of emotions, taught by nameless voices<sup>163</sup> whose intent is to syncretize the emotion with acquired behavior so as to provide a kind of blue print of life possibilities and pitfalls.<sup>164</sup> In particular, emotion conditions surrounding trauma are enclosed in stories that become a type of art form, given to collective narrating voices whose task becomes one

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<sup>161</sup> I refer to James Gustafson's work on narrative loosely described by Hauerwas, *WHY Narrative*, as a form of literary discursive situated at the intersection of ethics and theology. He suggests that narrative is a form of literary content that ascribes the identity to the speaker or speakers, thereby avoiding societal erasure. Pages 4-5.

<sup>162</sup> Jill McNish, *Trauma and Shame*. 109.

<sup>163</sup> Martha Nussbaum, "Narrative Emotions: Beckett's Genealogy of Love", IN *Why Narrative?*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, 218.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, 217.



who orally transmits how past generations survived conditions otherwise considered problematic.

Martha Nussbaum posits “..that concrete judgments and responses embodied in stories are less likely to lead us astray, in the sense that they will contain what is deepest for us, most truly expressive of our moral sense, and most pertinent to action, by comparison with the abstractness of theory.”<sup>165</sup>

Narrative affirms identity, assigning meaning and interpretation to stories that occurred in the past or occurring in the present. Narrative is used as a dialogical instrument for self-expression and interpretation. It is not apologetic; which is to say, it is not attempting to assert blame nor is it in the case of trauma, attempting to assign labels to the wounded as “victim”. Rather, narrative is used to uncover the truth about what has become a part of the experiential marking of collective or individual history. To some extent, narrative serves to register a public accounting of personal stories or generational narratives of traumatic horror and the explicit need for of soul healing and recovery. I should also note that in the particularity of narrative and stories, I define the term *meaning* as an organic reference point between the posterity of faith by those in pursuit of answers only God can provide and doubt.

While faith may emerge out of the human situational descriptive of trauma and subsequent hardship, the opposite can also occur. Trauma that

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<sup>165</sup> Martha Nussbaum, “Narrative Emotions: Beckett’s Genealogy of Love”, IN *Why Narrative?*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, 229.

results in shame often conjures experiences of alienation and pain can also compromise the material of generational narratives of redemptive and hope. In his work, *The Depleted Self*, Donald Capps references Robert Bellah's articulation of "communities of memory."<sup>166</sup> Here Capps claims that contrary to the dominant American culture, reference to the communal connection of histories through dialogue and narratives are essential to a people thought to be societal throwaways.

Using slave narratives and present African American female stories, I draw a linguistic connection for the reader of how the slaves' knowledge of God aided them to survive their own systemic brutality, which in turn allowed their teachings to instruct later generations. By showing how their experiences have become the rubric of wisdom teaching, these narratives continue to act as a seal to the African American codicil of religious life lessons. The lessons communicated in word, song, prayer and spirituals are a collection that serves to proclaim a people's faith demonstrated in the face of adversity. By remembering to seek God's face even within the image of pain and suffering, I show how a people's belief is strengthened. Therefore, how God/the Holy Spirit encountered the slaves' experience centuries ago becomes a picture juxtaposed to the soliloquy of the experience of trauma and violence confronting African American women today. Implicit in this argument is the assertion that

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<sup>166</sup> Donald Capps, *The Depleted Self*, 111.

while the chronicity of trauma and violence remains apart of the common culture, it does not constitute the consummate identity of African American people. Situated in the midst of their suffering and pain is God present and able to act.

### **Aesthetic of Slave Narratives**

In the this section, I wish to highlight the aesthetic of slave narrative and their use of embedded stories and narratives about the struggles of their lives for their descendants and broader society. Strikingly, the voices of slaves' recording of their agony and pain filled struggles are similar to two contemporary African American traumatized women's narrative included in the next chapter.

This story was recorded in the form of a prayer in the 1860s is about a slave woman's flight to freedom while confronting her worst fear: the traumatic theft of her newborn child by another plantation owner. It is through these stories that threads of wisdom are transmitted even in the face of trauma and tragedy.

*“We stopped at this boarding house. This was our first night's stop after leaving Wilmington [, Delaware]. The keeper of the boarding house tried to buy Fannie Woods' baby, but there was a disagreement regarding the price. About five in the morning we started on. When we had gone about half a mile a colored boy came running down the road with a message from his master, and we halted until his master came bringing a colored woman with him, and he brought the baby out of Fannie's arms. As the colored woman was ordered to take it away I heard Fannie Woods' cry, “Oh God, I would rather hear the clods fall*

*on the coffin lid of my child than to hear its cries because it is taken away from me.” She said, “Good bye, Child.”<sup>167</sup>*

In the heuristic reporting of what it may mean to experience suffering, the story depicted as a prayer becomes a meaningful way to connect with someone greater than himself or herself. Addressing God in prayer became a way to acknowledge how the pain of loss is perceived and to understand and care. This call to compassion in the form of a plea reflects the slave woman’s dilemma of having to confront the reality of her child being taken under duress as she continued to make her way towards freedom. Living with the dilemma of a child left behind could have been unbearable if not for the faith in a righteous and all-knowing God. These twin themes together begin to disclose ways in which slaves attended to their life traumas by seeking divine presence and peace.

### **Spirituals: Aesthetic Narrative of the Trauma of Slavery**

Words give shape to experience and memory. They also speak of an individual’s personal experiences as well those that constitute their historical narrative. More significantly words often calibrate how stories are crafted for purposes of historical memory within the community.

In this way, Spirituals evoke God’s power and the ever present Holy Spirit which sustains persons in the midst of suffering. I believe the presence of the Holy Spirit acts evoked through the singing of spirituals

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<sup>167</sup> James Melvin Washington, PhD. *Conversations with God*, 41.

are a source of solace while facing the ravages of slavery. The hymn entitled “God Put a Rainbow in the Cloud is a living testimony in artistic form to the spirit –filled connection between God and creation and the kind of relationship that is inherent in what it means to believe. Hence, the word text belies meaning of the kind, W.E.B Dubois described as “double-consciousness,”<sup>168</sup> one whose understanding reflects the material and sacred meaning of life.

### **God Put a Rainbow in the Cloud**

When God shut Noah in the grand old ark, He put a rainbow in the cloud

When the thunders rolled and the sky was dark

God put a rainbow in the cloud,

A way down yonder in Egypt’s sand, God put a rainbow in the cloud

Just to lead His children to the promise land, God put a rainbow in the  
cloud,

When they put old Daniel in the lion’s den, God put a rainbow in the cloud

Just to prove His promise to the sons of men, God put a rainbow in the  
cloud,

As a sign by day and a sign by night, God put a rainbow in the cloud/

Just to guide His People and to keep them right,

God put a rainbow in the cloud

Oh, Jordan deep and Jordan wide, God put a rainbow in the cloud,

To lead His people to the other side,

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<sup>168</sup> W.E.B.DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 63-64.

God put a rainbow in the cloud.<sup>169</sup>

The early nineteenth African American womanist writer, Anna Julia Cooper described this song as using the human voice as “a singing something.”<sup>170</sup> They used their voice to sing something about who they were in God, even in their debacle of slavery. In so doing, they named their condition using song and narrative as a form of resistance and empowerment. Towards this point, Joan L. Mitchell posits that knowing one’s social location and electing to speak through it changes the conditions, if not psychical, but more so aesthetically. Mitchell asserts that “by naming and speaking experiences from the margins, women stand the ground of their presence in the whole.”<sup>171</sup> I believe this statement to be true for any and all persons regardless of time and circumstance whose social conditions fail to afford them the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential.

### **Deconstructing the Slave Experience Using Narrative Accounts**

Song is one form of communication in which both stories and narratives are transmitted giving voice to the human experience of suffering. The musical cadence of narrative in a particular moment or

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<sup>169</sup> Spiritual Song #109-Compiled by Homer F. Morris, J.R. Baxter, Virgil O. Stamps and W. W. Combs, 1957.

<sup>170</sup> Joan L. Mitchell, *Beyond Fear and Silence*, 53.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

historical period in time characterize style of a people in how they wove their experience into realities of experience that later shaped their identity.<sup>172</sup> As Stephen Crites stated, “Narrative alone can contain the full temporality of experience in a unity of form.”<sup>173</sup> Slave narratives express temporality of experience in a unity of form, reflecting within the systemic tragedy of the trauma of slavery. Its temporality is intertwined with holy passion and the human past, and together, they form holistic meanings to the slave narrative.

For a moment, I’d like to enter another category to the dialect of stories and narratives. This form while not using the human voice is also a vehicle for communication. When trauma and suffering comprise the content of human stories, words initially may seem inadequate. This kind of inadequacy is described by Balbinder Singh Bhogal as “speechless speech.”<sup>174</sup>

Stories and songs give voice to experience. What happens when the experience is too overwhelming, too traumatic to express in a coherent story? Even more so, what is the manner in which the wounded seeks to express their injury when voice is too startled and/or mute by the initial

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<sup>172</sup> Stephen Crites, ‘The Narrative Quality of Experience’, IN *Why? Narrative* by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones ,63.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>174</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhogal, “The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 80, No.4, Dec.2012,872.

violent act? The late German theologian Dorothee Soelle also identified silence caused by mute suffering as “suffering that reduce one to silence in which no discourse is possible any longer, in which the person ceases reacting as a human agent.”<sup>175</sup>

However, there is a decided difference in the meaning of the word given by both authors. Bhogal interprets the phenomenon of “Non speech” as occurring when words prove inadequate in expressing the experience of the encounter with the holy. Soelle, on the other hand, cites silence as occurring due to the immense weight of evil and sin upon the wounded. Attempting to convey the emotion of being subsumed by evil and trauma.

J. Jeffery Means asserts in his work, *Trauma and Evil*, that there are distinguishable markings between trauma and evil. “Evil creates and builds upon brokenness in the world by threatening, attacking, destroying and desecrating the integrity of the relational nature of life.”<sup>176</sup>

Contrasting evil with trauma Means characterizes the latter as fragmentation of “one’s self –structure, leaves no aspect of one’s life unscathed , and threatens one’s attachments to everything she holds dear.”<sup>177</sup> This turning people against themselves can be reasonably

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<sup>175</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 68.

<sup>176</sup> J. Jeffery Means, *Trauma and Evil*, 92.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 151.



associated with trauma, inclusive of the kind of trauma experienced by slaves.

Therefore because of the manner in which trauma injures the soul by inflicting evil unjustly, I make the case that the slaves used any form of communication (including silence) to reclaim their balance if only through the faint strains of hope.

Particularizing this assertion, I will show how the historical slave experience gathered within itself its own remembrance of a sacred union. According to Bhogal, a critical association is made with God/Name/Truth,<sup>178</sup> beginning in the womb which Bhogal characterizes this as the first stage of human existence. Certainly testimonies from first generational slave descendants could attest to this truth. The words reveal something about the force of evil on earth and the conscientious and courageous force of good required to stand against it. As the traumatized summon the inner will to speak after experiencing violation or trauma of any sort, this Power occurs. Then they are able to garner a modicum of immutable strength in their spirit at first the extent previously they knew not of. Thus, a crucial lesson is learned: unless the soul succumbs to silence caused by evil, their voice can be used to advocate for truth and equity for themselves and others. Songs entitled “*Steal Away to Jesus*” or

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<sup>178</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhogal, “The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.80, No. 4, Dec. 2012, 870.

“*God Put a Rainbow in the Cloud,*” became cantabile reminders of the immanence of God in the human condition.

Similarly, these narratives reveal an embedded plea. Often trauma nuanced in asymmetrical ways in the post-Reconstruction period leading unto and including the twentieth- first century in America meant the sole reliable resource available was prayer. Prayer of the afflicted required belief that the Source who was/is able would respond by accompanying them into the depths of their despair and then to recovery. This is the hope of Stewart’s last stanza, to prevail like Israel was to know that encountering God would define the outcome. Hence, their narratives reflect an enslaved people’s stories wise teaching that knowledge need not be defined solely- or, for that matter, achieved- principally by paradigmatic investigation and validation but knowledge gained from wrestling with the Angel can only be defined intuitively.<sup>179</sup> It is this wisdom of African American grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts and uncles that is repeated herein, “God is able to do all things.”<sup>180</sup>

The African American Christian culture continues to affirm these very same beliefs and faith values in God whose strength mitigates trauma caused by a plethora of institutional and societal infractions. Particularly in cases where trauma is caused by individual malice, the healing power of

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<sup>179</sup> Jerome Brunner *Acts of Meaning*, 12.

<sup>180</sup> Psalms, 34:10, KJV.

the Holy Spirit may be crucial in order to make meaning of one's life situation. It is my claim that the African American community's collective memory assists the injured- either individual or group to constantly learn how to understand themselves in the midst of what has occurred to them and their relationship with God. Embedded within contemporary stories is the slaves' enduring narrative to survive regardless of the circumstances, thereby showing their descendants of their deliberate will to move past periods of mute silence and alienation towards recovery. Shelly Rambo refers to the process of moving past trauma as the *middle spirit*,<sup>181</sup> a transparency which allows a horrific event to become part of a generative source for recovery.

In summary, the history of slavery in America involved forcible theft, rape and violence upon human beings considered chattel, for the explicit purpose of achieving wealth for a defined group. Even so, the sin of trauma and slavery did not result in eradicating nor did the viciousness of it equate with the immutable power of God/The Holy Spirit to redeem and heal. Using silence, a moan, words, wails and language of any other sort, the slaves remembered God and their beginning. And over time, they worked the words into a technique called "call and response"<sup>182</sup> in which the preacher or the lead singer spoke in word or in song, the key stanza

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<sup>181</sup> Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 5.

<sup>182</sup> Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 196.

and the congregation responded. Thus, whether in a sermon or a lyric gathering in the fields, the leader and participants/slaves described their experience; at the same reinforcing their belief in God as the One whose righteous would roll down as a mighty stream.

## Chapter Five

### Examining Lived Stories of Two African American Women

“Everything that one believes reflects and says about God the Father and God the Son... would be demonstrated and clarified basically through God the Holy Spirit, the *vinculum pacis between Father and Son*. The work of God in behalf of creatures for, in, and with humanity would be made clear in a teleology which excludes all happenstance.<sup>183</sup>”

The focus of this chapter is an interrogation of the concept of Trauma by examining it from the standpoint of contemporary African American female stories with generational narratives. Specifically there are three ways in which I approach the task. One: when recounted the women’s stories reveal power conflated within the social classification of poverty. They experience similar traumatic experiences as their slave ancestors. Two: ethnographic analysis of collective stories about trauma enable the phenomenology of storytelling to emerge as an authentic hermeneutic

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<sup>183</sup> Veil- Matte, Karkkainen, *Pneumatology*, (Recitation of Karl Barth in his latter writings about the Holy Spirit), 13.

model for capturing the validity of the remembered account. Three: the cosmology of storytelling reveals the circuitous nature of the Holy Spirit, resilient in a force for change. This line of thought can be traced in the recovered memories of slave narratives up to current daily family stories. When revealed, each story provides a way in to glimpse the mystery of God in relationship with the wounded.

### **Embedded Stories of MK and AJ**

In the stories of both MK's and AJ and their families, redemptive memories told over generations about trauma and the conditions which may have caused them are often found. In telling their stories, the women made no suppositions or attempts to veil the truth of what may have occurred to either themselves or their families. Instead, their testimonies serve as oral histories that reveal either whole or in part accounts of the violence experienced by them and women of their families. These stories are oftentimes masked under layers of family secrets and personal or collective denial. At times the accounts of violence comprise separate events while others bear witness to conjunctive infractions resembling parts of events melded together over time to form a family narrative. Often interspersed within family secrets, myths, misconstrued facts some of which have been unconsciously repressed are the beginnings of reiterations long forgotten.

Their initial presentations appear as shards of stories incomplete and disjunctive but loosely connected in order to provide form to collective memories of a families' lived account in a specific area or region. And as storytelling space is increasingly perceived as sacred and justice seeking, the women began to peel back layers of oral accounts revealing hidden narratives. Their stories expose a deeper and more intrusive wound, one that embodies the horror of what it means for them and what it meant for their families before them to live marginal lives in economically depressed communities. Their wounds bear uncomfortable markings of silence and shame rendered between sentences of their story. In some cases, silence is evoked by sounds nuanced in their noticeable shifting in a chair or glances away to avert eye contact from the researcher. The message is clear. These are painful memories abruptly surfacing in the mind's consciousness, some for the first time, and are courageously being confronted by the storyteller in an attempt to render trauma harmless in their experience and in their conscious family oral history.

Thereby, this particular set of stories are dissimilar from others illustrated in this dissertation because they specifically refer to traumatic instances in which the violent perpetrator is known and classified as blood kin. The horror of each event is further particularized by association of the

member as kinfolk to the injured. This set of stories forms an organic script of trauma as its most basic level, in which *family* are perpetrators of violence.

This method represents a paradigm shift, one in which Nancy Ramsey refers in an earlier work, entitled *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms* as “reclaiming voice.”<sup>184</sup> This understanding of the European society that “problems and vulnerabilities were often the product of a life lived in the context of cultural oppression.”<sup>185</sup> Ramsey goes to say that psychological maladies “aren’t all products of unconscious conflict or idiosyncratic problems of development.”<sup>186</sup> I intend to bring up her later statement in further detail in chapter seven. Suffice to say here the researcher noted in the study the efficacy of testimony therapy when the storyteller perceived her right of ownership concerning her narrative. Hopefully, the storytellers were repeatedly invited to share always within the boundaries of mutual respect and regard for themselves and their families.

In the following paragraphs are specific descriptions of embedded stories that use the subjective anthology of the women and their families to show how the language of trauma manifests itself in social maleficence

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<sup>184</sup> Nancy J. Ramsey, *Pastoral Care and Counseling, Redefining the Paradigms*, 73.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*,73.

<sup>186</sup> Nancy J. Ramsey, *Pastoral Care and Counseling, Redefining the Paradigms.*, 73.

and results in immediate and prolonged suffering. On the surface these findings may appear as categories of social determinants, i.e., prostitution, sex trafficking, substance abuse and incarceration to name a few. However, beneath the veneer of the cover story is the chronicity of violence in a periscopic notion of familial dysfunction that impact individuals and the selves they are attempting to craft. How the each of the women report their stories is noted in narrative form, a linguistic process referred by psychologists, womanists and anthropologists, alike, all affirming the embedded power of hermeneutic and phenomenology in the narrative.<sup>187</sup> Given the hermeneutic phenomenological method used in the study, information gathered from each subject is categorized within four

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<sup>187</sup>Although the scientific-empirical form of Freud's groundbreaking psychoanalysis defined Western psychology, it is reported that he too, like latter theorists, Michael White, Edward Wimberley, and David Tracy among others affirmed the technique of narrative as a way to include the totality of the human experience caught through the lens of one's body, mind and soul/spirit. Latter, womanists; Emile Townes, Shawn Copeland and Karen Baker -Fletcher would ascribe in their writing to the significant role the Spirit plays when standing *in* the human experience regardless of historical circumstances or present conditions. In a similar venue, nineteenth century slave womanist abolitionists Maria Steward and Jarena Lee's narrative, among others, spoke to the presence Spirit as they engaged in the struggle for both religious and civil freedom. Neither of these women perceived of their own being or those they advocated for, as solely made up of mind and body. They knew the power of their call narrative emitted from a presence greater than which they were and are. Further they understood the agency of their voice could not be framed out of their own strength and mental acuity, but it was more to them and more to their souls. The more, Karl Barth argued is God who is all knowing and present in the human discourse of life. Feminist's theologians, Sally McFague consider the experience of the Spirit as *agential*, God *in* the human experience represented as agent, principal caregiver, protector and leader of all. Kathryn Tanner considers the all-knowing, presence of God as *panentheistic*, God's Spirit in the world. Thus, Tanner and McFague place their understanding of God as immanence-God Present in the human experience, William C. Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 98, 95.



specific areas. One, the context provides an ethnographic setting in the subjects may situate their narrative in a way which allows for an authentic communicative basis to emerge between researcher and subject as well as to allow for a bridge to emerge between her story, family stories and hidden secrets. Additionally, the ethnographic approach allow for the anthropological history of the family to weave its way into MK's narrative, giving depth and content to her voice as it emerges within text and context. Secondly, the situation serves to color in the story with the Mk's ancestral family characters as well as MK herself. Here, the shared narrative takes on specific meaning as it relates thematic patterns culled from events that occurred in MK's family life.

Hence, the women's stories illumine not only their accounts of trauma but also historical accounts of slaves lines with enacted memories of religious and faith practices used by their African ancestors. Spoken with similar potency their account of how God brought them "from a mighty long way" could also except for the rubric of time be easily uttered out of the mouths of slaves. Thus, while difficult at times to convey the notion that reflexivity<sup>188</sup> is a part of narrative and stories, its inherent meaning in acquiring understanding by interpreting, in this case, the slaves' experience of bondage in a world created by a just God.

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<sup>188</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 62.

## **MK's Story**

MK, a native of Massachusetts, is a fraternal twin in addition having six stepsiblings; two of whom are in foster care. The immediate family of MK resides in the Northeast. Both parents are alive. Her father is married and resides approximately thirty miles from MK; mother and fraternal brother. In addition to MK's son, age fourteen months, her parents have two grandchildren between them, a daughter, and age fifteen months. MK's mother KK has six grandchildren from her second daughter. There are no living grandparents, either paternal or maternal. The latest death, MK's paternal grandmother, AML occurred in 2004. AML who had been appointed guardian of MK and her brother when they were one year old. The grandmother succeeded in rearing both children until age nineteen. AML, paternal died due to inoperable colon cancer.

MK's narrative reveals thematic patterns of violence, substance abuse, domestic violence, drug and sex trafficking, chronic homelessness, incarceration, prostitution, and incest. Each issue is addressed in the following paragraphs.

### **Prostitution— Sex Trafficking:**

“At the age of eight years or so, I'd be going to school with my brother and us would hear a female's voice call to us. If we were with friends and classmates, we'd pretend not to hear her because we were embarrassed and ashamed that our mother was often lying in the alleyway, nearly stoned from drugs. Then her life was consumed by substance abuse, i.e.

crack, heroin, cocaine, and her vocation in order to support her habit and my father's was to prostitute".<sup>189</sup>

From an early age, shame seemed to be a part of MK's embedded and complex narrative. A statement that initially involved her mother's identification with prostitution would likewise be followed by her father's preoccupation with violence upon women.

MK's experience confirms Heinz Kohut's observation that episodes of confronting shame are compounded by the reality that "failure of the primary caregiver to convey a sense of rightness to the young child."<sup>190</sup> This reality may have an impact on how the then child relates to others as well as how they later identify suitable idealized parental images for the purpose of self-formation. In MK's case, both she and her brother were no longer under the primary care of either parent, their parental grandmother having received full custody at the age of 1.5 years. However, MK still struggled with how to approach the reality of her mother and father being perceived as social misfits. Because of her parents' criminal lifestyle and violent behavior lifestyle, at the age of eight years, MK feared acknowledging her mother while in the presence of classmates and friends.

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<sup>189</sup> Recollected Memories of MK's early childhood. Session 6, Date July 7, 2012.

<sup>190</sup> Jill McNish, *Trauma and Shame*, 104.

In a later sub-section, entitled “generational narratives and trauma”, I will take up the notion of shame as reported by MK. Suffice to say that both MK and her sibling suffered indelibly because of their mother’s “in your face” lifestyle. Her life often included physical beatings by male friends, her mother’s persistent bout with drug addiction, alcohol, and the social consequence of homelessness. MK experienced shame which would persist until well after puberty and young adulthood.

#### Domestic Violence:

Framing this segment of MK’s story involves close reading of the lifestyles and habits of three generations. They are: MK’s parents, paternal and maternal grandparents, great aunts and uncles as well as a paternal great-grandmother. Together they comprise a series of collective memories about trauma, violence and abuse in mutual families. In the familial genogram featured later in this chapter, I shall show how repeated infractions experienced within the family over the generations resulted in a duality of behavioral reactions. For example, MK’s mother, though reared as a Muslim because of her father’s affiliation with the Black Muslim’s of Harlem and Boston, Massachusetts in the 60’s ascribed her meaning of Allah and women’ adherence to patriarchal power system in a markedly different way than WL, MK’s father. WL, raised Christian with

matriarchal leanings tends to respect women who he perceives he cannot control or subdue. It begins with one of MK's earliest recollections.

There was another time when my brother and I were no older than three or four and my mother came to pick us up to spend the day with her (one of the few times she was not in jail). She took us to a local rooming house to visit with and her boyfriend at the time who was also my step-sister Joanna's father. He was a Jamaican man and his name was Lee. I remember he had a baldhead and a cocked eye. I sensed there was something mean spirited about him but at that age my only way to communicate was through my tears because I was uncomfortable and afraid to be around him. I wasn't sure what he would do to us but I knew he wasn't a very nice man to my mother. We were in his room where there was a sink area with cabinets, twin size bed, window, TV stand, closet and dresser. There was a community kitchen and bathroom in the building. We sat on his bed that was pretty high off the ground and he and my mother started to argue. Suddenly, he reached for a knife from the dish drain board on the sink and proceeded to slice her ear off. Crying uncontrollably, we sat together while my mother took a handkerchief (scarf) and tied it around her head to stop the bleeding and keep her ear in place. All I remember my mother saying during the altercation was "please Lee, not in front of my kids". I don't understand why she would deal with someone like that or why she allowed men to abuse her. It's so sad and hurtful to think of the things she did for what she thought was love or for a quick fix."<sup>191</sup>

Stories of the kind reported here are sporadically a part of MK's family narrative. Violence involving knife or gun seemed to occur frequently and generally related to altercations between male and female parties. As Nancy Boyd-Franklin reports, "In many inner-city areas, very young children (as young as age 2) who have witnessed acts of violence have been diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms such

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<sup>191</sup> MK's reflection January, 2013.

as night terrors, repetitive play enactment of the experience, and flashbacks (Osofsy, 1997).<sup>192</sup> In terms of MK's trauma situation, she reports in later narratives how she attempted to repress the story, particularly when her stepsister Joanna pressed for information about her father and his whereabouts. MK reports "I attempted to deflect her inquiries by pretending to hear a slightly different question." Often this strategy prompted a response on her part but one that was often unrelated to the original question. At other times, MK remembers consciously repressing the conflict. Even many years later, she noticed the scar on her mother's left ear, initially wondering if she had gotten it in a fight while incarcerated.

During the second generation of MK's family, her parents' generation, there was evidence of multiple acts of antisocial behavior between both families. WL (father of MK) is twenty years senior to KK (mother of MK) and though not married, WL tended early on to physically control KK.

Approximately one year after the birth of MK and her sibling, both parents would be incarcerated and with sparse periods of intermittent freedom, would remain repeatedly involved in the criminal justice system for approximately twenty years with KK serving the longest time in a state penitentiary.

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<sup>192</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 169. Citing Osofsy, 1997.

Thirteen years after the death of her mother, who died of bone cancer at the age of twenty-seven, KK would begin to engage in prostitution at the urging of her maternal aunts, KM and LB. (KM and LB are deceased of AIDS/HIV and bone cancer respectively). A fourth aunt, P., would assume maternal oversight for KK and three of her own siblings. Initially WL was involved with KK's aunts as their drug provider and pimp. The aunts later recruited their younger niece, KK into the underground world of sex, crime and drugs. WL functioned as KK's pimp, later providing drugs in exchange for sex trafficking exploits.

Years later, MK would evangelize to P about the Word of God. Eventually P converted from Islam to Christianity, electing some after her conversion to attend college. She served as mentor to MK in the years following the death of her grandmother.

MK's family includes several step-brothers and sisters. JH is the nearest known female sibling to Mk. Over the years, they maintained a relationship. This relationship became tenuous in recent times because in MK's view "JH is reliving the life of my mother." "The sole difference is that she has not been incarcerated for an extended period of time."<sup>193</sup>

### **The Ethnographic Storyline**

“”Being struck by the incomprehensible and inexpressible wonder of the body to the extent of complete immersion in an experience beyond

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<sup>193</sup> MK. Journal. September, 2011.

the ego, such that subject-object consciousness dissolves into a paradoxical oneness of self with African American, are familiar tropes in accounts of the mystical experience.”<sup>194</sup>

One could argue about the nature of mysticism in the human experience while Bhogal’s interest seems to lie in the rhetoric surrounding mysticism and its representation in animalistic versus human cosmologies, I am interested in the exploring the deep reaches of the Holy Spirit in the composite African American trauma experience. Particularly, voices of the female trajectory within the culture about the spirit and trauma continually confronts the ongoing post-modernist discussion about the validity of the Holy Spirit in the lived experience. My collected narratives and stories provide data for further inquiry into what it may mean to be encountered by the Holy Spirit and how that experience been exemplified in the African American ethnographic storyline. I aim to explore more deeply what it has meant for a people to experience God- the Holy Spirit and recount knowledge of this kind as intuitive –based. Intuitive based knowledge describes words used by dominant discourse to organize knowledge acquired beyond the parameter of empiricist rationalization. This kind of knowledge rendered in a plea by the women’s ancestors as well as my own *quickens me to know*. These words display both characteristics of humility and hope that in the moment of contact, the

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<sup>194</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhogal, *The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 80, No. 4, Dec. 2012, 880.



unexplainable will occur. This plea to connect with God in the spirit is heard in the prayer of the nineteenth century womanist and preacher, Marie Stewart, who is reported to have spoken these words, *Send me not away without a blessing, I beseech thee; but enable me to wrestle like Jacob, and to prevail like Israel.*"<sup>195</sup>

### **JH's Story** [as told by MK]

JH faced a lot of trouble while living with the Mann's (court-ordered foster care /non-blood related). From molestation to rape and neglect she often spoke of having to live with being violated by the very people the courts have given authority over you. She was treated as an outcaste and was forbidden not to do just about everything except attend school. She said to MK, the only way I could survive without giving up was to believe God cared for me when no one else did." When he raped me at night, I prayed. "The Lord is my Shepherd...." Mk reported that the family—specifically the wife of the violator cut her hair off like a boy and refused to pierce her ears or affirm her. JH said, "I guess she was angry or maybe jealous that he took me over her. But I was just a child..." The things she faced growing up with this family scared her for life and caused her to act out in school and in the home. JH turned to the streets and became promiscuous and got involved with drugs and alcohol."<sup>196</sup>

The ethnographic model provides for both the researcher and participants an opportunity to jointly look in on excerpts of a past narratives, that depicts trauma in a familial story. It also allows an opportunity for JH's story to "kick-up" in MK memories of her own

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<sup>195</sup> James Melvin Washington, *Conversations With God*, 30.

<sup>196</sup> MK' journal entry entitled "JH", September, 2012 (JH is the maternal step-sister of MK- Lee's daughter)

trauma and of the attempts she has taken to repress it. Further, in examining the individual and collective trauma narrative of MK, it might also aid in understanding and differentiating between how trauma was understood by family members and by MK. Lastly, interpretations of themes made apparent by the disclosure of family information in the genograms (appended to the rear of this chapter) may also be compared to the contents of the journal entries.

The process for the ethnographic analysis began with establishing a level of trust. With time, the participants felt sufficiently comfortable to trust the researcher to enter into their individual and familial lives, demonstrating constant awareness of the precious lives exposed under the rubric of trauma. I understood that no matter the situations told in narratives or the rough texture of conflict, shame, guilt, despair, anger and hope, these two African American women love their parents whether alive or deceased, and families, complete with unresolved frailties.

To experience their stories concerning what it has meant to live into the Spirit evokes humility on the researcher's part. Humility in the sense that their stories lay bare markings of what it means to live and survive today—specifically as an African American woman or man. The Spirit is the critical arbitrator between themselves and endurance and despair. While each of their narratives and stories affirms the progress and strength of a community, it also portrays the lengths to which the African American

community will still need to go in order to achieve individual and collective success. Moreover, feelings of vulnerability by the researcher became a critical consideration in the study, to the extent, to which there are moments of mingling spirits. These moments between them tend to “kick up” both collective memories and forgotten secrets.

### **The Cosmology of an African American Female Trauma Narrative:**

William Placher, editor of *Essentials of Christian Theology* suggests that there may be a conflict between the constructive nature of eschatology and entropy. The eschaton meaning the promised future of God’s reign on earth is directly in opposition to empirical naturalists who believe entropy—the movement from hot to cold- supports in some ways the big bang theory. That is to say the best has already occurred, an unequivocal equilibrium unmatched by human powers. This in the premise of Aristotelian *First Cause*,<sup>197</sup> meaning all that follows is a direct cause of the Original Being. But I would argue that story telling particularly of the kind that renders trauma as the epicenter of the narrative is in it, a manifestation of the escheating. A promise that what is to appear may be beyond what we ask, know to ask or think.

### **AJ’s Story**

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<sup>197</sup> Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 7.

AJ is a native of Alabama. She had two older siblings. After the sudden death of her mother, the elder of the two siblings, brother, assumed court custody of AJ. MJ, the brother reared AJ until age eighteen years. At age eighteen, AJ entered undergraduate school followed successfully by graduate training. In 2005, MJ died suddenly of heart failure. In terms of AJ's father, his whereabouts remain unknown.

In gathering family information and statistics about the autobiographical record of the family, AJ has experienced resistance on the part of her only surviving sibling to share information, therefore AJ continues to lack critical data about her own family. What she does know is largely centered on community knowledge about her mother. Her mother's life is reports to have included elicited patterns of substance abuse, domestic violence, prostitution and homelessness. AJ attributes her mother's behavior to significant periods in which she witnessed erratic behavior by her own mother, who seemed ill equipped in managing her own psychological disturbance. AJ later learned that her mother suffered from undiagnosed schizophrenia, primarily caused by multiple accounts of violence-induced rapes.

When queried by the researcher to describe her account of trauma, AJ shared these words.

“Trauma is physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual devastation a detriment that alters one's or a unit's normal functioning. It creates a kind of brokenness. I use the term trauma

in describing family dysfunction, church hurt, also for mental, spiritual, physical, emotional, social, institutional and spiritual abuse. Trauma alters the individual and affects the psyche and physical person. In the church setting when the Word is used in a manipulative manner the abuse renders emotional, mental, social, and spiritual hurt/trauma. A J. 2014<sup>198</sup>

Bhogal argues that the struggle to reenact to the events surrounding trauma begin with recovering of the “oceanic womb” experience.<sup>199</sup> Here relationship previously established between Creator and humanity is remembered again, invoking human reconnection with God. I assert that this ancient wisdom situates itself in prayers and songs of slaves. Accordingly, a moan or wail communicated with clarity the Cosmic Force/God when mortal speech lacks the capability to communicate. To some extent, this level of emotional dissonance is reflected in AJ description of trauma by the use of the word “ripped.” In her explanation she attempts to communicate to herself and others how soul hurt is experienced.

Bhogal’s summation of trauma critically mirrors Shelly Rambo’s interpretation of the movement of trauma as a sociological narrative in American society. Rambo stated, “In the past century, the study of trauma has circled around this enigma of the return of the past. Students of trauma

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<sup>198</sup> AJ Journal entry: March 2014.

<sup>199</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhogal, *The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body*,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 80, No.4, Dec.2012, 870.

attempted to discern and witness the marks of an event—a wound—that remains long after a precipitating event or events is over.”<sup>200</sup>

After wails and moans have subsided, then trauma’s next tentative language may be silence. For some silence is the source of interspersed healing, allowing the soul to pause in the face of tragedy before beginning again. Also, silence assists to name the hurt, while in some cases, paradoxically, the perpetrator is using silence to shame and control. In the later instance, silence may resemble a weapon used against the harmed ones to remind them of the power held by the other. And if sufficiently threatened, the wounded over time may take on symptoms and behaviors of the perpetrator. Thereby pain and suffering are inflicted on unsuspecting others.

However, the opportunity exists to perceive silence in another way. Not perceiving silence as a weapon of the perpetrator but as a source of resilient healing allows trauma to form as a transformative rather than debilitating object in one’s ongoing generative life script.

Therefore, trauma has its own language and rubric of conformity that depicts the wounding of the individual violated by it. It forms a kind of communication that circumvents race, class, age, gender or social location- trauma causes all who are violated by it to reflect similarly.

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<sup>200</sup> S.Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 4.

Language, according to Stephen Crites<sup>201</sup> is another part of the sequential nature of narrative. Hence I argue that language and narrative are interwoven into the decorum of trauma using it as a binary between and among individuals and families. Associated with memory as a collective slice in time exponentially, trauma captures the past, present and future in a language that, while yet delimiting can become the abrasive voice of liberty and justice. When this occurs, trauma is infused with different meaning by the words and language brought to it by the narrator. It pushes against the monastic evil of silence caused by traumatic violence (Traci West, *Wounds of the Spirit*) electing rather to take on alienation and isolation as subjective realities. Language emerges as a guttural cadence causing external sounds in order to give voice to the human soul and spirit.

## **Evidence of the Holy Spirit**

### **MK's Story**

*Evidence of the movement of the Holy Spirit* within generational narratives is reflected within the trauma stories of the women followed in the next section. I wish to show how the movement of the Spirit within each narrative reveals a faithful God's immanence to every generation, even when questions summarized theologically as theodicy arises. These

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<sup>201</sup> Stephen Crites, 'The Narrative Quality of Experience IN *Why? Narrative* by Stanley Hauerwas and Gregory L. Jones,63.

accounts of rape, violence and addiction reveal soul wounds occurring as a result of trauma injury is often met with at times the sudden and unexpected presence of the Holy Spirit. This sacred persistent encountering-- holding onto the human spirit in spite of focused rage and anger at God is responded to with patient love and grace. Moreover, by examining their lived-in accounts, I reiterate my claim to the sufficiency of narrative as a legitimate data set for use within quantitative or inductive research. Herein, dialectical techniques often accentuate the importance of human expression in the anthology of the story. In it narrative become an active account of the human experience providing a raw look into the anthropological nature of life by oral accounting. This form of data gathering form a critical context for what may have occurred in family and community. When the intent is to extrapolate information based on accuracy, cases involving trauma are consequently privileged by the use of personal narrative as a way to segment power held by the perpetrator and the wounded.

### **MK's Testimony**

“I learned about God and the Holy Spirit from my paternal grandmother who assumed custody for my brother and me at the age of two. (MK has a fraternal twin whose name is Malik) I learned from my grandmother that the Holy Spirit was like having another sense – a sixth sense-that acts to alert and protect you from seen and unforeseen danger. It is something within –like a vital organ—I can’t live without. It tells me to keep going, doesn’t give



up on me or let me fall astray, even when I may want to give up on myself.”<sup>202</sup>

### **Nancy Boyd – Franklin: Black Family and Religion**

In her book entitled *Black Families in Therapy*, Nancy Boyd-Franklin affirms the significance of religion in the African American community. Furthermore she asserts that a lack of recognition of religion by the practice fields tends to omit crucial data in understanding the totality of self- and family collective identity. “The mental health field has largely ignored the role of spirituality and religious beliefs in the development of the psyche. In the treatment of African Americans, this can be a serious oversight.”<sup>203</sup> Boyd- Franklin’s emphasis on the Holy Spirit is referenced repeatedly when it comes to determining whether authentic therapeutic encounter has occurred between the therapist and an African American client.

Concern for the kind of therapeutic skill and capability is of crucial importance as the demographic make-up American culture continues to reflect a more pluralistic society. There is a need for enhanced professional acumen in addressing diversity and its intricate relationships to which Boyd-Franklin so accurately points. “Spirituality and religion having historically been very central in the lives of many African

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<sup>202</sup> MK Reflection Session 8, July 2013.

<sup>203</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 126.

Americans.”<sup>204</sup> This degree of attention to religion by the therapist is beneficial, if not, indeed paramount, to the caregiving task of empathic therapy.

Moreover, Boyd-Franklin’s reference to the importance of religion and the African American experience extends beyond the church edifice. Religion also exacts meaning of self in both family and community. While filling the role of affirming during slavery, the black church took on the function of family. Relationships that extended beyond blood kin, the family and community were enacted. The church also retained its function as safe harbor for individual development. Critically, the “church–was–home,”<sup>205</sup> during enslavement. That fact retained its stature in the African American culture, and even rose over the years because of family and community. Boyd-Franklin comments on the nature of the black church functioning “as an extended family” a *cachexia of self*.<sup>206</sup> *This critical space* mirrored for African American people a positive collective of character that could be accomplished by those who sought refuge within it. Held in high esteem, the church was a place where the enslaved and disenfranchised, in faithful communion, went each Sunday to meet God.

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<sup>204</sup> Nancy-Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 127.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, 129-130.

<sup>206</sup> Jill McNish, *Trauma and Shame*, 105.

In the ensuing years after slavery, The Black Church emerged as the site of collective community advocacy, serving as its mighty fortress. It was the perennial institution that represented God doing justice in the midst of life. It was the place where people could go without exclusion to make meaning of their circumstances, while at the same time learning to receive mercy and grace towards themselves and others. Often prayers for healing could be heard in Worship services followed by songs, “I feel the spirit.” “Get happy and shout.”<sup>207</sup>

Driven by their historical narrative, the people learned to base their beliefs in the collective authority of the Holy Spirit, Scripture and The Preached Word, with the former functioning as a foundation to the remaining two. For example, when the preacher took a text such as Isaiah 61:1 “The Spirit of the Lord.... To heal the brokenhearted,” there was a reminder that God was always present in spite of daily wounding caused by trauma. While the scripture assured them, it provided the means through which they could seek comfort from those called out to serve God’s people. The Spirit inspired them to hold on to God, remaining connected in a faith community from which support and comfort could be sought out.

Being present in a beloved community provided sheltering grace which allowed for a greater emphasis upon sustained healing. In community, the

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<sup>207</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 130.

perennial Promise of God circumvented the reality of lives tormented by slavery's trauma. The belief that God's faithful love would never cease was instilled in the people. Milton C. Sernett contends that the slaves organized the plantation cabin as a weekly worship space, would become the precursor to the Black Church. Here within the sacrosanct space of the cabin was evidence of the first theatre in the black community.

Remembering the daily trauma of their forced captivity, they faithfully practiced their redemptive song, "Thank God, I shall not live here always!"<sup>208</sup> Like Greek theatre, its functional goal was cathartic. The Black Church went beyond the Greeks' search of transcendence. It became a way to fill spaces emptied by trauma and suffering. It is an enduring fellowship with God in which the formal worship service provided the occasion for particular periods of intimacy."<sup>209</sup>

This scenario presents in a different model, one in which predates acculturation of clinical care. Certainly the framers of psychoanalytic theories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not seem to consider the plight that institutional or societal trauma imposed upon a significant segment of global (and later American) society. To the degree that the African American women and men were not referenced by Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott and Heinz Kohut ,

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<sup>208</sup> Milton C. Sernett, Editor, *African American Religious History*, 67.

<sup>209</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 6.

among others does not necessarily mean the African American lives were devoid of trauma. Nor does it mean that they found it so commonplace that it required no added attention or their part in terms of professional care. The answer to this kind of supposition is critically, No!

The evidence of the two African American women's narratives clearly depict trauma as a part of the generational sequence of narratives and stories. To a large degree, the Black church was the provider of care; more specifically, the solace provided by God in the healing grace of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, it's not necessarily the Black preacher who was the focus of "clinical care" provided. The fact remained it was the act of God that the people sought. The preacher was merely the conduit.

Adequacy of meaning acts as a linguistic shelter to expose the violation that has occurred using familiar words and language of the harmed. Jerome Bruner calls this kind of reflection is not primarily based on "logical or paradigmatic mode"<sup>210</sup> of thinking but rather is instead focused on the meaning of the story and the manner in which culture and context serve as a mediating recourse for contemporary stories and historical narratives to emerge in the force of vernal recitation and nuance. When the offense is the central dialogical theme between God/Holy Spirit and human soul, the human spirit strives to make meaning of the imbalance created in the disruption caused by trauma. At the same time,

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<sup>210</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 94.

the spirit is attempting to recover homeostatic balance around be able to commune again with the holy. In chapter one, I refer to this notion by referring to the slave spiritual, entitled “*Nobody knows the Trouble I’ve Seen*” Here, the spiritual is an example of the kind of dialogue that can occur between God and human creation in the time of great suffering. The spiritual personifies a communal connection that extends beyond human capacity to empathize, suggesting in the language-specifically, word used “nobody” that there are spiritual spaces in which only the Creator and the human spirit can enter in. Some have called it liminal space in an attempt to describe that area of pain and suffering caused by trauma that remembers the Eternal source of healing and sustenance.

By placing emphasis upon the relational nature of the Holy Spirit and trauma care, Shelly Rambo’s book, *Spirit and Trauma*, provides a composite trajectory from which the ailment is transferred from wounding to healing. Citing a theoretical premise as the basis of her argument, Rambo enters into the discussion about trauma with a focus upon the human self as a lens by which the soul may have been wounded by trauma. Rambo suggests that order for authentic healing to occur, a new approach needs to take place on the part of practitioners. That approach should be tendered in the reflection of expository account giving of the human binary of trauma and healing. Assigning life’s realities in the depiction of living allowing all experiences including trauma to become

part of the material assigned by victory. Defining trauma as a *middle spirit*<sup>211</sup> provides grounded *hope* to enter into the stark testimonies of traumatic violence. Described to this degree, Rambo argues it can only be language a unspeakable. Intended to mute, in time, silence frees.

Twentieth century French post-structuralist Jacques Derrida<sup>212</sup> posited language as a hermeneutic may falter when attempting to fully capture the horror of stories involving trauma. To recover the expressive connection between the nuances created by trauma and the power of the Holy Spirit, Jerome Bruner argues for a collective exposition. One that critically explores “interpretive meaning” as “metaphoric, allusive, very sensitive to context.”<sup>213</sup> It describes the significance of meaning to narrative as “the coin of culture,”<sup>214</sup> the historical past and present praxis of a people surviving in and with the subjective experience of their whole being.

### **Question by Researcher: How do you know it was the Holy Spirit?**

AJ... “It occurs when people cry from the depths and pits of their soul as they have never cried before?” The Spirit has touched an unchecked and hidden place of pain in the individual rendering them out of control. Often the individual finds that they can’t help but surrender in the moment to the Spirit’s cleansing. As one cries from the depths of their soul or talks from the depths of their soul they are being healed in a way that differs from going to a medical physician. The individual is different because of their

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<sup>211</sup> Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 5.

<sup>212</sup> Jeff Collins and Bill Mayblin, *Introducing Derrida*,13.

<sup>213</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 61.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*,61.

encounter with the Holy Spirit. The inner countenance changes in some way that only the individual feels; yet others may see something different has occurred. It's the Holy Spirit leading, guiding, and sustaining ... when one feels unshakably anchored in the midst of chaos."<sup>215</sup>

Making meaning out a story that incorporates language such as the Holy Spirit in a discipline of linguistic empiricism may require a different approach to knowledge gathering. In this study, I have tried to integrate both methodologies in order to augment the legitimacy of my work as more than African American people talking about their emotions involving God. Critically, the objective is to open up the dialogue about empiricism and what constitutes reliability, accuracy, and validity in an increasingly pluralistic American society. To do so within a chasm of *hermeneutic of suspicion* by both clinical practitioners and proponents of the medical model requires a proclivity of agency ascribed to on the ground narratives by these two professional disciplines.

I raise this issue here because as this chapter proceeds, it increasingly points to the centrality of narrative—the spoken versus the written word as evidence of the Holy Spirit when encountering trauma- is critical to making the argument. In addition, I claim the Holy Spirit's interaction with trauma critically informs the voices of women and in particular African American women about the context of suffering in trauma. Further, as set out in the abstract of this text, I note that narrative is a form

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<sup>215</sup> AJ Journal, November 2013.



of resistance. By this, I mean that it is a way in which people who have known suffering have been silenced by either perpetrators or systemic instrumentalities of injustice. Regardless of the initiator, the human voice is a means to break silence, disrupting the disruptor as a cognitive source in order to begin healing.

Also, I assert that while writing is a predominant traditional claim to legitimacy in professional circles of academics, it is not the only one. I say this because violence caused by trauma can linger beyond the veneer of writing. Its effect upon the individual, crystalized in individual and collective memory can only surface unexpectedly. But when the wounded chose to speak, a kind of synergy occurs. This synergy results in a *push back*. At the intersection of the unknown, this kind of resistance calls attention to soul wounds defined by the speaker in the manner that best articulates their inner and repressed thoughts, feelings, and hurt. Therefore, I use both subjective and objective methods of induction to render a more accurate, valid and reliable account of the reality of the Holy Spirit in the human experience of trauma.

In summary, in chapters four and five, I have explored the nature of trauma and suffering, beginning with language used to phonetically create stories and narratives. I presented the paradigm of these creations, stories and narratives from the historical standpoint of slaves. Within each medium; language, stories and narratives, I showed how each shape

communication that is both unique to the period of slavery but also transcendent in the inherent meaning for future generations. Essentially slave narratives become living texts by which themes of survival and the fitted purpose of their lives and the lives of a people they represent, while considered less than in human history are a part of the consequential theme of God that they the misbegotten have an eternal seat at the table of glory. Commensurate with this message is the theme of redemption and hope intertwined in family narratives of their descendants and community.<sup>216</sup> McAdams recounts that even if the culture bespeaks of individual malice and evil causing suffering, redemption becomes the first fruit of the experience. McAdams goes on to make the point that redemption can be defined as religious – based or secular.<sup>217</sup>

In this study, I too use the term redemption in a similar way to Dan MacAdam’s definition as “deliverance from suffering,”<sup>218</sup> However, I use the term in a slightly different way than McAdams by asserting that while eradication of suffering is clearly a part of the intent to be delivered from pain and suffering, there is also a requisite reason to learn from the struggle of suffering. It is for this reason that the term suffering as used

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<sup>216</sup> Dan McAdams argues in his book *The Redemptive Self* that stories that reflect a culture and community of which the storyteller is a member.

<sup>217</sup> People assign meaning to it by the words which best describe their understanding of the world around them.

<sup>218</sup> Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self*, page XIV.

with the African American culture reflects a religious rather than secular tone. To suffer is to be invited into the mysterious being of God whereby the pain encountered is inadequate to defeat the believer.

Recounted by the slaves, their generative story is situated at the nexus of trauma and the Holy Spirit. And as a result the slaves was reminded of the love and faithfulness of God on the one hand, and who they were in Christ on the other. This understanding enabled slaves to pass a legacy of strength and faithful endurance to the generations that would collectively survive them. Therefore, I have included in my study the significance of slavery and its inherent meaning upon the African American experience, represented in part by MK and AJ's stories about trauma.

Finally, historical accounts contained in slave narratives form the nomenclature of narrative at the intersection of the Holy Spirit and its perennial power to transform has been captured in. Suffice to say, these accounts has empowered and inspired those whose lives today may not include the descriptor of slavery but nonetheless are reflective of trauma and violence, hence a similar wounding to their ancestors is noted.

## Chapter Six

### Generational Narrative Accounts

“When thou sayist, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee; Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”<sup>219</sup>

The case histories presented include the lived accounts of two African American women’s experiences of trauma juxtaposed to revealed traces of slave narratives. Each, while presenting their individual intrusion of trauma also suggest the chronicity of trauma in their own familial lineage tracing back in one case to Mk’s family four generations. In the presentation of their stories, I hope to show a connection between the slave narratives and the women and their families’ suffering concerning The Holy Spirit’s encounter of trauma. Additionally, I will indicate how the slaves confronted their predicament is strikingly similar to the contemporary women’s own reflections and subsequent behavior. Through narratives and stories, both expressed the consummate power of God/ the Holy Spirit to redeem and restore injured souls to wholeness. Deconstructing brokenness through the lens of trauma can seemingly form a collective response in which a people have learned to live beyond trauma.

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<sup>219</sup> Psalms 27:7, KJV.

In past and present day stories are illustrations in which healing and restoration occurs. It is in the act of appropriating value to the adequacy and appropriateness of these accounts that one may distinguish threads of the ethereal power of the Holy Spirit within them. Whether they are evidence enough to persuade the reader(s) to consider the realness of God in the living enactment of human suffering and survival is principally left to the values and belief each may have brought to the text. However, what may remain undisputed is the wisdom and insight of the women and their ancestors to see beyond their situation- however troubling- to a better day. Scholars have attributed stories of this kind as a reflection of primordial knowing. Balbinder Singh Bhogal iterates in his article entitled *The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body* the encounter between human and the Holy Spirit is sometimes described as “oceanic experience.”<sup>220</sup>

In the research and writing of this text, I also experienced a collision of the human spirit with the Holy Spirit resulting in an opening up of stories in ways that thicken the description of the women’s and their family’s accounts. The action constituted within the contact experience caused sequences of ideas, thought, emotions and inner wounds that the late

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<sup>220</sup> Balbinder Singh Bhogal, “The Animal Sublime: Rethinking the Sikh Mystical Body,” IN *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.80, No. 4, Dec. 2012,870.

Dorothee Soelle identified as “stepping –into their time –frame.”<sup>221</sup> The women’s accounts reveal the embedded narrative of family members, both living and deceased which impel a different kind of expressed hermeneutic than was initially intended. Both women admitted that they spoke more openly and honestly as they began to reiterate stories that for so long had been sequestered as family secrets. But when they allowed the stories to tell of the events that occurred, they experienced a healing deep within their souls.

The African American community was ignored, categorically silenced in American life. Their spiritual and emotional struggles were either made fun of, used in *blackface* comedy in the 1920’s or as material for movies like *A Cabin in the Sky*, featuring Leana Horne, Ethel Waters and Eddie Rochester. Although the film’s emphasis upon the soul and life’s injustice reached a major American audience, the struggle was portrayed in as light, less- than -bittersweet testimony of the assembled cast.

It was not until a female African American playwright from Chicago named Lorraine Hansberry wrote of the struggles of an African American family whose struggle to achieve an ancestral dream is sidetracked by the past hurt and trauma of the father figure, that American society in general began to wonder about the conditions of African American people.

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<sup>221</sup>Doro thee Soelle, *Suffering*, 15.

Hauntingly prolific even before the sixties, Civil Rights era, Black theatre told the stories of a people whose historic experiences also included dreams deferred.

Interwoven in the footprint of the African American story about trauma and slavery's insolent violence are the Harlem Renaissance writers and their depictions about Black life. Of note are the works of Richard Wright, *Nobody Knows My Name*, Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Dust Tracks on the Road*; Claude McKay's compelling prose, "If We must Die", and James Weldon Johnson, *Lift Every Voice*. The power of their writing was in the voice it gave to thousands— even millions surviving life on abysmal terms, yet encountering the grace of God and survived.

These wordsmiths' presented is the core of the ancestral wisdom involving life's heartaches that broadly ascribed to as trauma. It is not that trauma will cease to occur-although there is the hope authenticated in strivings for change that in many forms they will. But the truth of the matter is that trauma cannot claim its wounded. Fearless and resolute with the power that lies within chances, the claim that in time good wins over evil is affirmed. It is heard in the angel's response to John's query when looking upon the crowd, who came with their robes dipped in Blood. The answer: "These are they who come out of a great tribulation."<sup>222</sup> Hence,

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<sup>222</sup> Scripture referenced here is found in the Book of Revelation 7:14.

the Black Church, as in slavery, continues to be the place where hope is plied with victory. Reflected in so many slaves' narratives and spirituals, God's sacred presence is evident throughout all generations.

Thus, I claim the strength to counter injustice requires an inner knowing of the kind that constitutes spirit and soul together in unison with God. It enables the traumatized to, in spite of their frailty establish their vision towards the mark "of running this race with patience."<sup>223</sup> The resolve to do so is necessary in order to reach not only one's own goals but those of so many thousands gone. Evidenced in the repeated phrase in the African American church and home, to "make a way out of no way," remains a core generative that suffering need not in itself bring one low. Rather a deep sense that God's promise is in the story raises stooped shoulders. This is the African American witness to human history. It is generative because it illustrates a people's resolve to endure and to survive, enabling them to come out on the other side victorious. And in their strivings, they learned to wait and believe in God. The response is God continues to flip trauma, taking the pain out of the depths of evil and turning it into a meaningful good.

### **Theological Anthropology of the Human Story**

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<sup>223</sup> Hebrews 12:1, KJV.



Elaine Graham identifies the level of researcher participation as an invitation to do “theological reflection” of the kind that<sup>224</sup> employs the creative potential people have within to construct meaningful stories out of the varied circumstances of their lives. Such stories may have coherent form understandable plots, clarified or established identity of the author, all the while making clear the meaning of a single or complex puzzling event. And yet the meaning of a story, while including these functions, may also exceed them. I believe it may take on a broader role, not always mediated clearly in quantitative or qualitative inductive reasoning.

Learning to believe in God was clearly reflected by the stories and implicit messages of MK’s paternal grandmother. Faith, the consequence of their belief in God was evidenced in the early Sunday morning services of ring shouts and choral spirituals at a small corner church, *Bethany Baptist Church*. Paul Tillich described faith of the sort actualized in MK’s grandmother’s life experience as “faith ...ultimately concerned is the centered act of personality.”<sup>225</sup> Through faith, MK’s grandmother AML

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<sup>224</sup>Elaine Graham argues in her book entitled *Theological Reflection: Methods*: “Theological Reflection is often described as an activity that enables people of Stories embedded with artifacts of faith to give an account of the values and traditions that underpin their choices and convictions and deepens their understanding. Theological reflection enables the connection between human dilemmas and divine horizons to be explored...”<sup>224</sup> By taking on the responsibility of interpreting their own reality, individuals are able to script in their process of recovery and healing with God’s power.”; 5-6.

<sup>225</sup> Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 30.

would learn the benefits of rehabilitation from addiction due to a newness of person crafted from the seeds of her faith and belief in the holy. By faith, AMI intuited the beneficence of soul-healing comes with learning how to yet live with heartache. Transformed in her own life, she could then direct her attention to teaching her grandchildren the meaning and purpose of sacred healing. The codicil of her testimony enabling them to confront trauma and move beyond it towards reconciled hope in their own lives.

Similarly, MK's reflection of her maternal grandmother, JH, although deceased years before she was born, also assumes a voice in MK's narrative about stifling body- and- soul pain; a pain so severe that the spirit threatens to give up. In the choice of words and phrases, MK begins to recall a memory she never had experienced according to family stories, it was her grandmother's story. Here as principle speaker, MK takes on the semblance of the present time for her ancestor, providing a living text almost as if she could see into grandmother's story, opening to pages where suffering violence occurred before her medical condition.

MK's grandmother died of ovarian cancer. With raw honesty and openness, Mk's voice becomes that of the original speaker revealing instances of pain buried under the silence of shame and history.

The next section includes ethnographic and generational interpretations recorded orally to the researcher considerably augments the constructive

nature of subjective narratives in authoring “multiple realities”<sup>226</sup> about trauma and the Holy Spirit. God *in* the story of Trauma:

The generational stories reflected in the final segment of this chapter detail how trauma incorporates ways of healing that render God’s promise an eternal part of the African American legacy. Their stories reveal the history of a people who learned over generations how to connect with God using vulnerability- caused by trauma to co-mingled with their own faith to change their lives. In the process, they learned to actively participate in their own healing. It is a kind of healing that engrafts pain and suffering, and transforms it into reflexive healing.

### **The Women’s Stories**

The following story recounts KK’s earlier life. However when told by her daughter, the researcher heard her zeal to also share her mother’s life since imprisonment.

#### **KK’S Story** (as told by her daughter, MK)

She was often delinquent from school to do drugs with two other maternal aunts. This led to selling drugs, sex trafficking and larceny. Along the way she met my father who sold drugs along with his uncle. Both (parents) were eventually imprisoned with my mother serving the longest sentence. She started using at thirteen,

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“turning tricks’ at fourteen and imprisoned by eighteen. She spent twenty-five years of her life in prison.<sup>227</sup>

Inviting MK to reflect upon how her mother’s life story while at the same confronting her grandmother’s image of God required implicit reassurance on my part that as the principal researcher, I would not portray her mother’s story in a sterile and obscure manner. Outwardly, I reiterated my shared respect for both her and her family, stressing my commitment to present their narratives with dignity and fairness. Critically, my approach to this work has been to shed light onto a narrative often supplanted, ignored and minimized.

Through narrative accounts, my wish is show that the complicated nature of trauma includes, and at times reveal soul wounds that are self-inflicted. MK’s mother’s life included periods of self-induced trauma that earlier on may have had more to do with rebelling against authority. An earlier reflection details MK’s great-great aunt, age seventeen as caretaker of Kalijah, (MK’s mother) after her own mother’s death at age 39. Coming to terms with personal choice in relation to trauma requires a shift of the lens in which MK looks through to better reflect the personal pain she had endured as a result of not having the opportunity to have either or both parents involved in her and her brother’s rearing.

Taking responsibility for self induced trauma provide for MK a means of questioning her mother’s initial motives. MK becomes angry at some of

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<sup>227</sup> MK Reflection. May 15,2012.

her mother's choices but at the final stages of her reflection she begins to reconcile with her mother. MK forgives her in those spaces where harm was the result of her own doings as well as the doings of others. Upon reflection, Mk claimed that her relationship with her mother in the early years and to some extent, today - is tenuous today but acknowledges that she has always had a silent wish to have mother back in her life and family. It would be twenty-seven years before MK witnessed her mother's recovery and re-entry into civilian life. MK had to confront these conjunctive realities, without negating her grandmother's influence upon her own self-development.

On the other hand, addiction was not singularly attributed to MK's parents; her grandmother had earlier on experienced addictive behavior. However, after having encountered a corner street Pentecostal revivalist who prophesied to her that God had something better in store for her. Mk's grandmother she sought rehabilitative care. The story is told in family gatherings that during treatment AML (grandmother) accepted Christ as her Lord and Savior. AML told them that accepting God meant she didn't have to feel sorry for herself anymore, nor feel cheated that society had labeled her because of a fractious marriage and incorrigible children. Now she had a second chance in the care of her two grandchildren. After completion of the program, MK's grandmother sought custody of MK and her brother. At the time, she was unsure how

she would financially provide for the children but later secured work in a local county alcoholic treatment program. MK reports that her grandmother often started this account that affirmed her trust in God. She would go on to tell them that her legs were shaking standing in front of the judge but “I did it because I wanted my family to avoid foster care.” God kept his promise and provided for all of us.

MK’s account of her grandmother’s rehabilitative life aids to counteract MK’s mother’s story creating balance between plausible alternatives in seeking peace and joy from fractured beginning. In a later session, MK admitted that WL, (MK’s father) who was incarcerated in her earliest years, spent in total less time than her mother. WL resided within five blocks of his mother (AML) and children but he remained on the periphery of their lives. Complicating MK’s narrative of her father is the story about his insistent involvement in committing physical assaults upon women.

Nevertheless, in the research encounter, the process of assisting MK to confront her own inner hurt and anger was at times very vocal. At other times silence was the primary communicator. I observed MK’s behavior to know when the Holy Spirit was active in our discourse and therefore to remain silent, watching her for the next cue to re-enter her narrative. Particularly when the topic involved unmet maternal needs and ignored suffering, MK might begin her hourly encounter distracted by events

occurring within the public space in which we often met. At other times, she seemed sad and forlorn, requiring a gentle verbal nudge on my part as to what might have been going on with her. Always striving to structure my comments to the research, I would probe deeper regarding the last session and whether they needed more reflection today. In more instances than not, MK responded with clarity about the research instrument, i.e. questionnaire, genogram or spirit assessment tools, with her desire to connect the dots with her own development of self-image.

The process of Mk's framing of her own self-image occurred within chaotic, and at times, uncertain conditions with both parents intermittently incarcerated. Her paternal grandmother faced a chronic struggle to find sufficient funds to hire a lawyer to represent her son. Even in these conditions, conflating two symbiotic approaches to life, one based upon the hardscrabble drug and criminal life of her mother and the other, the rehabilitative life of her grandmother did not obfuscate her ability to frame her own self-image.

Richard Ullman and Doris Brothers state that the “nuclear self”<sup>228</sup>...is deeply anchored to the responsiveness of the selfobjects.”<sup>229</sup> In MK's family, she was able to organize a representation of fractured selfobjects

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<sup>228</sup> “True Self”- refer to term used in Donald Winnicott's theory in which he argued for the authenticity of the human self in which identity can be formed and sustained. Donald Capps, *The Depleted Self*, 88.

<sup>229</sup> Richard Ullman and Doris Brothers, *The Shattered Self*, 13.

which together served as a whole. Critical analysis suggests that although MK 's mother was deficient in providing a sustainable parental image, she became part of a parental image for MK. This imagery in concert with her paternal grandmother presence, aided MK in understanding her authentic self.

### **MK's Story**

When my grandmother passed, my mom was in jail. I believe knowing that her children's care giver was no longer alive may have prompted her to get her life together so she could step in and pick up where my grandmother left off. My brother and I were nineteen years old. Also, my step- sister had recently given birth to her oldest son which may have also contributed to our mother not wanting to live another minute of her life to the streets and jail. She started coming around more often and was involved in our lives to some extent. She would relapse here and there whenever life seemed too overwhelming but never gave herself fully back to the streets or jail again. I prayed for her, sometimes echoing the words of my grandmother and I believe it helped. My mother was raised a Muslim but I believe there is one God, regardless of what name is used to define the Holy. She was officially apart of our lives again and we loved it.

While I was away in college my mom was trying hard to redeem herself with the judicial system and asked if I could write a letter on her behalf so they would know that she was clean and making an effort to live right. The judge saw that she was looking good and seemed to be on the straight and narrow and decided to lift her charges so that she could become a more productive citizen. My mom landed a job and an apartment with her female partner and was doing well for herself. She even helped my sister out with her children and took care of them for some time when my sister wasn't doing too good. I helped my mom look into enrolling in college and she did. She attended Phoenix University for her Associate's degree and is now completing her Bachelors' degree.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> MK Reflection, July, 2011.



Intermittently, MK's story about the death of primary care giver, AML, included traces of impotence. Dorothee Soelle argued that impotence was a spiritual rather than emotional matter which often caused complications to arise in a family already encumbered by familial conflict.

In her final book, *The Mystery of Death*, the late German feminist theologian Dorothee Soelle, suggests that "the greatest danger I see spreading among us is a spiritual matter: that we think of ourselves as incapable of action and thus remain fixed in the feeling of our own impotence."<sup>231</sup> Given the script of MK's account of her mother's rehabilitative journey after twenty-five years of incarceration, Soelle's assertion that the possibilities for change are innumerable when the afflicted believe all *things are possible*. Here Soelle affirms that the human condition is susceptible to change, thus need not invite pessimism rather strive with perseverance to reach the goal.

Moreover, the relationship between the *holy* and the created invokes hope to the extent that enables the individual to believe change can happen. Inspired by a personal event as the death of a principal caregiver or the birth of a grandchild, MK's mother may have been willingly to risk familiarity for yet new relationships.

I argue by addressing the construct of trauma with another, namely the Holy Spirit's agency within human stories and narratives acting as

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<sup>231</sup>Dorothee Soelle, *The Mystery of Death*, 114.

empowering tools to heal and recover. I contend that the process of internal journeying becomes necessary *if* sustained transformation and healing is envisioned. When the acceptance of belief involving mutuality between wounded lives and the Spirit of God is ignored, recovery is stymied. By risking the familiar for unspoken accounts of the Holy Spirit's presence in the human condition, a new and more meaningful disclosure may be sufficiently parsed and studied in ways that reveal another aspect of the Truth.

In *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*, Womanist scholar, Shawn Copeland presents within the chapter entitled '*Body, Representation and Black Discourse*' her thesis regarding female domination within the African American community. Copeland posits the domination began during colonization of slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this time, she argues the black body was considered a material commodity to be exploited, controlled and when necessary serve as mortgagee collateral for the planter. Black bodies were considered the property of others in which the subject's body or bodies produced in sometimes forced conjugal arrangements were under the exclusive rights of the planter. The process of accomplishing this was to use tactics "requiring...breaking, taming, breeding, control and use of black human beings as work animals, as tools, in the service of violent expansion,

settlement and domination.”<sup>232</sup> Copeland draws a connection with slavery’s caustic reality of brutal oppression and exploitation to today’s consequence in which African American women whose lives are characterized as marginal and isolated by trauma, often male-dominated trauma, are regarded similarly to their ancestors. The irony is startling in many ways because the oppressor unlike in slavery were often of European descent, today are African American. In attempting to address themes of violence and its assault on women forced to navigate in and through present day life of slavery/sex trafficking, Copeland challenges how the use of the term *colonization* is manifested in the unconscious psyche of both modern day black and white American experience.

Deliberately, I have inserted her argument because I believe the historical reference to slavery and its required effect of trauma is incomplete without the role black males and their participation in the manner in which African American women’s bodies are viewed in the community as well as within the larger society. Historical remembrance is but one element to a larger discussion that this particular work does not take up but is considered by the researcher to be significant for a broader and perhaps uncomfortable discursive between members of the community at large. When I consider WL’s (MK’s father) rage against African American women, I am reminded of John Swinton’s use of the

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<sup>232</sup> M.Shawn Copeland, “Body, Representation and Black Discourse,” IN Katie Cannon, Emile Townes and Angela Sims, *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*, 98.

term “complexifying situations”<sup>233</sup> in order to reveal hidden and perhaps unconscious reasoning behind the act of rage but also his own rage against himself. Perhaps, part of his anger may have something to do with a historical numbness rooted in his ancestors’ incapacity to protect their women as partners and producers of their own lineage.

Could there be another layer of stories defined in soul wounds that are festered and prone to explosion? Copeland’s posits that colonization of black female bodies by owners affected not only the female members but also the men in the home but community, the black men witnessed the bestial behavior on the part of male owners toward slave girls, women and even children.<sup>234</sup> Even so, Copeland indicts popular culture or re-introducing violence as a plausible pastime that clearly trivializing the meaning of slavery in the minds of current day African Americans and the broader American society.<sup>235</sup> Such themes debase the honor and dignity of African American in the family, community and broader public. Moreover, Copeland asserts that acceptance of the African American community’s violence against African American women and their bodies

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<sup>233</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 13.

<sup>234</sup> M.Shawn Copeland, Body, “Representation and Black Discourse ,”IN *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*,98.

tends to make more complex what it means to be violated and traumatized in modern American society. Her statement uncovers a persistent issue within the African American community that relates to dismissal of black female bodies as aspects of beauty and worthy of respect. In so doing, Copeland's criticism addresses both male and female members of the community to raise their collective dissent about violence against women as an immoral act against humanity.<sup>236</sup>

Copeland's description of assault of female bodies as a result of violence suggest a term I've begun to use in the text. The term fractured *souls* is descriptive of how women describe their soul after violation. Reflected in the generational patterning of MK's family. MK's mother's body is regarded in a similar way to the relation of a white slave holder to his female human property. In both instances, the expectation is to produce: in the planters' case, children, considered instruments of wealth accumulation and in Mk's father's case forced labor for illicit use.

The following story by MK is one in which prostitution, regarded as anti- social behavior, was not identified as a source of alienation from her parents. Although both parents were at times incarcerated, they were not shunned nor condemned by the remaining family members. MK recollects a cousin's constant remark about the family's frailties and vulnerabilities, specifically referring to drugs, prostitution and incarceration. Her

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<sup>236</sup> M.Shawn Copeland, Body, "Representation and Black Discourse ,"IN *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*,99.

grandmother's terse remark to her was Blood is thicker than mud.<sup>237</sup> This attitude served to script any reference to the family's wayward ones as included member of the unit regardless of their tendency toward violence and addiction. From this experience, MK learned how to make emotional space for both of her parents. Because of these teachings, MK seems to have developed a broader sense of what constitutes acceptance and kinship caring.

Although my mother and father did not raise me and my brother due to their frequent incidences of being incarcerated due to substance abuse and in my mother's case, and her repeated arrests for prostitution, my grandmother "granny" did not discuss it per se." While both my brother and me were aware at an early age that my parents were incarcerated (my mother would attempt to make frequent collect calls to our home); their illicit behavior was not shunned because after all Dad is the son of my grandmother and she loved him no matter what he did. As for my mother, we were not made to feel shame by her behavior while not certainly condoning it my grandmother would not condemned it either. It is as if she understood her without having walked in her shoes. (My grandmother was a recovering alcoholic and operated a non-profit organization aimed at assisting recovery alcoholics). I guess her behavior as an illicit sex operative was not rendered necessary conversation particularly if we—my brother and I were within earshot. But even then, I felt a dull inner pain as if something within was torn.<sup>238</sup>

Here again, despite of abandonment and homelessness in late teens-in the death of her guardian and caregiver, there seems to be a readiness on MK's part to accept her parents' weaknesses and love on their terms more

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<sup>237</sup>Reflection by MK-Session 9-Date August, 2012.

<sup>238</sup>Reflection by MK-Session 8—Date July 2012.

than her own. However, MK's family history exhibits repeated encounters of prostitution, even tracing evidence of it in the third generation.

Categorically, MK's attempt at reconciliation with her mother does not coincide with that of her stepsister JK. (MK and JK have different fathers). For JK, who described her Christian journey as evangelized by MK, her connection with her mother is hostile and relationally fractured. This, in spite of JK's own journey that appears at initial reading to be a near replica of her mother's. While, JK has not been incarcerated for extended periods of time, for the first ten years of her children's lives (JK has four children) she received minor charges for offenses related to drugs and prostitution. Like her mother, JK was a teen and early adult prostitute who likewise may have gotten started (according to MK's assessment) by promiscuous acts of abuse by a male foster parent. Unlike, KK, JK did not have support for her remaining four children, necessitating that three of her four children be placed into foster care. Recently, JK regained custody of them by providing court-ordered proof after completion of rehabilitation treatment. However the schism of molestation still remains a chronic under story within the family's narrative.

### **Kinship Care**

My grandmother died in 2006. I was 19 years old and a sophomore in college. She had been diagnosed the summer before and was being treated with chemotherapy and radiation. I remember when she found out she had cancer. She didn't want us kids to know because I believe she knew it was going to eventually kill her. She was a strong woman and always had

been. She would drive herself to the doctor, and only when she became so weak that she needed the assistance of transportation services. As time went on, she had to be placed in a nursing home because the cancer had crippled her. She was bedridden.<sup>239</sup>

Of the four journal entries prepared by MK, recollections of her grandmother's illness and eventual death appeared to be the most difficult for her to pen words to. Often MK would cry as she recounted stories about her grandmother's life and struggle to overcome alcoholism, and later cancer. On these occasions, I thought of lament as a form of prayer, used to petition God for solace and help.

In the book, *Crisis Caring*, Rosalyn Karaban emphasizes the importance of lament in crisis conditions such as grief and loss. She states "One type of prayer that is particularly appropriate in times of crisis and loss is the lament, particularly psalms of lament."<sup>240</sup> I found it necessary to recognize MK's need to cry, shed visible tears in a setting that she perceived as safe, secure and without judgment. Because the emphasis of the study draws attention to the whole human being, psychological and physical ailments caused by trauma are not ignored. Instead, both the emotional and physical aspects are accounted in the trauma narrative so as to ensure that the soul may be as unencumbered as possible.

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<sup>239</sup> MK journal entry-entitled "grandmother," January, 2012.

<sup>240</sup> Roslyn Karaban, *Crisis Caring*, 58.



I must also include another crucial aspect of the research experience. In some sessions such as MK's recounting of her grandmother's story, I served in a dualistic capacity as therapist and researcher/investigator. When in the therapist role, I assumed the position of prophetic counselor, Karaban suggests this aspect of pastoral counseling "goes beyond the counseling relationship to the systems of injustice and oppression that cause and contribute to pain." (Oates, Pastoral)<sup>241</sup>

MK's world in the final months and weeks of her grandmother's life might have seemed fractured and unorganized by some. But for others, it was precious time her grandmother used to prepare her family life without her. One way in which she *lined the text* of their life together and in so many words, her passing was by remembrance.

When I got the call that she had passed, I was actually taking a nap and saw my uncle's name flash across the screen. Initially I wasn't going to answer and thought to myself that it could be an emergency. I believe I hesitated because I knew why he was calling. The funeral was a celebration of her life and the church was packed. I cried during the service thinking about the good times while she was alive and laughed as well. I chose to wear all white because she wouldn't have wanted us to be sad but to glorify God because she was no longer suffering.<sup>242</sup>

The memory of their grandmother bathing them as children while preparing their lunches for daycare the next morning, all the while, ticking

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>242</sup> MK journal entry, entitled "grandmother", August 10, 2012.

them with jokes and smiles, enabled MK to remember that she raised by modeling strength even in the face of adversity. She showed her grandchildren that being responsible for someone else required strength to come through for the dependent one, no matter what. But AML also taught them the significance of humility when they are the ones dependent upon another. Thus, modeling how to confront with pain and suffering while traveling to and from the doctor's office without requesting assistance from her adult children. And then, humility when she knew she could no longer drive herself, and had to seek help from the county transportation agency.

When my grandmother died these memories faded, even though I tried to convince myself I would be okay. I knew it was different in that I had no home.<sup>243</sup>

Nancy Boyd-Franklin addresses such experiences as feeling dualistically abandoned. First, abandoned by the identified parent (in this case, MK's grandmother) and then by God. She says, "The role of the grandmother is one of the most central ones in African American families. It can also be one of the most complex and problematic. Grandmothers are frequently very central to the economic support of Black families and play a crucial role in childcare."<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Mk journal entry "grandmother," August 8, 2012.

<sup>244</sup> Nancy Boyd Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 79.

The authors, Joel James Shulman and Keith G. Meador in their book, *Heal Thyself*, call this aspect of relationship caring as “fidelity.”<sup>245</sup> That is, the wisdom to know when being present with familiar faces at the time of death is part of life’s journey. Particularly, MK recounts how her grandmother tried to instill in them a sense of dignity and self- respect towards each other and those around them. These same attributes permeate the African American culture and conscious. It is one that is authored by strength to endure critically in spite of the circumstances.

MK’s relationship with her paternal grandmother helped to anchor her faith in a religious belief constituted by the Trinitarian experience of God as Father/Mother. Manifested in the flesh by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, faith acts as an offering of reconciliation and forgiveness, for oneself in relationship with God and then towards family, community and stranger. Therefore as the God loves and forgives all, so should her actions be even towards parents.

Given AML’s intent to provide a safe, secure and clean home environment also required anchoring both MK and her brother into a religious base. Sundays would begin with church attendance followed by family gatherings.

It was during these times that KK, would “come around to see us.” Once we inquired why she didn’t attend church with us. She replied that

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<sup>245</sup> Joel James Shuman & Keith G. Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 133.

she didn't believe in the Christian kind of God. That she was raised Muslim and would remain so.

In spite of KK's attitude toward the Christian church, MK developed a love there, perceiving it as a sanctuary of peace and wholeness. She states church provided her a sense of normalcy not often experienced at home. I noted here that MK seemed sad and despondent when she recalled life at home with her grandmother wasn't always so happy and secure. There seemed even with AML's constant efforts to provide care, there was something missing.

As the researcher listened, raising questions gently, probing when feasible, MK would not consciously address what ails her in this part of her story. Her reluctance to delve deeper into her grandmother's story and their home life, especially in the early years, was at some areas, irreproachable. When asked to express her soul's emotion when recalling these time, she repeatedly remarked, "All we had was our Granny."<sup>246</sup>

**Narrative: Description of Trauma and Suffering Caused by Kinship Relations.**

Growing up, my mother would visit from time to time in when she wasn't in jail. I remember how happy I was to see her no matter what she was dealing with because I didn't understand that aspect of her life anyway. I just wanted my mother. When she was away, she would call the house and I remember my grandmother telling me not to accept the collect calls because it was expensive. I felt sad during the times where the operator would say "you have a collect call from", and my mother would say "mommy" and I had to hang up the phone on her. I could only imagine how she felt on the other end. However there were times where I would

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<sup>246</sup>MK narrative-Session- 6- March 9, 2012.

accept the calls and just risk being scolded by my grandmother when she got the phone bill. It felt good to hear my mom's voice and know that she was thinking of us. It was opportunity to catch up with her and ask the infamous question, "When are you coming home"? There was always a false sense of hope because I knew she wouldn't be home. Anytime soon, and whenever she was released her first stop wouldn't be too see us but back on the streets. It was bittersweet.<sup>247</sup>

In her book, *Black Families in Therapy*, Boyd-Franklin asserts that the phenomenon of kinship care<sup>248</sup> is often established on trust between the cared for and the caregiver as well as members of the extended family. Thus, while AML assumed guardianship of KK and WL's minor children, their respective surrounding families kept watch over them. However, oversight for some of the extended family did not always mean assuming care if AML could not. But kinship care did provide a basis of accountability should a situation so warrant it. For example, MK recalls an instance involving her brother's repeated acting-out episodes, the latest of which resulted in temporary school suspension. AML, extremely frustrated by MK's attempts to control her grandson that she contacted his uncle, AL, to come and have a "talk" with him. He agreed and in their dialogue an altercation ensued between the two of them uncle and grandson. After AMK stopped the fight, she noticed that MK's arm was broken. She asked his uncle to leave immediately. Later, MK's father learned of the altercation, questioning his mother about why he had not

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<sup>247</sup> MK Session 7, May, 2012.

<sup>248</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 52.

been initially contacted. AML explained she was unsure if he would respond affirmatively and if he did, how he might act toward his son. Years later she confided to both of them that she was worried about their father's temper and propensity towards violence. She thought given the circumstances, WL's brother would be a safer option for all involved.

Here again, the role of the grandmother in the African American family can involve tenets of transmission of generational narratives, unspoken secrets, and kinship care. While in this case, Mk's grandmother's explicit role was kinship caregiver; she was also the *griot*, not only the keeper of wisdom embedded in narratives over generations but also the conveyor of backstories in an effort to provide fuller narratives about the families' history to the next generation. This is a task conferred by an elder belief that every generation ought to have received as much honest story as possible from prior generation. In MK's family narrative, kinship care was necessary and critical for family survival. It is, as Boyd-Franklin surmises, an increasingly characteristic of black family life due to the "increasing rates of parental drug and alcohol addiction, AIDS and incarceration."<sup>249</sup> Unfortunately, the circumstances surrounding kinship care are often categorized as "multigenerational family transmission"<sup>250</sup> which points generations struggling with similar constraints.

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<sup>249</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 259.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, 210.



particularly during the summer months, for both herself and her then infant son. The residual effect of establishing a rapport within the specific genre of social services become evident at particular times when the researcher process triggered sensitive and often soul conscious moments in her life. During these times, MK spent several days exploring with the researcher what it means to name a part of her story or the family's that heretofore had been embedded in secrets. Reflecting back on the time period, I spent more than 7 months building trust and a dialogue worthy of mutual respect and admiration of the life and lives compacted within MK's family. To do otherwise would not have compromised the depth and quality of the data included in the study. I am forever grateful to both of these women, MK and AJ, for their forthright honesty and willingness to trust in the work God given me to do.

The researcher's sole function was to ascribe facts to their allotted area within the genogram. No other members of the extended family of MK have had direct involvement in the formation of the genogram or within the study. However, both Mk's parents, WL and KK, have been apprised of the study and have agreed to share the content herein.



## Secrets

Family secrets are sometimes revealed within compound tragedies and grief. In the case of MK, her grandmother's death exposed this secret long held between MK and her brother. MK reflects that it was shortly after her grandmother's death that she approached her father about the story. To MK's surprise, he admitted that the story was true but inserted that when he met her mother, KK, she was already hooked on the streets and drugs. By becoming her "pimp," he was able to protect her. Both MK and her fraternal twin continue to struggle with this secret.

My mother is fifteen years younger than my Dad. The mainline story of her initial involvement with drugs and prostitution occurred because of him. But the secret embedded within it slowly emerged as we became older and my paternal grandmother began to tell us both more about our parents and their early years. According to AML, my paternal grandmother, it was my mothers' maternal aunts, DM, KM and LB who introduced, KK, MK's mother, to drugs and subsequently prostitution. However, KK's aunts were initially introduced to drugs and prostitution by MM's boyfriend. MM was the great-grandmother to JK's KK's mother. According to AML, B. B began to molest KK's aunts at the age of nine years, continuing until he put them on the streets as child prostitutes at age fifteen. The story is he used to joke that he was training them to be good whores. We are unsure whether it was he who prompted them to recruit their niece, but the back story told at family gatherings was in fact he did persuade them to engage KK. Common place knowledge was KK's aunts, DM, KM, and LB would alternate going to school and requesting emergency release of their niece supposedly due to illness of her mother. KK's mother, JK was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. They then would sign my mother out so

she could hang with them and do drugs all day. At some point she met my father, WL.”<sup>251</sup>

To hold a secret such as drug and alcohol addiction is to embed an already pregnant narrative of family intergenerational storyline with even more accounts of how members lived and to some extent, what conditions; moral, ethical or social, they were coerced to live under. MK’s account of her mother addictive life is one such case of mired secrecy. Her story as a whole or perhaps specific parts of it even today remain shrouded in mystery and afterthought. None of the above account has been affirmed by either KK or WL. The sole plausible reference to affirm or deny it is DM. Both KM and LB, now deceased after suffering under addiction and forced sex trafficking for many years. Both died before age Forty-five. The complex role of AML, MK’s grandmother is telling the story and in part revealing the secret is out of caution for those potentially most affected rather than projecting shame. According to Nancy Boyd-Franklin: this kind of secret, which in fact “known” by all parties (and by the community), can be particularly toxic because of the energy that is involved in ‘protecting ‘the family members from its knowledge.’”<sup>252</sup>

Certainly the challenge of raising two children male and female in the nineteen eighties within the African American culture and community could not have been easy, particularly as the evidence of multi-stage social

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<sup>251</sup> MK Reflection –Session 6-April 2012

<sup>252</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 69.

dysfunction were prevalent in both parent's family history. An earlier account by Mk identifies the issue of shame as crucial factor in self-identifying with KK and MK.

Here, MK, had to determine earlier on home she would address shame as a form of individual relatedness to her mother's addiction and life in prison and in instances of release, life on the streets as a homeless addict and prostitute. Boyd-Franklin asserts the responsibility of raising male children who on the one hand are actively confronting the reality that both parents are absent from their home has to have some effect on ego-formation and self-esteem.<sup>253</sup> Particularly for MK's brother, the lack of adequate male model to fuse with in the puberty and latency stages of development had to have been complicated if not confusing for the entire family. MK, Mk's fraternal twin may have had to manage his ambivalence about self-identity with no male image present with increasingly anxiety about how to assume the role of 'male' in a home setting where the members are of the opposite sex. Boyd-Franklin asserts that "in many sing-parent African American families, it is not uncommon for a mother who is raising children alone to become overwhelmed with the pressures and demands of her role. In situations like these the oldest child –particularly the male child –can be very vulnerable to a process of

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<sup>253</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 32.

involving reversal of generational boundaries.”<sup>254</sup> Howbeit, Mk’s family structure and the historicity of the arrangement, MK encountered boundaries that he may have had to blur if not cross in order to actively play a role in the household’s life. “Boundaries in this type of family (the unorganized family) are usually vague.”<sup>255</sup> The manner in which terms of kinship are disengaged contributes a young male’s struggle to form positive identity with multiple social obstructions, an absent parent or parents complicated by both parents’ chronic histories of addiction and imprisonment.

The result is their lives are complicated, exposed by cogent and explicit meanings of their own traumatic experiences along with that of their families and surrounding community. To their condition, the Scottish practical theologian, John Swinton suggests the following:

“Within the interpretative paradigm, human beings are recognized as actively creative agents who are constantly interpreting situations and ascribing meaning and purpose to events; creatures who constantly create complex networks of narratives to explain the world and their place within it. The meanings and interpretations of these narratives form the ‘maps of reality’ that individuals, communities and cultures use to interpret their experience and to decide on the nature of

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<sup>254</sup>Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families In Therapy*,218.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid*, 289.

appropriate action. It is therefore not enough simply to naively observe what a person is doing or how they are behaving within any given situation. In order to understand what is *actually* going on within that situation it is necessary to understand the *meaning* of the actions, the way the situation is being interpreted by those performing within it and the reasons behind the way individuals and communities act in the particular ways they do.”<sup>256</sup>

“Multiple realities”<sup>257</sup> interwoven with stories and family secrets are sometimes difficult to discern and even more so to parse away from the accepted script. Nancy Boyd-Franklin suggests that “the type of secret that is kept from certain members within the family is more toxic and difficult to explore. Secrets are often unconscious, obscure, or nebulous. Often these secrets have been passed down over generations.”<sup>258</sup> Based upon the vacillating behavior of MK as she shared this particular story with its embedded secret, I discerned that part of the reason for her erratic recounting had to do with her coming to terms with a portion of the story. This difficult story resolution was needed if her long-term intent was to build a credible relationships with both parents. But the crucible of reality involving multiple traumas committed upon a single individual- her

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<sup>256</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 37-38.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid*,38.

<sup>258</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, reference is made by Boyd-Franklin to the works of Bowen, 1976; Nicholas & Schwartz, 1998 , 25.

mother- required re-directing some of her anger at her mother instead to her great-aunts, two of whom were deceased at the time of this research. Only one involved in the original trio, DK is alive. However, DK had recently been diagnosed with AIDS. Two older daughters of KK's mother both expired -of AIDS.

Nancy Boyd-Franklin describes AIDS as an illnesses usually resulting in death. Originally cited some forty years ago in the Caucasian homosexual community, it is consistently believed in the African American community that AIDS was scientifically introduced to the continent of Africa from the laboratory. Today, while the percentage of AIDS related deaths have markedly decreased within the gay community population, the disease rate continues to climb in the heterosexual African American female population as well as in African American male population. Herein, MK's family represents today's statistical example of AIDS in the African American family narrative. AIDS claimed members of MK's family, 2 female and 2 males with prior histories of prostitution, sex and drug trafficking complicated by chronic incarceration. Like violence, AIDS was also a well - kept family secret, known to only a select few.

In considering the story today, MK believes there may have been two other reasons, both of which were embedded with an unspoken family secret. The first had to do with Mk's maternal family reluctance to accept

the truth of PM's mother's male friend's physical assault on KK. (MK's mother). According to MK, KK admitted that HM, the boyfriend of MM (maternal grandmother of KK) HM molested her from the age of twelve to fifteen years. Subsequently at the age of fifteen years, she was "pimped" by WL, father of fraternal twins (MK & MK). The "family secret" was known to members of KK's father, FK, largely due to HM's insidious behavior with siblings of PM, KM and LB. In these three cases, KK, KM and LB (step-sister of PM), over the period of twelve years, HM's committed acts of sexual molestation and trafficking upon each of them. Only KK (MK's mother) has survived, the remained two individuals died of AIDs in years 2000 and 2006, respectively.

The second reason, MK theorizes may have been related to the religious difference between KK and WL. While MK traces her paternal lineage within the Christian faith, KK's family line has largely practiced Islam, thereby considered for three generations, Islam to be their religious identity. KK, although incarcerated tried to maintain significant influence upon her children's practicing faith practices; even to the extent of controlling funeral arrangements for one of her children, RK, who died at the age of eight months. In the Muslim tradition, burial arrangements are instituted while the body is yet warm.

## Domestic Violence

The chronicity of violence surfaced regularly within both women's narratives and stories. MK's family carried multiple secrets, the core of which constantly revolved around her father. MK's father WL had a history of committing physical and emotional violence upon women. MK reports that his mantra was "he could break any woman down by the whip."<sup>259</sup>

MK recounted that day on the way from school she decided to visit her father at his corner store. The manner in which WL made a living was to "own<sup>260</sup>" and operate corner stores. When she entered the store, "I noticed that he was not in his usual front window spot. After quickly glancing around the store for him, I decided to walk straight to the rear". She thought he might be there counting the day's cash before depositing it in the local bank. As she pulled back the curtain separating the merchandise and the trade area, she noticed blood. Then she looked across the room and saw her father holding a bloody baseball bat and the woman who currently lived with him, NP, cowering on the floor. In a whimpered voice, she was begging him to stop hitting her. MK said that apparently he didn't hear her come in, but sensing someone else was present in the room, he looked up. Mk said, "I'll never forget the rage in his eyes." "And it didn't seem to soften after he recognized me." He just turned back to NP, lowering the bat, shouted at her to clean up this d---mess." She quickly complied and weakly began to mop up her blood from the storeroom floor. (Some years later, NP died of complications due to multiple sclerosis)<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup>Domestic violence has its score of wounded that also include the women themselves. Nancy Boyd- Franklin references absence as a construct that emerges largely within African American female head of households.

<sup>260</sup> MK, December, 2012.

<sup>261</sup> MK,'s account of this particular story represented more than fifteen years of historical distance, but when she recounted it to me, it seemed like yesterday. Her voice shook and her eyes for a moment seemingly



MK's father is the perpetrator of traumatic violence not only to NL but also to her. She must address this aspect of her own narrative story about trauma if truly soul-healing is to occur. The process may begin with MK attempting to meaning-making process from what occurred weaving in as much detail as her memory will allow. Sparing no option that allow repressed thoughts to remain hidden, she may need to approach the horror of someone else's blood spilled by her father in order to arrive at completeness. Critically, trauma has inextricably woven itself into the threads and memories of MK's life creating for her a reality that appears at times comprised by evil.

Confronting the issue of violence is the first reality that in early development, images of violence are in fact synonymous with her father. Clearing and confronting this reality has been a struggle. MK often had to reconcile within herself maps of reality that separate her, rather than create a bond with her father. These stories frame the basis for MK's search for good in her grandmother's faith in God whose Spirit was able to sweep over MK's memories of violence and blood-letting, allowing her an opportunity to begin healing.

Boyd-Franklin noted that often given the sheer lack of available numbers of Black men, the likelihood increases that many women may

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receding to a past time. Kohut might identify as conscious awareness of the defected self. Here, the opportunity for optimal mirroring of her self-image is myriad in violence.

become desperate. They became willing to settle rather than risk living a life without the accompaniment of a male partner. Boyd-Franklin posits that the tendency of black women to engage in and remain with black men who are violent has to do with the females' own issues of self-esteem and community labeling of single femaleness. Boyd-Franklin believes that violence in African American relationships emerges out of a perceived fear on the part of the African American female of her status within the community and/ or black family, when reaching *a certain age*<sup>262</sup> and having not secured a mate.

Sadly, Boyd-Franklin's argument rings true even in households where education and independence are considered requirements for attaining a moral and ethically fulfilled life. Still there may be inferences made, however implicit concerning unmarried females. Regarding class, poor communities seem to revert back to the master-slave paradigm, in which the male is considered primary while the female holds a secondary position. Hence, the pimp's role is to protect while at the same time securing his property so that it is not lost or stolen.

Functioning similarly to this suggested paradigm, WL assumed a similar position with KK. She was the proverbial "property" and he, the protector or "pimp," established himself as the controller of his property. Violence was a means to allow him to maintain control and order within the

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<sup>262</sup> Phrase used in modern American society to describe women of experience and maturity, usually over the age of forty-five years.

business. While I would argue against the injustice of this kind of map of reality within the African American community exists, there is yet another kind of injustice. This injustice permits violence, within seemingly intact nuclear African American families, to persist because women having a mate at all costs is better than having none. Therefore, corrupted by a false image of happiness, they accept the familial arrangement of violence. At the point of later reflection, the women argue that they stayed in the marriage *for the children's sake*. These forms of domestic violence often hidden beneath the veneer of family narratives constitute dangerous secrets for which future generations must deconstruct.

In MK's father's case, physical and emotional dominance of her mother exacerbated KK's descent into street prostitution and drugs. This story remained hidden in the family narrative for a number of years. Boyd-Franklin considers this to be a result of "the invisibility syndrome,"<sup>263</sup> which is often referred to in African American families as a characteristic of invisible members. There are family members who are present but not included in a organized family history. One example is "B" "boyfriend of MK's paternal grandmother. In addition, there are other meanings to the phrase "invisibility syndrome" such as the hidden history of the manner in which Mk's father and mother become known to each other. It was latter

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<sup>263</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 87.

disclosed that her father's constant physical abuse may have caused the paternal step-mother's illness, multiple sclerosis and death.

In either case, the meaning undergirding the phase is to suggest that the completed version includes a myriad of maps of reality that have become over time contaminated by memory or intent by the principle speaker or others considered a part of primary stakeholder.

Lastly, MK's family's pattern of intimate violence between WL and KK, parents of MK, and WL and were also generational.<sup>264</sup> For instance, WL's mother and father, before AML sought alcohol rehabilitation treatment, would weekly engage in physical brawls, many of which occurred within the family household. Later, AML admitted that some of the assaults were instigated by her abuse of alcohol and subsequent propensity toward violent behavior toward RL. In addition to WL, AML had three children whose father was not RL. Concerning these three, one son, MS was identified with domestic violence and abuse of women. It is reported he, too struggled with addiction. No significant record of violence for the remaining two children of AML. In the case of KK, her father FK was identified as an abuser and batterer. His spouse, KK's mother, JK died of bone cancer at the age of twenty-seven years. Their children, KK and two brothers, both with the initials KK, too, were classified as domestic violence abusers.

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<sup>264</sup> Note: See Key for Names in Appendix G.

## Homelessness

### MK 's Story

The semester was over in April and it was time to leave school again. This time I would be going home and my grandmother would not be there. I was able to get a ride home from a lady at my church who was in the area visiting. It was late when I reached home. My brother was not at home but the house was full of people. I asked around to find where he was and what was going on. No one seemed to have a clue. I went next door to a neighbor and she asked if I could stay there until I worked things out with my brother. The next day I went back to the house and asked him why all these people were in the house. He said they needed a place to stay. That was the end of my stay at the house. I went back to my neighbor's and stayed there a few weeks until she decided my time was up and I had to go. I was homeless and had nowhere to go.<sup>265</sup>

MK revealed in the third session that she was homeless even though both parents resided within twenty miles of her grandmother's home. Still, she reflected she considered that she had no place to go. Both homeless and hungry, she was able to find a live-in job for the remaining summer. As this was occurring, she realized that she also needed to grieve for her grandmother. One way she taught her to do this was to day dream about the good times they would have on the weekends.

Normally, it was during these time that her grandmother would prepare a Saturday country breakfast. She remembers during breakfast, her grandmother would apply for weekly teachings encouraging them to pray for guidance and peace in whatever they came *up against* in life. Mk

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<sup>265</sup>MK. Journal entry, entitled "Grandmother", Session 10, August 8, 2012.

reflected that it was during the summer of her grandmother's death, she began to pray and pray more often.

Suffering is reflected in MK's generational pattern as a 'signifying lament,'<sup>266</sup> a kind of bluesy interpretation using corresponding and conflicting notes to convey life's turbulent moments surrounding by screams and wails of pain. The music like the stories create what it means and to have meant to survive on uncertain terms. M. Shawn Copeland describes the phenomena of suffering as more readily situated within the lives of individuals whose economic plight relegates them to a lower societal rung. In African American life, suffering is often layered within music and dance, a kind of bluesy interpretation that blends contradictory notes within synaptic beat, creating contrast and sameness as daily refractions of lives lived in suffering.

The music like the stories create what it means and has meant for countless unnamed souls caught in a struggle to survive on uncertain terms. M. Shawn Copeland describes the phenomena of suffering as more readily situated within the lives of individuals whose economic plight relegates them to a lower societal rung. In her chapter entitled, "Wading through Many Sorrows," Copeland situates suffering within the collective

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<sup>266</sup> M. Shawn Copeland, In *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*,99.

soliloquy of the slaves' experience, homeless, physically assaulted, rape and killed, as life under the unjust system of proprietary ownership.<sup>267</sup>

However, there is another way in which suffering has been displayed as a caustic experience within African American culture over the course of three nearly four centuries. The form of suffering characterized here is "double entendre,"<sup>268</sup>

David T. Shannon refers to narrative whose meaning is disguised in public talk. Shannon argues this technique allowed anti-bellum preachers to issue a close reading to their communicants/slaves with scant understanding given to outsiders. In this way, the brutality of slavery and suffering could be attended to more appropriately than conventional practice of black religion may have allowed. Hence, given communication by the preachers to the assembled, may seem as if the slaves had accepted suffering and the conditions which promote it as God-ordained.

Moreover, it could have been assumed that in the slaves' acceptance of their condition, they then would become more benevolent empty-headed followers rather than souls whose striving for systemic

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<sup>267</sup> M.Shawn Copeland, "Wading through Many Sorrows," In *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*,140. Note: A Slave Story. "My sister was given away when she was a girl. She told me and ma that they'd make her go out and lay on a table and two or three white men would have sex with her before they'd let her up. She was a small girl. She died when she was still in her young days, still a girl." Sterling, ed, *We Are Your Sisters*, 25, 26-31,( M. Shawn Copeland, *Wading through Many Sorrows*), IN *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*, 140.

<sup>268</sup>David T. Shannon, "An Ante-bellum Sermon": A Resource for an African American Hermeneutic, IN Cain Hope Felder, *Stony The Road We Trod*,103.

correction to their injustice, reflected the inalienable gift of freedom and life from God. The genesis of the slave was in their inherent ability to make into whatever scrap of life they had into way that displayed the fullness of glory on earth for all, as it is in heaven. Language and its use were tools not beyond their grasp to use.

In contrast, such a view of suffering as “the consciousness that one is powerless is a fundamental element of suffering.”<sup>269</sup> Here, Soelle seems to suggest that while trauma is often accompanied by the agony of pain and suffering caused by spiritual, emotional and physical violation, there is another distinctive element that contributes to suffering. That is self-recognition that one is powerless to change their circumstances. In pointing to this particular aspect of suffering, Soelle is also conflating the term to socioeconomic class. One might infer from her grid on suffering that within the caption identified as a lack of concrete objectives she may have included this group. Clearly, entering into a period of perceived loss of control can be perceived as suffering.

To a greater or lesser extent, Soelle’s depiction of suffering identifies a cogent factor of MK’s generational narrative. Whether caused violence, prostitution, substance abuse, etc., it is suffering—represented by each individual and family member’s reaction to a loss of power and control that critically affirms their own place in the community and

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<sup>269</sup>Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 11.



society, from which identities and meaning were acutely formed.<sup>270</sup>

Confronting this reality daily may have affected their emotions and souls in the sense, that the women believed their lives were not fully their own. Living within the map of realities that their bodies constituted “two-ness,”<sup>271</sup> a description of master/servant on the one hand and an inner and outer societal role on the other, created a binary between drab condition of living an impoverished life and the hope that God will meet those confronting tragedy and change it.

The image drawn by Dorothee Soelle’s words *stepping into a person’s own time frame* allows MK a degree of control. It begins with her choice to not remain mute or silent but to speak out by telling her story in an effort to gain justice and heal. Caught between emotions of love and something other than hate, each one turned their suffering into themselves in order to shadow if not control anxiety about their parents’ lives and its impact upon their own. Yes, MK had her grandmother to counteract feelings of fear instilled in them the belief of a better Source of whom their image had already been grafted. And as they struggled to follow the

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<sup>270</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 69.

<sup>271</sup> The word “two-ness” refers to a binary referenced by W.E.B. DuBois as the manner in which an individual may perceive the phenomena of reality.

Dubois argued for the black person, survival dependent upon their ability to see into two worlds, their own and the broader white society. Based upon an accurate assessment, an individual could then act or re-act to whenever or whomever they might encounter with agency and assurance. This “double-consciousness” was necessary if the intended outcome of the person was to secure a faithful living in an environment in which he or she found himself or herself otherwise, powerless.

religious teachings of their grandmother, each learned they could come to terms with who their parents were and still remain, while at the same time reconciling their relationships with them. Over time they came to understand the trajectory of God in their stories and the reality of the Holy Spirit in the midst of their tragedy.

Moreover, their stories constitute embedded narratives by deceased family members whose lives were shortened. Their narratives struggle to be heard and listened to if only through the voice of their descendants. By their comments, the speakers' wonder aloud about why they said what they did and how the statements connects with their stories. Still at other accounts, they seem to know why they have spoken such words and who they are speaking for. For example, during one encounter, MK suddenly became tearful after having read the first stanza of psalm 102.<sup>272</sup> She replied, "I felt my maternal grandmother plea for mercy and healing". When queried by the researcher how, if at all, the psalm might resonate with her, she said it was a psalm I often referred to when my grandmother was dying of cancer, to be able to discern who was speaking and how to confront her shadows while at the same time "living in tension with..."<sup>273</sup> their family's sordid history and narrative. Garnering the courage to

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<sup>272</sup> Psalms 102:2-3, "O Lord, hear my prayer; let my cry come before You. Do not hide Your face from me in my time of trouble; turn Your ear to me; when I cry, answer me speedily. JPS –TANAKH.

<sup>273</sup> Marcia Y. Riggs, *What Do Nineteenth-Century Reformers Have to Say to Twentieth-Century Liberationists?* IN *Womanist Theological Ethics* Page 23.

confront their embedded suffering enabled each of them to find ways to make -meaning of their complicated intertwined storylines. It also reminded them of the faithful promise of God to *be* in the moment with them.

**Dorothee Soelle**

Phases of Suffering <sup>274</sup>

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
Mute	Lamenting	Changing
Numb Explosive		
Speechless	Aware,able to speak	Organizing
Moaning	Psalmic language	Rational language
Animal-like wailing	Rationality and emotion communicated together	
<i>Isolation</i>	<i>Expression,</i>	<i>Solidarity</i>

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<sup>274</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*,73.

	<i>communication</i>	
The pressure of suffering turns one in on himself	The pressure of suffering sensitizes	The pressure of suffering produces solidarity
Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
Autonomy of thinking, speaking, and acting lost	Autonomy of experience (can be integrated)	Autonomy of action that produces change
Objectives cannot be organized	Objectives utopian (in prayer)	Objectives can be organized
Reactive behavior		Active behavior
Dominated by the situation	Suffering from the situation and analyzing it	Helping to shape the situation
Submissiveness	Suffering	
<i>Powerlessness</i>	<i>Acceptance and conquest</i> in existing structures	<i>Acceptance and conquest of powerlessness</i> in changed structures

In summary, recalcitrant images of trauma and suffering are embedded in generational and contemporary reiterations of these two African American women while at the same time are haunting reminders of slavery in the Americas. The reflections of the women's accounts of suffering serve to complicate the chronicity of violence and oppression either derived out of systemic or individual malaise. Stephen Crites suggest that this kind of narrative encompasses not only our self-identity but the empirical and moral cosmos in which we are conscious of living... in our multidimensional story."<sup>275</sup> Like their ancestors, their stories comprise a living testament of God/ the Holy Spirit in the midst of the human experience.

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<sup>275</sup> Stephen Crites, *The Narrative Quality of Experience* IN Stanley Hauerwas and I. Gregory Jones., *Why? Narrative* 83.

## **Chapter Seven: Comparative Analysis of Two Case Histories**

The chapter presents a comparative analysis of three scholars: David Tracy, Heinz Kohut and Judith Herman applied to the case study of two African American women's trauma stories. By selecting a theologian, self-psychologist and a trauma theorist, I wish to show how their theories, when applied to the actual circumstance created by trauma, are inadequate in two central determinants: accuracy and appropriateness. Further I wish to illustrate the extent to which their applications are insufficient, thereby obscuring the totality of injury by solely using paradigmatic references to define and describe trauma. Moreover, by applying trauma to categories of ecclesiastic and clinical categories, the case might be made concerning missed opportunity in addressing treatment from the central point of the Holy Spirit.

The works of three theorists are crucial in this study because they point toward questions around the gap in trauma treatment occurs today. A critical question is whether or not the psychological –based models can adequately address soul wounds caused by trauma. In this regard, I claim that trauma obfuscates a person's inner self, causing harm. The degree of wounding that has occurred has either been ignored or broadly approached by modern psychologies. Without particularized treatment, moral injury is often the result leading to deepened signs of despair and alienation that later surfaces in representation of silence and mourning. Without the

intervention of the Holy Spirit countering trauma, silence continues and suffering is worsened. I argue that the human voice becomes the initial force of resist silence begins to recede. Speech is a response to the Holy Spirit's presence, a reverberating force that brings desperate and forlorn human spirits out of the depths back into life again. I contend that the range of human interpretation about trauma has not included the voice of African American women and scholars in the same way that feminist scholars have occupied. But, now is the time to include the spiritual acumen of a people who in spite of all, has survived. Their intellectual community, African American female scholars, particularly those devoted to a historic and contemplative storylines, ought to be included in the increasingly pluralistic metanarrative about violence and trauma in America. Notwithstanding, this work begins with authoring the inclusive nature of the Holy Spirit into relationship within wounded lives. However, authentication into institutionalized publics like the academy, church, public-private organizations are also required.

This chapter is organized in the following manner. David Tracy's revised correlational method interrogates one aspect of MK's presenting trauma story. The problem presented by MK involves shame at witnessing her mother's lived predicament at the age of eight years. Although identified as a theologian, I use Tracy's model in assessing MK's case in two specific ways. One, to assess whether MK's

interpretation of trauma, appropriated as a common human experience, recognizes the Holy Spirit as a learned religious text. Two, to the extent, The Holy Spirit is part of Mk's collective remembering,<sup>276</sup> how then is it used to frame healing in her own life? Heinz Kohut's self-development model explore AJ's narrative about trauma's effect upon self-image building. Judith Herman's work on trauma and recovery will be examined using a segment of her work entitled, *Complex: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*.<sup>277</sup> I am particularly interested in the way Herman approaches trauma by emphasizing the complexity of the event and the persons impacted by it. In the words of recent Oscar nominee, Viola Davis, "Black women are complicated"<sup>278</sup> and as such require a complex rather than simple, nominative approach to care, one that takes into account the fuller essence of what it means to be female in modern America today, a reality overlaid with gender, age, experience, education and life's daily tasks. To tease out a single aspect of one area is to critically engage in an unjust act because the maximum extent more of the human experience is required to render authenticity and respect towards the individual's wholeness and being.

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<sup>277</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 20.

<sup>278</sup> New York Times article: September, 2014.



With each paradigmatic approach, sketches of oral histories will be explored using the DSM\_IV diagnostic assessment tool. Each approach examines trauma stories of two traumatized women which are enclosed within a larger generational narrative. Starting with identifying information followed by background history and then a short reiteration of the event. I then impose each theorists' approach as the proverbial on-site clinician. Since, the overall study design is predicated upon the bifurcated nature of human narrative, to act as an instrument to pronounce the trauma to the external work, thereby giving visibility to the assault in addition to describing how the encounter of the Holy Spirit is experienced. In addition, I argue that in noting the movement of the Holy Spirit in trauma, the African American ethnographic storyline of survival is made known. Where their narratives include echoes of past stories of trauma either openly or covered in myths and family secrets, is their evidence that each theorists recognized and accounted these revelations as principle parts of the treatment plan.

### **Interrogating MK's Narrative Using David Tracy's Correlational Model**

David Tracy's significant contribution to the field of theological studies is his revisionist correlational model. Influenced by the 1960's pontificate's magisterial order known as Vatican II, Tracy constructs a hermeneutical method that suggests that interpretation of the Word ought

to occur as a result of human experience drawn from active living situations. Unlike Paul Tillich's correlational model, which informed largely by Christian Text in order to frame the canonical message, Tracy believes the human situation is valuable in ascertaining God's Word in the world. Tracy suggests that in appropriating experience as a means for humans to *peer through a glass dimly*, healing as in the case of suffering can be derived. Arguably the joint involvement of the sacred in the midst of life in the public square contributes to meaningful dialogue and understanding of God's faithful promise to empower, heal and restore.

### **David Tracy's Theological Anthropology**

Employing David Tracy's theological anthropological rendering of self-versus object-reverent models of dialectic inquiry as a backdrop for critical reflection of trauma as a condition encountered by the Holy Spirit, I raise the following questions. One, the terms self-observant versus object-referent within Tracy's model suggest there are two plausible ideas. To what extent is the self-referent model an authentic re-presentation of MK's traumatic experience against uniform Christian values and beliefs? Two, given the object-reverent model, how does the category of soul wounds inform a more modernist-orthodoxy?

Particular to the concept of the Holy Spirit is the location or to use a term coined by Tracy, it's limit-situation. Perichoresis<sup>279</sup> signifies the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the soul effectuating testimony of the Presence of God operating "providentially within the open grain of reality."<sup>280</sup> In this way, God the Author of Creation fashioned as *the imago dei*<sup>281</sup> both reminds and orients creation towards who is their "ground of being."<sup>282</sup> Thus knowing to some extent that you are in relation to God constitutes understanding beginning in one's inner self. Hence, the sense of relationality between God and the soul becomes ingratiated with sacred meaning that though disrupted by trauma and violence proves resilient in recovery and healing. This eternal presence articulates the soul endemic of God's Love mediated in the Breathe of Life is perceived as a gift to humanity. Tracy posits that the use of human expression, e.g. speech and voice, provides humanity an opportunity to share events of personal experience as well as that of their families and community. All, regardless of description contribute to enrichment of the collective common human experience within families.

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<sup>279</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in Quest of Truth*, 89.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>281</sup> William C. Placher, Editor, *Essentials of Christian Theology*,133.

<sup>282</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 156.

Tracy's use of contingency within the actual lived situation defines vulnerability as a factor in sorting out whether or not the Word/ texts resonate in the common human experience. Tracy counters Paul Tillich in his correlational method by asserting the inclusion of human expression. By applying the construct of agency to subjective interpretation of the text, a challenge is made to ecclesial authority to involve the public into the Christian witness. Finally, a move toward the evangelistic work of the Church challenges boundaries of the spoken and prophetic Word for the benefit of empowering marginalized and heretofore silenced souls.

The therapeutic setting involves Tracy and MK in dialogue. She presents a brief background family history, then followed by presenting problem.

### **Oral History –MK**

“My mother is fifteen years younger than my Dad. The mainline story<sup>283</sup> of her initial involvement with drugs and prostitution occurred because of him. But the secret of this particular story slowly emerged as we became older and my paternal grandmother began to tell us both more about our parents and their life. According to AML, my paternal grandmother, it was my mothers' maternal aunts, DM, KM and LB who introduced, KK, MK's

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<sup>283</sup> Arthur Frank, a writer of the sixties, asserted “seriously ill people are wounded not just in body but also in voice”. For Frank, inner wounds create the need to tell stories because the diseased or injured body has been disrupted by trauma. Therefore old stories are insufficient for the new place of the deformed or wounded body; in turn its voice is stymied. Without a way to begin speaking again, the body is left empty with no way to give voice to new ones. To correct this, Frank argued for voice which allowed the quality of stories which align rather than separate from wounded bodies.

mother to drugs and subsequently prostitution.” “They used to come to the middle school and sign my mother out so she could hang with them and do drugs all day. At some point she met my father, WL.”<sup>284</sup>

### **Identifying Information**

This twenty-nine year old, single African American female is a native of Quincy, Massachusetts. Has one sibling, a fraternal twin in addition to six maternal related stepsiblings. Currently two are in custody to the state foster care system. Immediate family members reside in northeast metropolitan communities. Both parents are alive residing approximately thirty miles from MK’s mother and fraternal brother. There are: grandchildren, one, a female, is the daughter of MK’s fraternal sibling and six by KK’s daughter. MK maintains a history of low-grade addiction to recreational marijuana use and prescription drugs. No known criminal and felony charges of record. Received Bachelor’s degree from a Historical Black College (HBC) before relocating to California where she has received a Master level degree. There are no grandparents, either paternal or maternal who remain alive; the latest death occurred in 2004 WL’s father, died due to inoperable colon cancer at the age of forty-one. MK’s narrative reveals thematic patterns of Violence, substance abuse, domestic violence, drug and sex traffic, chronic homelessness, incarceration, prostitution, and incest.

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<sup>284</sup> MK generational narrative: Theological and ethnographic storyline.

### **Presenting Trauma Incident:**

“At the age of eight years or so, I’d be going to school with my brother and we would hear a female’s voice call to us.” If we were with friends and classmates, we’d pretend not to hear her because we were embarrassed and ashamed that our mother was often lying in the alleyway, nearly stoned from drugs. After, my brother and I would whisper to each other how long she would be out before she’d be caught again and put back in jail. Then, her life was consumed by substance abuse, i.e. crack, heroin, cocaine, and her vocation in order to support her habit and my father’s was to prostitute”.<sup>285</sup>

### **Past Medical History**

History of asthma and chronic bronchitis; currently does not present with either. Overweight since high school; recently diagnosed with type II diabetes.

### **Past Psychiatric History**

Medications: Lorazepam for sleep disorder; and Xanax for occasional periods of heightened anxiety.

Devices- None

Allergies –Yes

Substance Abuse and Alcohol- none Specific

Homicidal/Suicidal-No

MK’s factual account of family of origin does not reveal a prior history of substantive depression. However, the investigator suspects that given MK’s stories and family narrative that she may have experienced periodic bouts of prolonged depression. Clearly she suffers from soul

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<sup>285</sup> Recollected Memories of MK’s early childhood. Session 5, April 2012.

wounds- calling it feeling numb and empty. With regard to her loss of her grandmother's death, she has not engaged in active grieving and bereavement processing. MK's grandmother expired in 2009 when MK was nineteen years of age.

Using David Tracy's revised correlational method, specifically the empirical constructs of adequacy and appropriateness to interrogate the extent of the Holy Spirit's encounter within the women's traumatized narratives, I wish to show how the efficacy of MK's voice in depicting her story about trauma is not sufficiently attended by Tracy's method. Further, I show when reference is made to the particularities of their human condition, Tracy's model, while emphasizing the significance of human expression uses language to interpret MK's problem rather than attending to her pain and suffering.

### **MK: CASE ASSESSMENT**

Although Tracy's revisionist model suggest that authentic knowledge ought to be based in qualified understanding about God, his sub-categories use terms such as "meaning" whose specificity include appropriateness and adequacy.<sup>286</sup> By the very nature of who gets to speak and why, the critical factor of pluralistic human experience is obscured, resulting in descriptions of evil, sin, violence and trauma being relegated to traditional orthodox categories. Accordingly, descriptors of awe and silence are

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<sup>286</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 79.

mitigated by the speaker's status and not necessarily by the authenticity of their illustrations.

While David Tracy's revisionist correlational model reveals a gap left by orthodoxy, it also opens up another. This gap wider and veiled, allows him to remain a stranger in his own theological analysis about who gets to legitimately interpret the Christian text over against the living human experience. When interpretation of the kind occurs, the common human experience is once again relegated to voices who speak out of a binary of privilege and entitlement. The caustic reality is God remains veiled in theoretical nomenclature. Therefore, I assert that Tracy's concept of theological anthropology is embedded with a lack of justice for actualized perception and articulation of the masses. Language and words used by African American women in their testimonies of the Holy Spirit and its encounter with human trauma are omitted from Tracy paradigmatic theory of revisionist methodology.

The question remains whether the weight of authenticity or accuracy should be establish according to whose voice? The Christian text needs to be interpreted broadly in today's pluralistic American society. As such, it ought to be incorporated through the lens of stories from persons like the women detailed within the study. Their narratives are authentic not only because they have actually experience of the event and the encounter with the holy but also because they include within their stories a historical



layering of other incidents of trauma. Together, they may prove beneficial to the wider discourse about violence and trauma in America. If the interest is legitimately to garner truth by knowledge gathering, the manner in which David Tracy reveals the workings of the Holy Spirit in his rational empiricism approach articulation should not in any way be regarded any higher in efficiency and status than the words spoken by the two African American women.

Tracy's argument includes the binary constructs of *appropriateness* and *adequacy*<sup>287</sup> both actualized and validated by human expression. In his revised correlational method, emphasis is placed on the significance of theology's usefulness in contemporary culture by using the organic interpretation of individuals and groups whose religious, philosophical, aesthetic, and political viewpoints depend on it. Certainly influenced by Vatican II, Tracy's method advances the idea that no longer should religious interpretation of the Word rely solely upon the ecclesiastical order of the Church. Moreover, revelation from God is evangelistic in and of itself, therefore predicated authority of clergy should reconsider its status in order to make room for those inquirers who reflect the common human experience. Here, Tracy seems to infer that determination of whether the Word is adequately and appropriately interpreted is comprised of an inherent contingency described as vulnerability. The experience of

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<sup>287</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 79.

feeling vulnerable occurs less within constraints of security and more when the inner self is exposed.

Exposure of the totality of one's being; spirit, soul and mind/body is both threatening and alienating. Being able to approach the Word pregnant with these feelings and experiences adds texture and meaning to its interpretation where schooled theology and sanctity of ecclesiastics alone cannot provide the richness. In this sense, Tracy is correct to argue that human expression is both necessary and critical to the meaningfulness and propriety of the Word applied in the public square. Moreover, a move toward evangelistic work challenges the Church authority by spreading the gospel through the use of the human voice. Therein a more composite rendering of the Living Word of God in the midst of human stories can be attained.

This approach to theological reflection acts to transform Christian thought and practice in the minds and spirits of people whose lives often take place in the open and exposed view of the *public*. Correlating Tracy's idea of theological anthropology with his scholarship translates conceptual reasoning to actual practice requiring the shared responsibility between clergy and the storyteller/narrator. Accordingly, Tracy uses the linguistic form of narrative to explore new horizons in order to derive deeper understandings of the Scripture. The context in which he begins his exploration is cloistered among two principle sources: "Christian Texts

and Human Experience and Language.”<sup>288</sup> These serve as mediating factors for a clear delineation of adequacy and appropriateness in understanding sources, texts and human experience. Tracy posits that the empirical constructs of adequacy and appropriateness calling for critical interpretation as the conduit “of human understanding characterized by relating word, or symbol of action to another.”<sup>289</sup> Clearly, Tracy ascribes value to this process of interpretation in which a person thinks and or feels is adequate and appropriate to foster new or remembered meaning into a life situation such as trauma.

It is at this point I illustrate how Tracy’s revised hermeneutic model might interrogate MK’s trauma narrative.

MK recounted that day on the way from she decided to visit her father at his corner store. The manner in which WL made a living was to “own” and operate corner stores. When she entered the store, “I noticed that he was not in his usual front window spot. Quickly glancing around the store, I decided to walk straight to the rear.” She thought he might be there counting the day’s cash before depositing it in the local bank. As she pulled back the curtain separating the merchandise from the trade area, she noticed blood. Then she looked across the room and saw her father holding a bloody baseball bat and the woman who currently lived with him, NP, cowering on the floor. In a whimpered voice, she was begging him not to hit her again. MK said that apparently he didn’t hear her come in, but sensing someone else was present in the room, he looked up. Mk said, “I’ll never forget the rage in his eyes.” “And it didn’t seem to soften after he recognized me.” He just turned back to NP, lowering the bat, shouted at her to clean up this d---mess.” She quickly complied and weakly began to mop up her blood from the storeroom floor. Some years

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<sup>288</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 43.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*, page.44.

later, in learning much later about NP, I was told that she died of complications due to multiple sclerosis.

MK,'s account of this particular story represented more than twenty years of historical distance, yet when she recounted it, she said "it seemed like yesterday". Her voice shook and her eyes for a moment seemed recess in to a past time. MK's trauma relates images of alienation and suffering even at the same time reflecting upon the event as being one of many stories she shared in prayer with God. Noting that she needed to present them before God, ontological placing them on the altar, as a way to come to terms with the horror of it in order to move on. In Mk's words, "I don't know if my father actually repented for it but I've asked God to forgive him." Applying Tracy's theological method places the Holy Spirit as a principle agent in the healing and cure of pain experienced within the human condition. As was the case of MK's trauma, narrative description of her prayer to God to heal her and forgive her father is rendered as the Holy Spirit present. Tracy would argue that the kind of sacred response experienced is demonstrated by MK's belief and trust in God. Belief functions as the core element of the human condition particularized as God's immanence in the world.

In the instance of domestic violence, Mk's voice resounds as the core witness. Embedded within the role of storyteller is that of second self. According to Joel Shulman and Keith G. Meador references in their book,

*Heal Thyself*, the term ““second self”<sup>290</sup> refers someone who knows us as well as we know ourselves and in whose life we see reflected back to us what we are becoming.”<sup>291</sup> MK may have recognized her own self-image in the mirrored image of her father’s eyes. Consequently, for MK’s father, the glance into MK’s eyes may have revealed the person he had become. Perhaps part of the rage was directed at just that, who he had become. Perhaps terrified and regretful, Mk now knew more about him than she may have wanted or for that matter she needed her to know. I would suggest that MK in this incident assumed another role for the third person present and that would be NL. Again, Shulman and Meador use another term that I refer to MK’s rendered account. The term “*misericordia*, or mercy which is that virtue by which we are moved to act for the benefit of another whom we see suffering.”<sup>292</sup> NL’s voice may have been wounded by the physical assault to her body, but years later, in the iteration of the story, MK also offered to her *misericordia*.

Accordingly, Tracy’s interrogation of the Living Word employed as the “common human experience and language”<sup>293</sup> can be described as phenomenological to the extent that the wounded can inherently offer up

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<sup>290</sup> Joel James Shulman and Keith G. Meador, *Heal Thyself*,132.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*,130.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*,130.

<sup>293</sup>David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 47.

prayers using words and phrases that appropriate understanding of God as *holy*. For example, Mk's choice of words used to describe the incident herein recorded, were her own without the instrumentality of interpretation by the researcher as transcriber. With respect and dignity towards the narrator, word intonations, however repressed were able to surface thereby enabling a rich iteration of the story to occur.

Like Tracy, I also claim the term "religious" encompasses a broad litany of beliefs and faith juxtaposed to a consortium of common human experiences which when co-joined with life's joys and suffering, can reflect a more accurate description of the event. Thus, Tracy argues that human beings can articulate their own personal and religious narrative in the public sphere using language that is meaningful as well as purposive to themselves and the listener. When this occurs, an encounter achieves a heightened level of mutuality that impacts the healing and therapeutic process of individuals and community.

Moreover, embedded within the construct of encounter is the construct of interpretation. As earlier stated, the primary intention of interpretation is to make-meaning out of incidences which constrain and restrict one's inner and external realities. As interpretation is compacted into a series of meaning making events, otherwise defined as phenomenology, hermeneutics is intertwined within consciousness and reality to such an extent that the event frames the style and composition of

the story by the testifier. For example, MK's trauma narrative include the word phrase "rage in his eyes. The term "rage" intensifies the event for the speaker and listener implying the conditions which precipitated the emotion were real and terrifying. The preliminary word phrase is adjectival in that "when he looked up..." seems to imply a kind of action or wish for joy in the eyes of her father. Instead MK witnessed a glare that she later described as terrifying. Terror in the eyes of kin can often be described as "rage" or repressed fear. Again, the appropriateness of language to depict the actual situation was solely MK's. As sole signifier, she chose not to use the terms anger, shame, or even guilt to translate her emotions then and even present at the time of this recording. Tracy suggest that the linguistic form hermeneutic signals "a mode of reflection which explicitly raises the question of how human understanding and its objects, often described as 'texts' shape and are shaped by the cultures, economies, social structure, traditions, sciences, languages, and symbols of meaningfulness,<sup>294</sup> color the image of trauma in the spirit and mind. Regarding MK, the chronicity of domestic violence constituted a wound in individual and collective voices within her family.

Poignantly, David Tracy' revisionist theological method engages believers, even black church believers, to acknowledge the importance of human expression in order to transcend the pain and suffering they

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<sup>294</sup>David Tracy, *Blessed Rage For Order*, 80.

experienced. Tracy describes the process for examining “Christian text and common human experience”<sup>295</sup> as a call to investigate the adequacy of scripture in the life situation.<sup>296</sup> Here again Tracy might have in mind the black church when he coined this definition because its members, including AML and her granddaughter, MK pushed against the odds to prevent stagnation. They accomplished this by transcending themselves, in essence, refusing to believe the image reflected back in the mirror was the totality of all they could become in their lifetime. The kind of theological interpretative envelope pushing requires inner strength shrouded in hope that change can and will happen. Arguably faith inspired MK and some within her family to make a serious effort to move beyond the familiar and secure for a deeper knowledge of the unknown. “The whole of life and history, therefore, can be described as the process of trauma moving toward hope, tragedy driving to denouement, pained and distorted life reaching for wholeness, anxiety wanting reduction, and dissonance longing for resolution and tranquility.”<sup>297</sup>

Similarly for MK, David Tracy’s emphasis upon human expression while key to critical empowering of wounded souls, fails to adequately

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<sup>295</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 43.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>297</sup> Harold Ellens, *Radical Grace*, 45.



address the multivariate ways silence is culturally and socially expected of African American women as an implicit protocol to success.

Dwight Hopkins highlights David Tracy's work in theological anthropology primarily due to his argument of "revising the postmodern symbols in order to be faithful to the common project of secularity shared by theologians and nonreligious academics,"<sup>298</sup> Necessarily, Hopkins calls attention to Tracy's work by highlighting the significance of the theologian /practitioner's attempt to draw attention to the storyteller/narrator's interpretation of the story and the listener. Specifically he argues that Tracy's attempts to prioritize the storyteller's account of the event/ trauma in order to derive the *true nature and purpose of the human being* often render silent by the prevailing notions about how suffering and pain is generally configured.

However, in concert with Dwight Hopkins' questioning of Tracy's method, I would suggest that effective interpretation from the standpoint of the storyteller requires Gadamerian dialectical analysis<sup>299</sup> of the kind in which trauma is told as a present event with traces of a wider view of the event and the contextual nature surrounding it. Paying attention to the intersection of what is presented or in sight by the hearer as well as those parts of the story situated on the boundary or slightly removed, can when

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<sup>298</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *Being Human*, 17.

<sup>299</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 115.

taken into account enrich meaning the overall account. The story accomplishes the role of mediating the description of how the encounter with the Holy Spirit is humanly experienced. Narrative takes on the form of cumulative discourse rendered over generations. Embedded within both narrative and stories are aspects of wisdom and hermeneutic understanding. Through recollection and remembrances stories and narratives have become collective storehouses by which both individuals and families may gather strength to endure circumstances like trauma in an effort to recover.

David Tracy's revisionist model suggest that human experience is critical in reinterpreting the Christian text. However, he does not necessary show he would include their voices into his theory of practical theology of Christian fact and lived experience.<sup>300</sup> Moreover, in the case of MK's reported trauma, how is the correlation model an authentic source of interpretation and understanding? Further, What assumptions is Tracy suggesting in the confluence of his correlational method and the complexity of MK's story? Are his assumptions reflecting the stark dichotomy between reason and the raw experience of poverty and addiction? Perhaps Tracy's worldview may take into account MK's story as a reflection of the human experience. However, when positioned as a collar to a larger trajectory, her claim may be dismissed as insufficient

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<sup>300</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 79.

data when situated next to a broader discourse of logical reason and tradition. This, even though Tracy's analysis attempts to rectify the situation by acknowledging that heretofore some narratives and stories have been invisible to the Christian metanarrative discourse of God in the midst of the human experience, he does very little in his own revisionist theory to alter the inequities shown. Occurring as either inadequate purveyors of traditional values and interpretations of the Christian text or having no legitimate rational position on the Christian text or its implied traditions and values, these women's stories in modernist leaning research would most probably have been discarded, and if included, would appear as faceless voices with no named power and authority in how trauma is experienced or even characterized.

In the book, *Blessed Rage for Order*, Tracy meagerly attempts to situate voices like that of these women in a category identified as "relative adequacy."<sup>301</sup> However, he fails to show how adequacy can engender meaning by situating it as a barometer to the speaker's language, culture, or social location. What Tracy does not seem to acknowledge beyond his assertion for cognitive claims is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the theological and philosophical narrative that imposes onto the speaker's account of trauma, its own import for meaningfulness and adequacy. Like framers of orthodoxy, modernism and neo-orthodoxy, Tracy's analysis is

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<sup>301</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 103.

centered on the cognitive realm rendering logic rationalism as verifiable and reliable truth.

Dwight Hopkins's in his book, *Being Human* cites Tracy's assumptions around the complexity of theological anthropology due to "rational conversation on the part of the reasoning human subject as that subject engages staple sources from European experiences and recognizes the existence of others different from the European diaspora."<sup>302</sup> In so doing, Hopkins asserts that "Tracy remains within the modernist liberal camp"<sup>303</sup> because his analyses appears to concretize individuals into schemata of ordering based on unconscious pretense and logic rather than allowing their interpretations into the equation of understanding and interpreting the event. Suffice to say at this junction that the term "Meaningful"<sup>304</sup> described by Tracy to approximate standards of "criteria of adequacy"<sup>305</sup> and "criteria of appropriateness"<sup>306</sup> is problematic unless the "interlocutor is willing to take the positive of authentic listener thereby ceding power as an implicit disclosure to the narrator/storyteller who then takes on the role of primary speaker. In order for this to occur then the interlocutors will

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<sup>302</sup>Dwight N. Hopkins, *Being Human* ,16.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid,18.

<sup>304</sup>David Tracy, *Blessed Rage For Order*, 121.

<sup>305</sup>Ibid, page 69.

<sup>306</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 72.

have had to surrender their own self interests and their fixation on self-image.”<sup>307</sup>

Further, to what extent is narrative used as an article of perusal generativity in the face of self- loss? Intentionally using the African American female voice to articulate accounts of the experience between the created and Creator, I hope to insert into modern pedagogy the legitimacy of including those oftentimes silenced and ignored. Thus, inclusion of these voices as adequate phonic interpreters of common human experience and an omnipresent Trinitarian God may broaden the ecclesial skirt of meaningful vestiges for translating coherency and appropriateness inherent in sacred encounter. Substantively, at the interstices of the study are four themes: trauma, violence. Racism and gender bias, all of which serve to expose the brutality of violence upon the human soul. Here, violence is situated within an economic prism of slavery that when conflated together serves to etch within each story and narratives of pain and suffering alongside resistance. Resistance is the anchoring agency in which survival becomes the prescriptive measure of endurance and recovery.

An example of a paradigmatic model that argues adequate constitutive imagery is sufficient by solely human representation misses the point. While I would argue that psyche mentoring and image building approach

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<sup>307</sup>Dwight Hopkins, *Being Human*, 18.

is reasonable, its suitability is limited particularly so when the injured has not begun the process of lamentation and recovery by the Holy Spirit. Inner wounds must begin to heal in order for external relationships to have a reasonable prognostic chance. If not, then treatment of trauma care remains stymied in paradigmatic methodologies, resolute that their reading of prescriptive analysis on the mind/brain and body is correct. Meanwhile, violence within modern American society increases, disrupting lives of individuals and families, its evidence rendered in systemic threat to public health.

Herein, the African American women's narratives color how the Word is understood and made flesh in the world. Tracy's prophetic advocacy flips the heretofore –privileged and valorizes human expression as equal to the proclaimed sacred text of those in authority of those with those who have not been classically granted the exclusive right to name, describe and identify the sacred text for themselves. Being able to do so, even from the negative standpoint of trauma empowers the harmed ones to take their rightful place in today's dialogue located in the public square. This is the crux of Tracy's "public theology." This assertion "brings together the two strands of the correlational model: (1) the apologetic, or an attempt to give a coherent account of Christianity in terms accessible to its cultural context; (2) the dialectical, insisting on theology's openness to renewal from secular insights by virtue of their grounding in common human

experience.<sup>308</sup> The “common human experience” may include trauma of persons, particularly women who see themselves through the lens of horrific violation or trauma. In the schema, they may begin to re-establish a connection with God, even in light of a breach caused by trauma, pain, and suffering.

### **Heinz Kohut-.... Self Object Referent Model**

Today, Heinz Kohut’s theory provides a rubric for clinical case analysis of AJ’s traumata story and family narrative. Heinz Kohut’s last work *How Does Analysis Cure? ...* interrogate six themes that emerged in AJ’s case vignette. To the extent that her narrative undergirds encounters of the Holy Spirit, AJ identifies and names the Holy Spirit as a transformative agent within the space of her human condition. Her accounts show how the Holy Spirit disrupts trauma changing it from persistent pain and suffering to one of health and recovery. Using Kohut’s model, I will show how AJ incorporates empowering themes to the degree she is able to insert her voice into the pain surrounding her trauma. Along the way, she demonstrates how she has learned to re-create associations whose potentiality allow her to distinguish appropriate self- objects from negative-self depleting ones. Appropriate self-objects later become potential constructs for reappportioning her

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<sup>308</sup> Elaine Graham, *Theological Reflections, METHODS*, 160-161.

selfobjects.<sup>309</sup> As she is able to accomplish this, and drawing strength from those who make up her near-experiences, she is then able to trust herself and others.

Critically, Kohut's method argues that the human self, once broken and mangled due to trauma, with suitable imaging can begin to self-form and important new cathartic relationships from previous ones. By using his form of "mirroring and idealizing selfobjects,"<sup>310</sup> as suitable images, AJ is able to discern the obscure from the more visible, thereby claiming critical currency for self- building in an image of another likeness and affinity. In the text, *How Does Analysis Cure?*, Kohut raises key concepts explored in his earlier work. Specifically, he discusses how the defective self becomes injured. While contained in brokenness begins to work its way toward re-shaping itself. Kohut states, "It is the defect in the self that brings about and maintains a patient's self-object (narcissistic) transference which the "idealized imago"<sup>311</sup> is located in another source whose personality conveys wholesome to the extent the harmed self can begin to form an authentic and homeostatic psychic.

Key to Kohut's argument here is the defective self, although it has become structurally compromised by a disengaged caregiver, it endeavors

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<sup>309</sup> Jill McNish, *Transforming Shame*,99.

<sup>310</sup> Richard B. Ulman and Doris Brothers, *The Shattered Self*, 219.

<sup>311</sup> Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?*20



to strive toward forming positive relationships with a self-object<sup>312</sup> in the formation process. Kohut posited that the effort to locate a suitable object to resume the process of self-imaging is a conscious act on the part of the seeker. In this case, AJ perceived she need further image building given the early deaths of her caregivers, mother and elder brother had precluded her from sufficient internalizing a positive self-image.

Continuing his theory, Kohut suggested that the defective self seeks to be in relationship with an idealized self-object by consciously electing to attempt to take on the very personality of its superhero self. If successful in forming a bond with the idealized self-object<sup>313</sup>, then the individual begins to internalize the selfobject into their own self experience.

Similarly to the approach taken previously with the posthumous standing of David Tracy in dialectic engagement with MK, I now turn to Heinz Kohut and AJ's presenting case about trauma.

Trauma is physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual devastation. A detriment that alters one's way of being or normal functioning that creates brokenness. I feel broke and I am tormented by it. Also, I use the term trauma to speak of family dysfunction, church hurt, and the mental, social, institutional and spiritual abuse it has caused. Trauma alters the individual and affects the psyche and physical person.  
AJ, 2013

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<sup>312</sup> Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?*, 49.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid*,49.

## **AJ: Case Assessment**

### **Identifying Information**

Forty-year-old Single African American female, no dependents with a history of family alcoholism and substance abuse; attends AL-ANON regularly. Experienced early deaths of both parents and sibling caregiver. Has one sibling, with whom she currently resides. From this sibling, AJ has several nieces and nephews, all of whom reside within a twenty-five mile area.

### **Background Narrative**

AJ is a native of Alabama. She had two older siblings. Her brother raised her from the age of seven to nineteen years. He expired in 2009. AJ's mother is deceased; her father's whereabouts are unknown and is believed dead. In gathering family information and stats, she informed the researcher that in her family there are patterns of substance abuse, domestic violence, prostitution and homelessness. She attributes a significant period of her growing up years to have centered upon adjusting to the erratic behavior of her mother, a diagnosed schizophrenic, whose ailment may have been exacerbated by her erratic 'street' lifestyle. AJ reports that when she "took to the streets" to make a few dollars to feed us, she normally took us with her. We witnessed a lot." AJ's admits to a history of obsessive-compulsive behavior which may explain why she demonstrated a tendency to hoard accounts of stories that had been previously shared with the researcher.

### **Presenting Traumatic Incident**

I was twelve years old when I was officially raped. Which means a male physically abused me tearing my vaginal placenta. Before that I remember being 'touched' by others- my mother's boyfriends. "H" had a nice, clean apartment with two bedrooms. My brother stayed on the couch

and I had a room and my elder sister when she came to visit. Earlier, AJ's elder sister had been assigned into foster care by the court. Her foster parents agreed to visitation. My brother and I considered H "safe." But then we learned differently. When she wasn't "turning a tricks", my mother had several boyfriends. This was one of the times she wasn't. Later on, my brother and I consented that most of them had been mean to her and to us. But "when they were mean to us, we couldn't understand it because we didn't ask them for nothing. Still there were times she did get rid of them. Generally this occurred when she had to go to the streets in order for us to make it. I guess she didn't want them in her business."<sup>314</sup>

### **Past Medical History**

AJ reports no major medical current or early childhood physical ailments.

### **Past Psychiatric History**

1. Medications: Elavil for earlier accounts of depression
2. Devices-None
3. Allergies-None
4. Substance Abuse and alcohol-None reported
5. Homicidal/Suicidal- None

#### *Mental status Exam:*

1. General Appearance- Presents well groomed-neat in appearance.
2. Sensorium- Poor, seemed distracted during initial interview.
3. Speed- slow-deliberate. Demonstrated fidgeting anxious behavior. Gave accounts involving others that seem to be extreme and unwarranted.
4. Psychomotor- Good, articulate and effectual using hands to emphasize verbalizations appropriately.

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<sup>314</sup> AJ Reflection-November 2013.

5. Mood- Appears buoyant about future plans but lapses into noticeable depression.
6. Unable to reproduce total memories of trauma. Noted rape but could not give specifics as to the occasion, circumstances surrounding and after effects. Memories continue to surface as dis-jointed and confused. Repeatedly related events pertaining to brother's death.
7. Beneath veneer of acceptability is evidence of poor self-esteem and identity.
8. Expressed difficulty in maintaining platonic relationships. Inability to maintain clear boundaries may be an attributing factor.

### **Problem Assessment:**

In addition to AJs trauma condition, there are three underlying factors.

One, AJ's account reflects absent periods of authentic family nurturance which caused abreacted emotions of anger interspersed by periodic instances of sadness. As a consequence, these repressed feelings tended to stymie her efforts towards framing adequate and meaningful relationships. In response she experienced difficulty in identifying alternative mirrored images. After, a series of frequent attempts to locate kinfolk as plausible models for image building, she elected to try a different church. Attending religious services was one way AJ found that she could begin to meet new "family" members towards the aim of establishing membership within a new community. After attending church on a regular basis, AJ determined that it was a safe space in which to grieve the loss of her brother. Because the process of locating exterior "objects" in which to re-configure her self-

image occurred with a safe space, she was then able to confront the more difficult task. This involved exploring trauma from the standpoint of her inner self, meaning raising questions with God about trauma and why such an egregious act has to occur at all. More specifically, why trauma occurred to her and could any of it be attributable to her mother's shortcomings. Finding the courage to risk questioning and discovering answers or the probability of unanswered ones alongside the ambiguity of it all, AJ attributed to the emerging connection within her church family encouraged her to trust the Spirit within.

Two, trauma silenced AJ, muted her response to sexual violations by boyfriends of her mother and as a result left her angry and remorseful at God for allowing it to happen. However as she began to recount order to explore her inner self moments of traumatic memory, she elicited God whom she was introduced to again in her new "family" the church. It was in the encounters of church members in young adult classes, choirs, summer picnics and youth retreats that the mystery of healing was shaped out of her trauma. Through the church, AJ found solace and a way towards recovery.

Three, AJ's initial ability to trust had been severely constrained by a series of social and familial experiences that emerged due to chronic dysfunction. However, the church experience had begun to teach her the value in the currency of newness. Here, she learned to reach out even

when her voice was low and unsteady. Later, she reflected that “in my spirit”, I refused to give in.”<sup>315</sup> Further, she asserted that her lack of parents normally functioning in the home, the painful memory would later lead to inspiration. Inspired by her mother’s absence, she reached beyond her family’s inadequacies not from the standpoint of shame, but from one of courage and compassion for others in similar situations. Being able to witness to others meant for AJ that her trauma could no longer remain silent nor invisible.

Four, evident addictions exhibited by her mother has resulted in AJ’s decision not to consume alcohol or participate in cigarette or narcotic use.

Five, AJ’s story reflects the lack of supposedly normal childhood caused by inadequate family unit within which her optimal self could be established. Her story reflects spiritual and emotional pain in which she constantly struggled with the realization that her environment was chaotic and unstable.

Given analysis of Kohut’s theoretical reflections, his recommendations might have been the following: evidence of incomplete imaging. A central tenet of Kohut’s theory is “*transference neuroses*”<sup>316</sup> or structural neuroses. Here, he described as the process of identifying and sustaining primacy of a self-, object in another person as a means towards

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<sup>315</sup> AJ Reflection, April, 2014.

<sup>316</sup>Heinz Kohut, How Does Analysis Cure?,22.

developing/ and or restoring the healthy self. Given AJ's presenting problem as trauma caused by sexual molestation, he might have detected security and safety encumbrances in the manner in which AJ hesitated to approach plausible self-imaging objects. The aim would have been to dialogue and, through the process increased knowledge about each other. The object was to associate sensitive information with increased trust level. Kohut's construct of transference neuroses would have surfaced as AJ began to address trust. She might have perceived him as an initial step towards the suitability of self-object. Accordingly, Kohut's method would have included inquiry into the task of mirroring beginning with a known and perceived safe encounter. Thus, AJ could have begun the clinical task of engaging with the therapist, whose presence might have assisted in supporting her as she experiences her defective self actively in a mirror.

In his work, Kohut noted that the sequencing of psychic stages can occur between the defective self and self-object. Moreover, he believed that in arriving at the essence of the whole self, shards of pain and suffering can re-attach themselves to the conscious psyche causing the defective self-object to become temporally estranged. Here Kohut's theory strikes a somewhat familiar tone to Shelly Rambo's much later work involving trauma as a "middle spirit,"<sup>317</sup> an experience in which its wound constitutes generative recovery. However, the two theories are not

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<sup>317</sup> Shelly Rambo, *Trauma and Spirit*, 5.

congruent because Kohut seems to locate trauma as disruptive even as AJ takes steps to reclaim her voice and recovery with external support. On the other hand, Rambo's theory implies that the consequence of trauma when used internally tends to strengthen rather than abreact trauma wounding.

An aspect of Kohut's theory addressed here in the clinical treatment is focused upon the concept of "the establishment of empathic communication between the self and its selfobjects on mature adult levels instead of the level of repressed or split-off unmodified narcissistic needs."<sup>318</sup> According to Kohut, narcissistic transference is situated around the fractured self and its ability to stimulate recovery on its own. In order for recovery to occur, one must be able to identify personal areas that inspire and energize the self. AJ's decision to attend church was an initial step in assimilating recovery. In a new environment, she was able to risk setting aside familiar but troublesome experiences for ones perceived as risky and more ambiguous. As a result she was able to locate alternative image-builders while at the same time learning to acknowledge self-endowed spiritual gifts and capabilities.

At the same time, Kohut employs cautionary measures that suggest that the self-object transference phenomena supported by narcissistic transference as enabler may at times prove insufficient—even inadequate to meet the needs of the defective self. When this occurs, the experience of

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<sup>318</sup>Jill McNish, *Trauma and Shame*,107.



lacking fulfillment in the image of the mirrored object may need work to foster inner strengthening of the defective or damaged self. Sustaining *imagoes*<sup>319</sup> may be at risk of impropriety between the defective self and its narcissism. Unlike Freud, Kohut perceived narcissism as a positive emotion, one whose source energy introduces healing as a predictable protocol in which the defected self participates in their recovery.<sup>320</sup>

Kohut's theory is closely applicable to issues involving AJ's nuclear family. Kohut basing his clinical attention on the means by which AJ might have may located personal images outside the clinical setting. But periodic interruptions surrounding grief of her brother's death continued to surface in her mind's consciousness causing episodes of prolonged depression and internal conflict. When this occurred, she reports a kind of disconnect between repressed narcissistic tendencies and her need to reshape her image without interrupting positive transference modeling with her therapist. However, AJ's ability to broaden her exploration of plausible replacements may have communicated two messages. First, pronouncement by the therapist that her environment was safe and therefore meaningful in the sense that she could locate replacements did not make it so.

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<sup>319</sup>Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* 23.

<sup>320</sup>Jill McNish, *Trauma and Shame*, 90.

Second, authority of the therapist. In this sense, Kohut might have been perceived by AJ, even a generation later as more influential than her own efforts thereby adding the weighted advantage to another. Hence, the perceived advantage of Kohut's power as a Caucasian male of the mid-twentieth century could have mitigated the moral acuity of muting rather than liberating the African American female's voice. Hence, gender, generation and race would appear to replicate pre-existing historic conditions rather than underscore change. Therefore, AJ's struggle to align her image of a defected-self with a new idealized one required inner strength building.

Researcher's observation: Throughout the sessions with AJ, it remained unclear how she identified the church as a starting point for self-generation. But the act of church-locating proved a meaningful way for her to reclaim her voice as well as resume image building. Consequently AJ's genogram reflects blurred lines between kin and non-kin, particularly those previously represented as male relatives. For example, earlier on, AJ discusses a male cousin, TY. According to AJ, TY regularly brought her brother and family toys and gifts during Christmas. For years she believed TY was related to her only to later learn that TY, who is now deceased, was a regular boyfriend of their mother. Solidifying the memory of TY as a reliable self-object appeared important to AJ even when confronted with different accounts by family members.

Trust becomes the active identifier to which the relationship is unified based upon consensual acts of image building. Herein Kohut posited that tension may develop, friendly though the relationship might appear. When nurtured, the situation properly result in a positively –oriented “tension arc.”<sup>321</sup> The arc functions almost as a bridge, eventually reducing the distance between the defected self and self-object. Consequently the relationship matures to a point whereby distanced is obfuscated and self-object becomes fused within the individual’s self. Kohut called this process “transmuting internalization.”<sup>322</sup>

### **Judith Herman-.... Trauma and Healing**

Consistent within Judith Herman’s influential work, *Trauma and Recovery* is a narrative that the psychical effects of trauma is experienced as chaotic and disorienting to souls.<sup>323</sup> Further, the extent to which trauma causes dis-equilibrium, human beings *experienced* this primarily by emotional-affective states of consciousness. Herman bases her thesis upon classic psychoanalytic theory. She situates pathology as a key ailment in assessing and diagnosing the human condition obstructed by trauma. Hence, her focus on treatment care is authored out of the psychological model which at the same time does not obfuscate her acknowledgement

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<sup>321</sup>Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* 4-5.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>323</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33.

and understanding that trauma also wounds. It wounds to the extent that the soul may be harmed and the human spirit affected. However, Herman persists in arguing that psyche exploration is essential in assessment and diagnosis of a presenting trauma crisis.

Moreover, Herman continues to ascribe to the belief that the psychologically based treatment approach to trauma best meets the needs of patients suffering from its impact. Herman argues, “The most powerful determinant of psychological trauma is the character of the traumatic event itself.<sup>324</sup> Individual personality characteristics count for little in the face of overwhelming events. There is a simple, direct relationship between the severity of the trauma and its psychological impact, whether that impact is measured in terms of the number of people affected or the intensity and duration of harm.”<sup>325</sup>

Similar to the approach taken by Tracy’s revised correlational phenomenology and Kohut’s self-development theories, I use Judith Herman’s model entitled Stages of Recovery. Herman’s model is employed to illustrate the way in which language used within MK’s narrative extrapolates understanding of her family’s embedded trauma narrative. Shuman and Meador in their work ascribes validity to language that is descriptive of a

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<sup>324</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*, 156 .

specific human experience. In this case, the discourse of trauma may result in the formation of a

“cultural-linguistic’ account of religion, in which religions are seen as comprehensive interpretative schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized,” does not disregard or deny the existence of human religious experience. Rather, it denies the primacy and the priority of individual religious experience by showing that myths, narratives, and rituals that make up a particular way of life themselves ‘structure human experience and understanding of self and the world.’<sup>326</sup>

In MK’s family story involves kin-related violence, drugs, prostitution, molestation and rape. The use of language assists to reveal past suffering and pain as well as embedded agony of the MK who struggles to tell it.

Trauma happens when men and women are incarcerated. Not only are the inmates traumatized no matter what their charges are, children, significant others, spouses, and family members are affected by their circumstances. One’s normal circumstances have been altered and ripped in a way that requires recovery in order to be restored back to wholeness and wellness emotionally, mentally, spiritually, socially, and physically’.<sup>327</sup>

### **Trauma and Healing Assessment**

I begin by exploring the typology of post -traumatic stress disorder made more complicated by the families’ persistent involvement of violence. Certainly in the case of MK, violence has remained visible in three generations with its apparent intrusion now in the fourth. “The study of trauma has also moved away from an exclusively individual look at the

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<sup>326</sup> Shulman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*,39.

<sup>327</sup> MK’s Journal reflection regarding the encounter of the Holy Spirit, March 2013.

psyche to a study of cycles of history and the global and political effects of ongoing violence. The study of trauma has expanded to account for multiple levels of trauma: historical trauma, institutional trauma, and global trauma.<sup>328</sup> Violence is the pejorative elephant in the room. One that MK tries to avoid and where feasible ignore by trivializing its presence in the family.

MK's experience of trauma began as early as age 8 years. As a child, she witnessed violent behavior by her mother's boyfriend. "L." Her mother, a substance abuser with a history of sex trafficking and prostitution, proved then to be unstable, therefore unable to care for her children. Their paternal grandmother assessed that MK's mother and father's substance abuse lifestyle compromised their children's (fraternal twins) safety. Accordingly, at the age of 1.5 years, she applied for sole custody and was subsequently granted sole custody. She retained custody until her death at which time MK and her brother were age nineteen. However, she complied with her daughter-in-law's wish to maintain contact with their children if only on a minimal basis. The reality would be that for eighteen years and longer, MK's mother would remain incarcerated with only brief episodes of freedom given her chronic addiction, drugs and sex trafficking. Therefore her presence was intermittent and sporadic. In terms of her father, his imprisonment was less, but his parental

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<sup>328</sup> Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma* 3-4.

involvement was not even though he resided less than five miles from where his mother and children lived.

As a child, MK recalled her father's chronic physical beating of her step-mother in a language that conveys the horror of seeing an adult mop up blood. Her demeanor was nonchalant almost commonplace. It felt almost too placid and calm, as if something within was about to erupt. Tucked beneath her rendition of this particular incident while melancholic, was a soul wrestling with the reality that kin in this case, her father was a domestic abuser. Unable to change circumstances for her step-mother nor now her father's attitude towards women, her resistance was applied in two ways. One, to use her voice in story-telling about the kinds of trauma occurring within the ordinary everyday experience of African American women. Secondly, to use her voice as an instrument of resistance, informing others while reminding herself that such acts should not be committed towards her. MK's resolve to never accept or allow the same to happen to her was yet another way to make meaning out of this traumatic human experience.

Here Spirit is the acknowledged source of power that is able to heal and restore. The process for restoration begins with resistance. Resistance attributed through the lens of womanist Karen Baker-Fletcher...is "the ethical challenge to live out the mandates of love in a hateful and hate-filled world is a constant struggle and demands an attitude of

resistance.”<sup>329</sup> Karen Baker-Fletcher’s understanding of resistance in the context of women enduring evil defined as violence and trauma can be considered a model for Tracy’s criteria of adequacy and appropriateness.

For MK, religion was the focus of authority channeling particularly as she had experienced early on its powerful impact upon her grandmother’s life. Therefore, within MK’s story of violence are inherent kin-stories of women, sisters, aunts, cousins and later, her own mother, who over time derived the will to resist evil particularly of the kind perceived as demonic acts of violence committed by men. Rather than accept violence, they learned over time to resist. In the case of MK and female members of her family, resistance is articulated in narratives concerning religious conversion.

MK’s grandmother’s regimen of raising her and her brother included regular Sunday morning *ring shouts*<sup>330</sup> at the Bethany Baptist Church as a form of praise and affirmation of the presence of God in their life story. This was in direct contrast to MK’s mother’s religious experience. KK was born and reared Muslim. Later conditioned her adult children to observe the practice of Islam while practicing Christianity. Within MK’s

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<sup>329</sup> Karen Baker-Fletcher, *How Women Relate to the Evils of Nature IN Womanist Theological Ethics, A Reader*, 82.

<sup>330</sup> “The term refers to the earliest reiterations of African American worship service. Here their songs, known as ‘spirituals.- *sperichil*’ were identified as ‘ring spirituals’-- shout spirituals.’ --Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 168-171.



paternal family, Christianity is the primary religious order. Here God is revered as Creator, Healer and Sustainer.

What I mean by rapture is the complete ascent of the soul's force towards the majesty of the glory of God, now revealed as a seamless unity. Or you could describe it a pure encompassing ascent towards that infinite power that dwells in light. It is not merely heavenly rapture of the soul's powers; it also comprises the complete transcendence of the sensible world itself. This deep desire for God...is a spiritual intoxication that arouses all our longing...it is truly an intoxication of the spirit driving on our natural thoughts towards life.

The following chart by Judith Herman is used to illustrate how a classic model for trauma treatment correlates with MK's familial history of violence, rape, molestation, drugs and prostitution. The objective is to determine whether or to what extent Herman's model actually alleviates suffering by ascribing a paradigmatic psychological approach. In what way, does Herman's model assists MK to name her own and that of others trauma of her own and others, in a way functioning as a second self of known and unknown kinfolk injured by violence and trauma? According to Herman's treatment process, her model is organized around the melancholy and sadness experienced because of the event. Is evidence of MK's and/or her family sadness attributable to the traumatic event or the circumstances that result from it? Further the coherence of pain is not

without its abstractions including conscious efforts by MK to avoid or ignore the reality of violence in her life. By coaching MK, Herman's model asserts that MK may be able to explore feelings about trauma and emotions that tend to surface as chronic reminders.

*Stages of Recovery*<sup>331</sup>

<b>Syndrome</b>	<b>Stage One</b>	<b>Stage Two</b>	<b>Stage Three</b>
Hysteria (Janet 1889)	Stabilization, symptom- oriented treatment	Exploration of traumatic memories	Personality Reintegration Rehabilitation
Combat trauma (Scurfield 1985)	Trust, stress management, education	Re- experiencing trauma	Integration of trauma
Complicat ed post- traumatic stress disorder (Brown & Fromm 1986)	Stabilization	Integration of memories	Development of self, drive integration

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<sup>331</sup> Permission to Reprint, Chart: Stages of Recovery IN Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 156.

Syndrome	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Multiple personality disorder (Putnam 1989)	Diagnosis, stabilization, communication, cooperation	Metabolism of trauma	Resolution integration development of postresolution coping skills
Traumatic disorders (Herman 1992)	Safety	Remembrance and mourning	Reconnection

In taking this approach, Judith Herman explicitly uses the category of remembrance to critically process healing and recovering. She does so explicitly using four factors: mourning and loss, witnessing and testimony of the trauma in order to institute a corrective process to facilitate moving past it.<sup>332</sup> Her mom uses descriptive measures, some of which are within their own categories. Some are repressed emotions that later may provide opportunity for further excavation. Hence, the treatment model underscored by Herman validates psychological –based inquiry technique known as “abreaction or catharsis,”<sup>333</sup> full recovery required that the totality of mourning is required as a conscious experience rather than a nascent abstraction. Hence, repressed memories related to or now

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<sup>332</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma Recovery and Healing*, 155.

<sup>333</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 12.

assimilated with distinct memories of violence-trauma involving her parents have to be included in the exploratory and treatment process.

Yet, considering the issue of moral injury and its relationship to the sudden and disruptive violent acts either committed by MK's parents, Herman's model of recovery may not have adequately addressed critical family dynamics. (see chapter six related to Nancy Boyd-Franklin's family system's i.e. secrets, non-blood relationships). Moreover, while the author's model readily points out that without serious effort on the part of practitioners and theologians to focus upon mourning and melancholy caused by trauma, its memories will converse into halting moments in a client's cognitive mind space. Critically, Herman asserts that without careful attention to psychological injuries caused by trauma wounds, the soul remains stifled in despair causing repeated triggers of doubt and fear to occur in the human psyche. But she does not go any further to explain how exploration of this nature might occur beyond the boundary of utilizing psychological instruments.

I assert that composite recovery model is needed, one that reflects attention to the actuality and agony of the event including rather than ignoring the soul. Without careful attention to a more complete practice, trauma in individual and families' lives may well continue to silence experiences just beneath the surface of conscious being. But by acknowledging the ancestral history of MK's stories and her family,

inquiry into the trauma and its effect upon the soul may yet expand our knowledge and understanding of God and the Holy Spirit. Until then, the mystery remains how the Holy Spirit takes violence and transforms it into beneficence and good. *Seeing God* in the midst of transformation is blessed redemption.

“Stages of recovery can be observed not only in the healing of individuals but also in the healing of traumatized communities.”<sup>334</sup> MK’s story about her trauma is critically intertwined with that of her mother and those before her. The maternal link to trauma is troubling more so because often in therapeutic settings, the family’s pain is ignored or at the very least referred to as a bifurcated otherness, a contextual genre in which to understand better the person and their presenting need rather than a party, howbeit absent from the clinical space, but nonetheless in critical need of attention.

The necessity of enjoining the family to the clinical setting increase the likelihood that consummate healing may occur. Herman goes on to broaden her argument about the interconnectedness of healing by engrafting community trauma injury with that of moral injury of a society. “Our own society faces a similar dilemma with respect to the legacy of

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<sup>334</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 241.

slavery. The unhealed racial divisions of our country create an ongoing potential for violence.”<sup>335</sup>

Herman’s reference to slavery expands the current venue on how trauma is perceived as a constricted individualized condition, caused by one person and affecting primarily a single individual. Countering tradition, Herman places trauma on a societal scale and with it violence, associating with it healing that takes on responsibility of an individual but also the society in which they live.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I supplant the women’s narratives into paradigmatic theories of David Tracy, Heinz Kohut and Judith Herman. Herein, the method used critically explores the adequacy and appropriateness of the theorist’s arguments when applied to the public square; that is perceived through the lens of common women’s experience of trauma. Their account of trauma is correlated against systematic entitlements in the person of theorists whose experience of the African American slave storyline may have much or little to say in the meaningful context of applied theories. In this regard, I interrogate the extent to which their theories if at all act as an operational platform in which they may stand sharing their account of trauma in their lives and their families.

The consequential nature of doing so, amplifies the chronicity of trauma and its upon individual and family conditions. With regards to

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<sup>335</sup>Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 241& 243.

MK, I illustrate how frequent occurrences of trauma evoke emotions in both perpetrator and persons targeted in ways that tend to take shape in family narratives as cloistered secrets. Over time, these secrets act as manifold clusters of family stories which veil in some cases and others, mask the violence created around trauma. MK's story of trauma and violence is not intended to be shared as representative of the African American experience, particularly that of the female population.

However, it is accounted, as part of the culture's narrative implicit within it is its historic strains of slavery. Given this, the emphasis is not on the tragedy of trauma and violence in the African American individual and collective narrative. No, the whole note emphasizes the Holy Spirit and its encounter with trauma; transforms it into an opportunity for generative growth and development. Thus, the core of this work illustrates the extent to which the movement of the Holy Spirit is present, reordering chaos into cathartic practices of ritual and positive memorization.

Using each of the theorists' principle argument, I advance my claim that God is in the midst of the human experience. Further, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4, I exemplify the preeminent covenant of God to be present in all human conditions, thereby resoundingly inclusive of races, people, ethnicities and religions of the world. The plurality of God endemic in the human story undergirds my argument that God in 2<sup>nd</sup> century early Church is immutable regardless of

histories of war, famine, violence and yes, slavery. Confidence of God in the situation is repeated in spite of twelfth century Cartesian argument or eighteenth century Kantian primacy of rationalization over human experience. And as was expressed in chapter four, the African American historic experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit-God in the midst of the human narrative is evident in language, customs and religious beliefs of many individuals. Traces of the slaves' accounts resound today in these two oral histories. By scripting slave stories and spirituals, I have attempted to shine a proverbial light on the resiliency of past beliefs in God on how this faith becomes a lynchpin for those enmeshed in the human condition of chaos and evil. In addition to examining the Holy Spirit within the women's accounts providing analysis into an often ignored if not explicitly marginalized view of trauma and its interpretative mode upon the psyche who have endured it, I also explore its psychological injuries.

In addressing this matter, I present case analyses of a traumatic accounting using the DSM IV model in which to render their stories as clinical data for diagnostic assessment. My supposition in doing so is to illustrate the inadequacy of diagnosing trauma from a solely psychological vantage point without giving critical attention to the nature of moral injury and its affect upon the human soul. Accordingly, I assert that the current practice of psychological or mind-body treatment is insufficient to render



total recovery. Thus, without careful attention to I deepened injuries caused by trauma, critical spiritual wounding may be mis-labeled or even ignored. The circumstance presented as a result of a largely proscriptive and paternalistic practice is no longer acceptable in modern American society. Because of the current and projected demographic landscape, attitudes about the Holy Spirit and its place in modern day society need to reveal the totality of the human experience. If the objective of professional treatment is to restore with coherency health as identified by the injured, then an inclusive accounting by individuals and communities of what it means to recover ought to become a part of best practices.

In summary, I presented a case analysis of a traumatic account using the DSM IV model in which to render their stories as clinical data for diagnostic assessment. My supposition in doing so is to illustrate the inadequacy of diagnosing trauma from a solely psychological vantage point without giving critical attention to the nature of moral injury and its affect upon the human soul. Accordingly, I assert that the current practice of psychological or mind-body treatment is insufficient to render total recovery. Thus, without careful attention to deepened injuries caused by trauma, critical spiritual wounding may be mislabeled or even ignored.

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## **Chapter Eight**

### **Critique of Womanist Theology and Pastoral Care in Trauma Treatment**

In Chapter Six, I refer once again to a critical construct undergirding the dissertation. It is the subject of theoretical criticism focusing both on insufficiency of theory and practice when treating trauma. Here, I am particularly concerned with two specific areas, womanists, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave theory and practice and Pastoral Counseling. There are two primary reasons why I have selected each category.

While acknowledging the vibrancy of the Spirit in attending to the body, soul and human spirit, womanist writings tend to subjugate the power of otherness for the staid privilege of the academy and bureaucracy. Second, womanist theology makes statements privileging the communal nature of the human experience, which is to say, it does not assert primacy of individuation over the ethical action of being in community but their physical support is without visibility. For example, the recent shootings of Tray von Martin and Michael Brown have not resulted in the proverbial support of womanists whose work has taken to ratify the urgency of justice for the poor, marginalized and otherwise noted as the bottom social-economic rung in modern American society. Even though,

Womanist theorists believe the same Spirit of all humanity is present in the cosmos and that the universality of being intricately connected to one another and God presents the potential for engaging at a deeper and more involved level.

For these reasons among others, I argue that neither 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave womanist theology nor pastoral counseling as practiced today critically address the totality of trauma and moral injury inflicted upon the human being. And by their action, each participates in the chronicity of reductionism upon an already un- and underrepresented segment of the American society. Further, I assert while their respective theories resound within the institutional and academic walls with prophetic urgency, its prevailing effect falls flat in the face of abject poverty and trauma. I believe the impact of their actions is paucity in the public square that in it is complicit, therefore promulgating an already underlying ethos of inconsistent moral values and leadership.

Rather than projecting themselves into community aligning with classes of people identified as marginalized by trauma and violence, they remain cloistered within bureaucratic and academic institutions that prevent them from accurately viewing the plight of those they have vowed to serve. Instead, they have engrafted their discourse into a hegemonic system of power enabling institutions rather than people to benefit from the American ideal of freedom and justice. Continuing to mute the voices

of those who all too well know what it means to daily confront traumatic injustice.

Likewise, MK and AJ's voices have been silenced by trajectories of systemic power and entitlement but now are beginning to experience their voices as part of historic resistance. This is not to say that disclosure group does not understand or have compassion for the disenfranchised and historic peoples of American society but their strategies for engagement seems to pale against their disciplistic need to be recognized as meaningful within proscriptive centralized practice. Thereby, their theory is insufficient to persuade themselves and other disciplines to alleviate the Holy Spirit as a credible praxis of scientific query within the academic discourse. Accordingly, the symbiotic impact of the Holy Spirit actualized in soul healing and recovery remains itself miss-stated in significance and ignored. This, even though womanists have at times critiqued feminist theorists for their hegemonic like gender posture. Ironically they have taken up similar positions.

A perplexing query of the assertion being made here is who ultimately benefits from these strategies? Does womanists as a discipline benefit or is it in fact, some feminist whose philosophical leanings underscore the dominance of hegemonic reasoning. In pondering these questions, I reflect on innumerable numbers of African American women and mothers of the past and present who chose not to purchase a proper Sunday dress and hat,

or shoes, instead electing to sacrifice for some others, at times, those cared for were not even members of their own families. But they did so for a reason. Their courage to care for the other, to risk suffering coupled with disadvantages accentuated by experiences like soul-wounding trauma in order to achieve collective soul-healing and restoration for family and community should serve as a standard for how womanist *must* do the work their souls must have. Understanding it is not their own souls who set the bar for how to act responsibly in a world that all too often chooses to divide and diminish over uniting and empowering all people to achieve their best selves. Despite their own soul wounds, these courageous souls, understood that their souls bore the markings of many thousands lost.

Though their voices were now stilled in death, these nameless women believed in the inalienable right of all human beings to be. Because of them, the emphasis for womanists ought not to focus solely academic expression for personal acclaim and recognition but rather, place their attention upon those who may not even come to know their names in a lifetime, but will have benefitted from womanists presence and courage to stand both individually and collectively as a discipline of scholarship, doing theology in the public square.

This effort is a sign of commitment and determination to strive for justice when it is not professionally expedient or economically feasible.

Doing the work because of the privilege afforded by others before them which allowed womanists to sight their future and achieve it. Whether they were mothers, aunts, grandmothers and god-mothers, they wore rough dried Sunday dresses as regally a queen wears a robed gown. They could wear their dresses with confidence and assurance not because of the nature of the garment or the material it was made of, but rather because of the living soul who wore it, had decided long ago to refuse to stoop, instead reaching despite the risk toward glory. They were of a class who knew trauma and its systemic injustices yet they believed that their labor, in behalf of others, was not in vain.

Interestingly enough, the anthology entitled, *Womanist Theological Ethics: Reader* by Katie Cannon, Emile Townes, and Angela Sims among others point to a complementarity of ethics and action. In the chapter authored by Townes, its title “doing the work our soul must have”<sup>336</sup> conveys a sense of both recognition and passionate urgency without that begins with a summation of the state of womanist theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Specifically, its prose serve to both pronounce the work of womanist theologians as well as a critique their shortcomings. Particularly, Townes focuses upon womanist’s presumptive reluctance to actively agitate against the norm. A norm so configured by Townes is personified by taking up the option to go along with the status quo rather

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<sup>336</sup> Emile Townes, “Doing The Work Our Souls Must Have,” IN Katie G. Cannon, Emile Townes, Angela Sims, *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*, 42.

than raise critical inquiry about its marginal representation in the modern day public square. This criticism of course, points to ways in which womanist may assume a different perspective on how ethics from their standpoint is to be projected in the exterior world. What Townes seems to advocate for is a fresh and organic approach to ideas that hopefully spurn changed behavior. Moreover, in the phrase Townes uses, there exist an urgent reminder that a passionate response is due if not most needed. One that is less tailored to the needs of speakers and crafters of subject writings and more on the benefits of those heretofore silenced.

In using the normative term *work* our souls must have implies that there may be categories of restorative justice in which those can make substantial corrections whose pronouncements seem to carry weight in behalf of the less powerful. Further, this work is not of the condition that renders it reducible to meaningless rhetoric or chatter about the conditions supplanted and surrounding it but rather implies is the grammatical verb *must* that there has been a sacred calling upon another, in this case, the soul. Moreover, the word “must” sounds an adjudicated message to the reader in tone plied with justice that an equitable tender of payment between the lamenter and the God-The Responder has occurred. This agreement is manifested by the presence of the Holy Spirit whose calling involves engagement of others to join in behalf of the voiceless. Doing the work ...is not an elective act but one requiring attention and constant



action? I believe to ignore or deny the call and instead opt for rational dictum alone renders an incomplete and trivial response.

Ironically Townes' writing though nuanced by passionate conviction to a qualified call remains centered in a theoretical episodic message. A message that conveys coherence to ethics of a principled avocation without careful attention to what ought to occur in or around the circumstances as projected. Clearly, there is risk in transitioning from speech to writing to action but this category of restorative justice places emphasis upon the latter and not the static nature of theoretical ideas. Thus, Townes' physical embodiment is realized as absent from her emotional and perhaps, even, spiritual acuity to in this case, trauma. She, like other womanists within similar academic stature can speak about it and certainly write and research about the harm and impact of traumatic wounds but they do so without interjecting themselves into the actualized story of trauma. Towards this issue, I recall the late German feminist theologian Dorothee Soelle' wisdom in approaching the work of trauma with authentication. She stated that to do so requires the courage and perhaps the will to step into suffering. The act of stepping into suffering is by far a greater risk to those who proclaim witness to it than those who choose to walk along side. Because walking along side, howbeit close in proximity provides opportunity to the accompanier to avoid direct harm howbeit offers protection even in instances of close proximity.

Given the gravity of trauma and its inherent association with violence, I argue that unless the physical body is present in the horror of the wounds of trauma, the called out souls may falter in their work that requires more than words and scholarship can provide. Pursuant to the passionate call is eternal nature of the work by One whose praxis and purpose is divine. Hence, Townes' prophetic call to womanists is a sacred one whose meaningfulness ought to resonate beyond the cathartic nature of professional relationships. Preferring the requisite proverbial echoes of academic achievement over work inherent in the cries and moans of suffering souls, both Townes and other womanists of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave seem to privilege scholastic scholarship more so than the common human experience.

However, Womanist theologians who take into account the human condition of trauma do so at the risk of being perceived by their colleagues as inattentive to the rigors of scholarship. But because injustice and inequity often strikes at the core of reasoned intentionality, the work our souls must have requires meeting the task as experienced. Moreover, to take on seeing through darkened lens means addressing injustice with honesty and courage, that is, if the intent is to carefully examine its environment and systems that act to sustain it. In this regard, the role womanist can play a significant role in the plight and lives of people who may not even know the meaning of the word *womanist* but in witnessing

the actions of womanists on their behalf will come to understand if not embrace it. Doing so may require those who claim efficacy of its communal calling to recognize the very systems in which they actively participate in and look towards for their own survival may appear to others as less accessible and fair.

Accordingly, for womanist theologians and theorists, there is more to the work of attending to the injustices like trauma that tend to wound human soul. The stories and narratives of women like the two included in this dissertation may in tone appear raw and unfinished but nonetheless must be heard because they testify to women whose histories involve extreme struggle yet in still maintained the courage to actively contribute to society. The justice of their tolling in a lifetime echoes across their families generational accounts requiring those who hear, their kin and others who speak and write to listen to their voices whose silence has been too long and then join with them in the ground towards action.

There is risk to the extent the practitioner may incur as a result of stepping into the suffering of another. This may be experienced as psychological transference/ counter-transference redeemed as heretofore-repressed hurts and disappointment now arriving to the surface. However, in either course they ought not be rejected or constructed into a more palatable idea or emotion but rather embraced as a living testimony of how

trauma affected their lives and those around them. In response mutuality of an inner-experience may occur for both.

Thereby, I continue to advance the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in connection with the inner being in all life situations, particularly those that inflict pain and suffering. To this extent, I believe there is a sacred relationship between human and divine that is replicated in the exteriority of religion and science. Sixteenth century, physicist, philosopher and astronomer Galileo understood that God is an Ultimate fixture in all humanity and that to dismiss inductive analysis as a legitimate interpretative and reflexive model for a more reasoned approach to knowing about God is at best, a mistake. Perhaps the mitigates truth is first approached by deductive reasoning and human volition embodied by preconditioned values and mores, the nature of inductive knowing powered by exploration and examination of questions and queries ought to be included. It is towards this extent, I have tried to illustrate throughout this writing the rumbling of the Holy Spirit in the trajectories and the disputes of the early Church, or the medieval rendering of mystics and the benign voices of vitalism versus mechanists in the emergence of recanted in generational narratives of the two African American women, MK and AJ. Sufferings caused by trauma has over time spawn similar reactions by mortals when God is experienced as present. Whether in the annals of medicine as science or personified in the mnemonic voices of African

American slaves by song, prayer or spirituals, I trace the phenomena of the Spirit as discovered and acknowledged by scientists, theorists, theologians and philosophers shedding more light upon the presence of the Spirit in distinctive realms of knowledge and experience.

Hence, the Spirit, reserved to the back room of empirical thought alongside conjuration, black magic, and intuition would have minimal impact upon the footprint of scientific thought in the emerging modern age. Thereby, the tension between science and religion, caused to a large extent by the coloration of the Spirit upon the latter, would to a large extent, permeate the field of pastoral care and its historical development as well as its struggle for its own identity in both the academic and practice fields today. Because of seemingly pastoral care's ambivalence to align its identity with its theology roots, it has in some ways diminished its capacity to see the significance of the Spirit as a viable curative agent in healing, specifically in cases where trauma is the presenting problem.

Moreover, these Womanist theologians cited herein argue the ethical approach to care ought to recognize the practicality of the total being; spirit, mind and body, reflected in a communal relationship with God, in which circularity and eternal place are illuminated. Each womanist theologian and theorist suggest with poignant agitation the need for an authentic *pastoral voice* in the presence of the sacred Spirit when confronting fractured souls and wounded hearts.

Reconciliation includes more than differences between individuals, families, groups and nations, her theory seems to suggest that reconciliation from opposing poles of consciousness deep within one's soul and spirit also requires the praxis of mediating protocol. Moreover, she seems to imply in using the term as median point between differences of access to an inner power whose intent is enjoin with souls for the purpose of reconciliation, hence transformation. This is one of many ways the Spirit enable change to occur in an individual and the broader community. I believe once the human spirit connects with the Creator Spirit in anticipation of healing and cure, the effect of such an encounter on the inside is also revealed externally. Critically when souls are made whole gain, there is peace not only within but radiates in the fractured dissonance of today's common reality.

Thus, the Spirit can heal but also bring peace and a binding love. This is the key to the argument made herein. Remind living souls of the Spirit's power to heal is purportedly of greater consequence than attending to the dissonance of mind and body through scientific clinical methods exclusively. Displacing its sacred focus prevents authentic reflection from taking place on the deeper meaning of life both personally and in community. Whether caused by unexpected process of a life journey, the inner search of soul and spirit ought to be engaged by the active involvement of pastoral theology and care. From its ethical historicity,

Womanist theology ought to raise questions and conditions that challenge and disrupt standards of normalcy but this very act begins the process of uncovering dialogical threads that have long receded from the public mind, to the benefit of some over others. Countering this kind of conventionality often involves recovering history with the hope that those left out and ignored may once again be included at the core, enabling transformation of those in the center and healing of those in the margins.

### **Critique of Pastoral Care**

This section critiques pastoral counseling from the standpoint of its caustic and staid approach to care. In particular, I am concerned with the vitality of pastoral counseling practiced in poverty ridden urban and rural areas of modern day America. Ancillary to pastoral counseling's traditionalist approach is another concern of which I implicit threaded throughout the dissertation. The matter involves the dualistic nature of marginalized voices cogently silenced in the public square and the additive regarding legitimacy of those voices when heard. Further to the extent pastoral counseling has positioned itself metaphorically with stakeholders whose association with power and controls morphs individuals' rights to decide life on their own terms, the level of egregious complicity strikes of an injustice. By that I mean, voices silenced are systemically caught between prescriptive diagnosis and continued pain and suffering. Often confronted with the choice of receiving some or at least the hope of

temporary relief or remaining in the conundrum of agony and pain, the care seeker elects to do something howbeit on a fee-for service basis, rather than recede into silence again. Hence, when encountered with clinical techniques that seek to objectify their experience, in this case, of trauma, they elect to ameliorate their condition by therapy. Now, I am not saying that the psychological therapeutic model does not provide a purpose. Instead, I am suggesting that counseling ought to invoke the perennial assumption that there is more to trauma wounding than the emotional mind may suggest. Peter Kramer's recent article entitled *Why Doctors Need Stories*, has so aptly addressed the issue raised here. He claims the following: "Data are important, of course, but numbers sometimes imply an order to what is happening that can be misleading. Stories are better at capturing a different type of the big picture."<sup>337</sup>

Despite of repeated calls by those within the discipline as well as other professionals in ancillary disciplines, current redactions of pastoral counseling practices continue to indicate its constrained reliance upon stories as a way to embellish gathered data and information that may in fact illumine the situation in mind and soul fields where crevices and creaks lay otherwise concealed. Instead, the discipline persists in utilizing methods that privilege the diagnostic assessment approach tending to objectify hence sterilize lived situations in orderly units of analysis. But

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<sup>337</sup> Peter Kramer, New York Times Article, *Why. Need Stories*, Doctors, and Statement earlier in the New England Journal of Medicine. Page 7.



solely designated reliance upon straiten research based upon objective measures over interjections of lived accounts ultimately ought not to control the way the power of anecdotal is perceived by the industry and the client. It seems that Kramer has put his proverbial finger on the underlying issue before both research and readers.

The power of healing occurs when the harmed is listened to, first by God, manifested by the Holy Spirit and then by those who see the divine blessing for hearer and storyteller. The gift come from being invited into someone's narrative and stories about events, whether classified as struggles and joys that emerge out of the depths of an individual's inner and circuitous journey. To obfuscate the power of stories, more laterally, case vignettes in clinical research seems to be trivialize the meaning of God in the midst of the lived experience.

Critically, I have taken up the argument that individuals and communities demeaned and otherwise ignored largely begin to begin to regain their democratic footing by asserting their linguistic rights of what is true and just in their own human condition. The process starts by presenting their experience through art form of stories. Once again, Peter Kramer, argues in the before mentioned article, the vignette corresponds to a convincing account of how people change.”<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Peter D. Kramer, *Why Doctors Need Stories*, The New York Times, October 18,2014.

Returning to the portion of the claim that pastoral counseling has transformed its practice into a ritualized proprietary of mechanistic based care, further query is made regarding how pastoral counseling presents its clinical wares to patients and clients who heretofore may have little or no knowledge about its history and mission. What this section also briefly addresses is the plausibility that over time perhaps injury in the form of a palimpsest has occurred provided scant reflection of the field's historical mission to its potential client base.

Thus, using trauma as the source of a palimpsest and attempts by modern psychologies to write over the ethereal power of The Holy Spirit revealed in incidences where the prescription required soul healing. In Chapters Three and Five, I critically interrogate pastoral counseling along the lines of its modern day clinical assumptions derived from rational empiricism that sought to pronounce care on the basis of carnal imaging and caustic prescriptive measures.

In response, I sketched pastoral counseling within the rubric of its presenting care protocol by its paradigmatic relationship with Freudian, psychoanalytic methodology and psychodynamic, object relations theorists of largely the twentieth century. In this analysis I show how pastoral counseling and care historically have entered into the service field by way of its ecclesiastical relationship intoning reverence for the care of the soul within its avocation. Meaning the experience of living was not

solely concentrated in the physicality of human life but also involved the spirit and mind. If traditionally, inference made by to the field to external environment, then why isn't it plausible to infer that discipline can once again regain a critical portion of its prior function? While this argument may challenge modern thinking to the extent that it counters Cartesian and Kantian worldviews, the issue at hand is that the emphasis today in qualitative ought to be on the inclusivity of narrative regardless of the ethnographic, hence socio-economic placing of its speakers.

More importantly, the matter before systematic contemporary research is whether or not it will continue to take up, old, outdated scientific sources that tend to delimit the authenticity of the data, or lend its influence and support toward a legitimate protocol for substantiating a changing and more specifically, pluralistic worldview in modern day America. To start the movement towards inclusive scientific analysis, I argue that academia as a formalized system of inquiry and validation may influence the process of change by inviting research proposals that show a marked interest in intuitive versus paradigmatic inquiry. Hence, qualitative research such as this one may be afforded financial support in a way that elevates the work equal to empirical research.

Voices of researchers, like my own strive to invite change in how the normative process claims how knowledge is derived. In the sense, rational ordering of ideas although widely acceptable in classic therapeutic milieu,

is perceived by some as insufficient, particularly when the trauma reveal injury to the inner soul, I believe the power of anecdotal storytelling can serve as an appropriate tool to unlock hurts and its residual effects, characterized as shame and doubt. The challenge remains for the field of pastoral counseling and care to realign itself shifting with its history established by the church several centuries ago. In more recent scholarship of pastoral care and counseling Barbara McClure urges “ the field to become more flexible and more open in theory and practice, and more grounded in a theological vision for promoting flourishing of *all* God’s people.”<sup>339</sup>

Trauma wounds the soul and as such individualized psychological based models are inadequate to fully address wounding of the nature only the human soul portends. Siegel and Solomon’s reference of trauma in their joint work entitled, *Healing Trauma* describes it as impacting “the self by impairing the integrative capacities of the mind that are themselves ultimately created by processes of neural complexity and integration.”<sup>340</sup> in further articulation about trauma as n unnatural force that complicates the more normal functioning of the mind to develop into a state of emotional well-being without interference and blockages caused by traumatic violence, Siegel and Solomon ascribes the trauma therapist’s

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<sup>339</sup> Barbara McClure, *Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 8.

<sup>340</sup> Daniel Siegel and M. Solomon, *Healing Trauma*, xv., 23-24.

task as relieved those harmed by trauma and its subsequent encumbrance to the mind, by aligning with the individual in such a way as to begin the process of assisting them to slowly scale away the scab of trauma injury.

However, both Schauer et al and Bessel van der Kolk argue similarly but in a somewhat different way. They believe critical to the coefficient of trauma is the quality of the human mind to store offensive memories or the “hot memory”.<sup>341</sup> Hot memories comprise such events as trauma which when experienced results in a disconnection of the self’s homeostatic thought process. This act subsequently exposes increased levels of dissociative behavior resulting in the individual’s inability to properly negotiate between internal and external frames of reality around them. Given the nature of trauma’s breach upon the soul, I argue vulnerability increases visibility in which anxiety’s platform rests exacting relationship between categories of chaos and disconnection.

Accordingly, the context in which disconnection of the self homeostatic thought process occurs then exposes increased levels of dissociative behavior resulting in the individual’s inability to properly negotiated both internal and external views of the world around them.

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<sup>341</sup> Maggie Schauer, *Narrative Exposure Therapy*, 19.

Given the nature of trauma's breach upon the soul, I argue vulnerability increases visibility in which anxiety's platform rests exacting relationship between categories of chaos and disconnection. Moreover, the duality of disconnection and impairment tend to mediate out meanings for individual and collective memories concerning processes of recovery. Therefore, based upon the socio-ecological context of the individual and community, individuals once silence may elect to remain muted in their pain about trauma or begin the arduous task of reclaiming their voices even in the face of extreme bodily and psychic risk. Stories and narratives become live enactments of soul-wounding challenging those harmed to risk sharing when it may appear that the power of God has been effectively eroded by evil and sin.

From the standpoint of pastoral counseling's role in trauma treatment, Pamela Couture purports the pastoral practitioner's ethical obligation is to attend to the whole condition of people's lives, regardless of the spiraling effects of disconnection. Couture's model reflects later writings of Don Browning, Walter Rauschenbusch and to some extent David Tracy regarding public theology and praxis all of whom challenged the classical understanding of pastoral care and counseling's for a more contextual model signifying a much broader model of the human condition in society and the world. By addressing the holistic praxis of the human condition as her primary subject matter, Couture's argument begins to

trace the process of shifting the service needle of pastoral care from classic individual-based psychodynamic theories towards methods that take into account the hermeneutic of experience at the interstices of theory and praxis.

In addition to attending to previous criticisms raised concerning recalcitrant blind spots within the field of pastoral counseling and care, I wish to raise one other. And that has to do with recent research by modern day neuron-scientific theorists such as Maggie Schauer et al and to a lesser degree by Bessel van der Kolk.<sup>342</sup> These theories tend to promulgate ideas from a trajectory of dualistic possibilities. Hereby Cartesian ideology's traditionalist approach asserting brain/mind as the centralized sources in which the human experience can be didactically exposed counters historical African and Orientalist thought Oneness implies more than the human psyche and physical stature.

This notion that a holistic approach might be inserted into what has largely become identified with as Enlightened modern meta narratives seems even in this day and time of acknowledging pluralistic otherness as absurd. Yes, numerous lectures, scholastic articles and books tend to underscore the significance of signifying difference in every aspect of the human experience, the sad fact remains that filters of what is nominal and

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<sup>342</sup> Bessel van der Kolk, "Traumatized Mind?" By Jeneen Interlandi, IN, The New York Times Magazine, May 25, 2014, 43-47.

therefore primary or core to the dialogue remains filters through a largely Caucasian Western worldview.

I am asserting here that for nearly five centuries, African have inhabited the western hemisphere, for the most part, as slaves but also as indentured servants, explorers, missionary and teachers. Explicit in their being in a strange land, they also had the security of being one with a familiar Spirit, God. I find hard to understand why multi-ethnic research and approaches to research faces constraints when the choice is made to using qualitative techniques to enrich the data while quantitative methods like meta- analysis particularize small scale experiments in such a way that meager findings are then critically generalized, thus creating force fields of reliable and verifiability outcomes. When used in qualitative research, anecdotal stories and testimonies are presented as data that affirms the truth of the core findings regulating their importance to a secondary position. Implicit in scientific criticism about qualitative research is the suggestion that stories are less reliable and as such ought not to be considered as reasonable for generalization on a broader scale.

Cienfuegos and Morrelli<sup>343</sup> instituted an approach to therapy for individuals wounded by torturous acts. They called their technique,

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<sup>343</sup> Reference to work conducted by Cienfuegos & Morelli found in Maggie Schauer, at el, *Narrative Exposure Therapy*, 23."Testimony therapy is an innovative approach that combines political as well as psychological goals. The biography of the survivor of



testimony therapy. Its application constituted fissures of subjectivity and narrative to begin the reclaiming of lives and souls. They were not alone. Stanley Hauerwas, Martha Nussbaum, the late Michael White and yes, Maggie Schauer admits to the importance of stories and narratives when addressing trauma, specifically in relation to wounding of the soul. It seems to me rather than continue in this direction of narrowest research and pedagogy, it might be considerably meaningful to incorporate applications of organic data such as stories and narratives in research particularly related to disciplines of pastoral counseling and care. Why? Because this discipline, however strayed from its historical role counselor, can take up tasks like guiding, teaching, sustaining and avocation of the marginalized and poor in spirit emulating God in the world. Evidence of which broadens the ecclesiastical skirt to include otherness in standardized research that includes linguistic volition on the part of the speaker to incorporate stories as form of trauma narrative but also the encountering movement of the Holy Spirit in the human situation suggests that there may be alternate ways in which research can be designed with the aim of determining how data is described and used to formulate findings/ and results.

I claim that when stories and narratives are used particularly by pastoral counseling than the opportunity for deeper journeys into the

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human rights violations is documented in detail with emphasis on the persecution history and traumatic events experienced.”

human soul may emerge. Journeying into the human self requires humility on the part of the inquisitive inquirer to see the vestiges of their pain from its boundaries. Knowing there is more suffering to be experienced and the option to withdraw into fantasies of the mind diminishes as each step is taken downward and into the soul.

In her book entitled, *Suffering* the late German theologian Dorothy Soelle, suggests there are stages of suffering<sup>344</sup> in which the wounded is involved. Using the grid to illustrate how the wounded, identified as the slave in context of religion, transcends the state of *mute suffering*<sup>345</sup> to one of expression and liberation. Relatedly she informs the process of suffering that impinges the human soul momentarily mutes the wounded causing in descriptor reflections, bouts of anguish and fear. But I would argue muted silence is also caused by encounter God in midst of one's soul and suffering. The encroachment of God in the registry of human awareness negates even the human five senses' ability to negotiate understanding of the world in which the live. Rudolf Otto employed terms like God is *mysterium tremendum*, the *overplus*, in which to describe human understanding of *something within*.<sup>346</sup> Knowing of a greater than

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<sup>344</sup>Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 73.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid 68.

<sup>346</sup> Terms used by Rudolf Otto, in his book, *Idea of the Holy*, to describe human encounter of God. 5,11,13.

human presence enables the listener in this case the /pastoral care practitioner to courageous *step into suffering* of the other.

To step *beyond* suffering requires knowledge not only of an experiential nature but that of the kind that renders the holy sacred. Further, to be able to step alongside one suffering implies the listener/pastoral counseling practitioner may with intentionality formed a relationship with the overplus. Therein, becoming a witness to testimonies of trauma in such a way that the communal discursive between the traumatized and the Holy Spirit informs meaning in the physical, psych and spirit worldviews. I believe justice is revealed by sacred acts such as this that provide inclusive gifts of salvific power and redemption to all.

It is towards this venue that I argue exploring the underpinnings of what it means to be identified as human exacts revelations that heretofore may either have been glimpsed or remained blurred behind a glass. Granted when confronted with the feasibility of designing duopolistic factors, the immateriality of the Holy Spirit can be perceived as a hindrance but I suggest there are ways to quantify the quality of God in the world. Beginning with the determinate factor of data, and what kind of methodology is used to gather it. If the choice is to remain steadfast to traditional mechanistic measures, then perception of the Holy Spirit may remain veiled behind a glass reason and empiricism. Contrarily as pastoral care and counseling research paradigm shifts in the direction towards

gathering data by anecdotal vignettes, then viable alternatives to ways of seeing and perceiving may be begin to emerge in effectively future research. Maggie Schauer acknowledges ‘trauma wounds the soul,’ but it is not clear how her proposed biogenetic approaches to healing addresses wounding of the soul. What her studies do show is strict continued adherence to research that continues down a narrow venue seemingly in a way that is dismissive to others whose life experiences reflects diverse lived experiences of the Holy Spirit.

Similarly, experts in the field, Dr. Karen Scheib, Wayne Oates, and Ron Hunter earlier explored the plausibility of wounding and treatment as phenomenology that encompassed a much broader periscope than solely situated within clinically based concepts. In this regard, I merely offer my voice to their already exemplary critique with increased urgency given the critical times in America’s inner cities and the world universal. In particular, the aim to derive an increased level of social awareness in a society such as America requires alternate ways to filter difference using constructs of adequacy and appropriateness that reflect population and communities in which they inhabit. Signaling parameters of difference that include sacred religious practices such as the concretization of God/Holy Spirit in the muck and mire of life experienced on the margins and center of power and privilege is a much needed action worthy of recognition in research protocols for healing and wholeness. A holistic approach is what

is called for today to address the plethora of issues confronting individuals, in particular women in communities traumatized by violence. Partnering inclusive practices require practitioners whose spectrum of service have altered and thus are not limited by the mechanistic fifty-minute fee-based model.

Lastly, in Chapter Five, I raised the question, whose voice is ultimately heard and why? I believe critical attention to the question provides alternates views to surface and be heard and meaningful dialogue to emerge. Renewed discursive such as the one I am suggesting here represents alternative approaches to how stories are read and listened to by those whose beneficence relies largely in empirical based analysis. Yet, by raising the purview of vignettes and narratives to levels of legitimacy with traditional data sets offers in this incidence, two plausible outcomes. One, it may reduce the probability that implicit meanings of superfluous and hegemonic worldviews are entrapments of the powerful and two, alternatively actions that include the Holy Spirit may lead to enhanced dialogue about how God is known and experienced in the confluence of life practices and religion.

## Wrestling with an Angel

Based upon these claims, I raise three particular points of reflection. One, the extent to which the reflexive and curative category of the Holy Spirit is actively assigned by pastoral care and counseling practitioners in their treatment of persons suffering from trauma. Two, in order to do justice in characterizing the value of meaningfulness,<sup>347</sup> I contend that authentic healing practices by pastoral care and counseling practitioners must actively include the inflection of the Holy Spirit in both paradigmatic and intuit methods of treatment. Three, the extent to which the single focused psychologizing of trauma advanced by pastoral care and counseling is descriptive of American Industrialized era, a conscious turn toward methods of care that conflate interdisciplinary theories mingled in authentic practice if the field is to remain relevant.

Towards this end I have proposed a different model, one in which critical attention is paid to the emergence of the Holy Spirit in conditions of trauma and suffering. I believe that as the Holy Spirit is experienced, it is revealed in ways that mirror soul- healing. Towards this end, I employ anthropological analog of stories to suggest the extent to which the Holy Spirit is made real concretized in the lived situation of subjective or generational –based narratives. Whether shared in linguistic style of

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<sup>347</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 70.

ethnographic experiences or hermeneutic accounts of God in the midst within the Christian church, each hint of a range of historical sets of stories that have emerged in the conscious minds of the healed. Herein God's Presence is acknowledged even though traumatic injury may have initially appeared irreparable. The study is intended to illumine the Holy Spirit in stories signified within anecdotal vignettes/narratives that attribute to the sacral covenant that nothing can separate God from the created human. Howbeit, I argue in the critical case of perennial revelation constituted by testimonies of the conscious reality of the Holy Spirit's power to connect breached spirits, illustrations of prevenient grace are made known again and again in history.

Central to my argument raised earlier is the notion that God is a Source of Healing unparalleled to human invention or discovery. This assumption is not based solely upon my own beliefs or values however qualitatively represented in the thesis stated at the beginning of this work, evidence of God engaged in the living conditions across human history is itself a story and one that surfaces repeatedly throughout time. Because there are clear consistent accounts of the sacred in carnal narratives stories about the Holy Spirit is the vortex of research presented herein. As trauma caused by violence create conditions that are experienced in a range of emotions, from doubt and alienation to shame, mute silence, each encroachment becomes an act of injustice requiring careful attention at the

causes but also the residual effects of a breach such as trauma upon the soul. Without this degree of critical introspection I am suggesting here, trauma or its residual emotions harbor wounds threaten to mitigate human awareness of perennial relationship between God's Love and humanity. Further, I assert that given the peculiarity of African American people's history in the western hemisphere, a unique perspective is made available, one in which suffering and loss extends far into the human soul, causing wounding that only God can reach and heal. Shouldn't the African American experience of trauma be listened to not from the spurious lens of victim but a perspective of wise endurance? If this is not to be so considered, then why not?

I advance the claim that the African American experience reveals the presence of the Holy Spirit in the joys and the trauma of exacting life in modern American society. But a close reading of their life scripts reveals a syncretic rendering of a complicated unspeakable knowledge and wisdom garnered only by the encounter of the Holy Spirit. In attempting to make meaning of their slave experience, the African American collective experience has survived. Similar to John Swinton's method involving complexifying situations.<sup>348</sup>

I argue framing an orthopraxis of trauma requires adherence to the unseen, groundless, power of God. This method ultimately privileges first

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<sup>348</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 13.



and foremost one's relationship with God as the primary image by which a soul can restore their sense of being in an effort to live. As Swinton's method projects a unique approach to the construct of interpretation that summarizes the experience of connecting with the Holy Spirit, so too, is the method I wish to advance. That connection may result in a series of reflections that promote understanding by plumbing the depths of despair in order to become engrafted by the Holy Spirit. The experiential method proposed here begins the process of extracting truth out of suffering and pain.

When the perpetrators of moral injury are in fact kin of the wounded individual, complexities emerge of varied and obscure places. Hence, I do not fully know nor believe that the residual effects of the pain contained in the authored voices of AJ and MK were sufficiently addressed. However, from a therapeutic standpoint, I tried to invite their voices into the pressed wounds of the holy. I found in taking this approach, their trauma became a composite of mingled stories; a liminal space with God embracing vulnerability of the story and the storytellers.

Because the study endeavors to weave an image of God in an open and vulnerable place, I concede that there may a professional "pushback." To this viewpoint, I argue normative theories and practices and trauma treatment and its consummate acquaint, suffering would begin to incorporate new ways of being and thinking that enable people to survive

even paradigmatic images of violence and its effects upon the wounded. In this way, I advance the claim that pastoral care and counseling ought to begin to critically listen in the myriad narratives and stories of anecdotal vignettes accounts that point to the appearance of God-the Holy Spirit in conditions involving wounded souls. To do this, the practice standards would intuit changes in not only the way pastoral practitioners hear words, however shaped or ill-shaped they may be, as rubrics still striving to make meaning of their pain, but more extensively how language is used in the formative stages of trauma recovery.

Theodor Reik, in his late 1940's classic, entitled *Listening with the Third Ear*,<sup>349</sup> cautioned against a normative kind of therapeutic listening formulating itself into practices that unconsciously cajole rather than intuitively hear the client voice just at the appropriate words from the soul are beginning to emerge. Reik urges this kind of introspective reflection, “point of departure”<sup>350</sup> are more useful than dialogue that include words because it allows thoughts to resurface after having previously been missed by the testifier. The language that frame the words to depict what is emerging into one's consciousness becomes a story conveying more than neatly crafted rational thinking, rather it is language that begins to

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<sup>349</sup> Dr. Theodore Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear*, page 208.

<sup>350</sup> Dr. Theodore Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear*, 208.

script the experience through the lens of one's own reality.<sup>351</sup> I concur with Reik's assumption that the art of listening in such a manner ascribes a kind of agency to the soul thereby inspiring authentic sets of revelation that adequately reveals pain and suffering, even of the kind filtered in time and space. However, the boundary needed to be breached is the seemingly retraction of the profession into the consumerism capitalistic approach of "time is money" thereby contradicting the essential value of time is assessing the degree of soul wounds and the appropriateness of the spirit to.

Recognizing the therapeutic deficiency in providing holistic care within a pluralistic modern American culture constitutes increased sufficiency of practice that goes beyond assessment, diagnosis and treatment schemata. Consequently serious dialogue begins with acknowledge that regimented models of therapeutic care marginalized not only individuals brought against their wishes into slavery but also those who consumed the myth that they were "masters of the universe" precipitously believing it was due to their own grasp of rugged individualism. Beyond the rhetoric, fuller discussion of how God engages the human experience equitably and justly is necessary.

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<sup>351</sup> Stephen Crites, *The Narrative quality of Experience IN Why Narratives?*, Stanley Hauerwas and L.Gregory Jones,88.

And, finally, perhaps, a pattern glimpsed from the holy may begin to emerge: first in the soul followed by the rational mind that trauma (however described as individual or systemic-) causes harm which must not be ignored or rewritten as psychic dysfunction. A further complication is brokenness and soul-wounding. Introduced in the dialogue are deeper questions about the presence of God in trauma and violence, and how the strain of it affects all humanity.

## Findings/Conclusion

*“WHAT AILS YOU?”*

“The human species is a shared gift of *God-surrounded by the heavenly company of Witnesses-bequeathed in materiality for just a Moment.*” Bjs

I begin the chapter by introducing a question that my late mother, a shamanist, often asked those, who having heard of her spiritual gifts, would come to seek her help. After hearing her question, “*what ails you,*” their initial response was tears. Then, after patiently waiting and no verbal answer apparent, she’d ask again, her voice not reaching above a whisper, “What ails you?”

Recounting the presentation of my argument thus far, the first chapter involved storytelling as a lived experience. The second chapter briefly sketched the movement of the Holy Spirit in Church and society. In third chapter, I draw connections between trauma and language, the later attempting to it meditate its way between the disruption of trauma and violence. In the fourth, evidenced in by slave narrative, I argue trauma wounds extend beyond the mind or even physically, the body. In chapter five, I show how the narratives became linings for stories in contemporary life. In chapter seven, I use the contracts of adequacy and appropriateness

to illustrate areas where theologians, trauma theorists and psychologists may have missed the mark in attending to complicated and embedded stories of trauma by African American females. Lastly, in Chapter eight, I critique two specific professions: pastoral care and 1<sup>st</sup> and second womanist theology for their perceived reluctance to address a crucial segment of their respective vocational call. This involves the Holy Spirit as a significant import in the treatment of trauma and violence in today American society.

### **Vulnerability -The Moral Ethic of the Holy Spirit and trauma...Wrestling with an Angel**

Inviting the Holy Spirit into traumatized reflections actively engages sacred encounters within the common human experience that often exceeds self- rationalized ideas and emotions. Towards this end, I use the work of Christopher Lasch to show how , critical meaning is uncovered when attention is given to those unspoken words These unspoken words whose meaning is inferred in the story. This degree of close recitation requires abandoning self and its narcissistic covering for a clearer view of the true being lying just beneath the physical veneer /body. “That this inordinate attention to the actualization of the self has created a ‘culture of narcissism,’ shapes its members in such a way (if indeed the modern self can be thought of as a ‘member’ of anything) to be fundamentally

absorbed with themselves that they are walled off from each other.”<sup>352</sup> In this regard, in our narcissistic contemporary times it seems the research continues to advance theories that situate traumatic wounds within the physical and emotional properties. This predicament is evidenced by increased publications citing the importance of mind-body therapies in trauma. All the while the third and critical essence – the soul is ignored.

### **Smith-New Hermeneutic & Trauma Theory**

A core paradigm of the study is the immanence of the Holy Spirit, particularly evident in human situations of suffering and pain: healing of the kind wherein God is experienced in the sacred space of woundedness and recovery. Vulnerability acts as a sacred promise between the Known and Unknown.

In this regard, vulnerability constitutes more ethical moral acuity in order to frame narrative and storied accounts into an inductive interpretation congruent with the Holy Spirit embedded in trauma. With these assertions, I frame my new hermeneutic.

1. The Spirit of God is embedded in trauma narrative and lament. Narrative is a form of inductive interpretation.
2. The Holy Spirit is the Essence of Sustained Soul-healing and Recovery.
3. Vulnerability is both a human and sacred condition.

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<sup>352</sup> Joel Shulman and Keith G. Meador, *Heal Thyself*, page 78.

4. Trauma is a tear to the human soul wherein a breach occurs within the authentic self.

5. Reflexive Healing is embodied redemptive Love responding to the voice of the wounded.

6. Generational narratives testify to the faithful eco- covenant between God and all creation.

Oneness of Spirit in all creation provides the seeker and practitioner the opportunity to explore to the fullest extent what it may mean to confront the pain and suffering and move beyond it. Necessarily so, the researcher is curious as to the consequence of this approach upon current medical practice as it strives to address the complexity of issues layered within symptoms of the body and mind.

The aim of the study is to broaden trauma care to include the whole person, spirit, mind and body. Implicit within the study's core intent is a proposition to carefully build a case for a kind of healing and recovery experienced by the spirit in relation to the Creator's Spirit. This involves clear and concise diagnosis, assessment and treatment protocol for specifically for the soul/spirit in addition to the mind and body. Moreover, my study organized around broad narrative was used to bring broad attention to life experiences and sufferings.

Essentially, both narratives and stories provided direction to what it may mean to live through trauma and violence as experienced by African American female. Thus, her voice is the sound heard in the reading of the words in my study that resound in passion and hope even in the sterile



capturing of a written text. Promoting a kind of the dialogue between patient and physician, pastoral care practitioner and care seeker that begins with an open-ended question; *what ails you?* can engender a response that is beyond the cognitive understanding of traumatic wounds. My approach offers consideration of a new approach in which the Holy Spirit is consciously a part of the therapeutic dyad. Simply put, this kind of approach may create heretofore-unconsidered expectations by both practitioner and care seeker to pursue curative healing on a broader scale.

Thus, interpreting emotions and feelings through a spiritual lens can prompts questions and response at a deeper level. As the practitioner, what to do with questions about “where was God” and “what kind of relationship might God have with persons confronting trauma?” I believe that by inviting the Spirit into the conversation, persons can begin to search for answers within themselves, connecting in the Spirit. With this connection occurs practitioners and care seekers can establish a modicum of mutuality symbiotic of a deeper connection with the Spirit.

In a sense, the pastoral care practitioner serves the relationship between seeker and Spirit by modeling what the process may include as the Spirit then steps in. Therefore the agency of compassion and empathy experienced between practitioner and care seeker in effect stands in the gap as the Spirit begins to in effect transform and heal souls. Herein, a person, irrespective of situation or circumstances, can experience God

I propose a revisionist hermeneutical approach in which God is experienced not solely through cognitive reasoning or emotional catharsis but also by agency of the human soul and spirit. This kind of encounter with the Holy Spirit presents an organic connection made more vulnerable by the openness and penetrability of God in the human wound. Dorothee Soelle suggests that the art of looking into the core of one's story or narrative, "is to move beyond which language cannot proceed few steps"<sup>353</sup> requires the willingness to risk the concrete evidence of ideas for one whose meaning is just beyond the veneer of human sight. She even argues that in the pain of agonizing death comes the gift of life---- and death on a circuitous path connected by the Spirit, is eternal in time and space. For Soelle the core of her narrative held no end or beginning.

By the act of redemption and grace, the presence of the Holy Spirit is then positioned as a source of redemptive love and mercy, a reminder to creation of God's presence in the process of engaging messiness of the human experience. I argue that it ought to be the vocational responsibility of the therapist to excavate the pain in order to witness and then address the scab on the soul.... in other words, 'to trouble the waters' in order to expose the agony and scarring beneath the surface. God does not turn *away* but rather acts *into* and toward human suffering. Consequently God is in the midst of a traumatic experience identified as unspeakable and

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<sup>353</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, 69.

horrific but not without the plausibility of restorative justice<sup>354</sup>. This kind of change can occur only when the injured soul and the practitioner are willing to risk the mystery and vulnerability<sup>355</sup> of the unknown in confronting an inner pain they both therapeutically acknowledge.<sup>356</sup>

In uncovering the story about trauma and its perennial nature in terms of its ensuing effects of pain and suffering, it is crucial that the investigation include ways to examine not just explicit renderings but also implicit messages. Consequently metaphoric statements (some of which at first glance may not reference any of the basic statistical data about the trauma incident) first recover embedded meanings. However, upon reflection, more about the experience may be revealed in what I term here as the underbelly. The underbelly is that part of the subjects' stories that constitute significant aspects of the story, and its resultant qualifier, anxiety. Specifically, I was curious about how nature of the Spirit experienced in reflections and embedded segments of the subjects' stories, even the underbelly. Moreover, how was the Holy Spirit described in the

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<sup>354</sup>Ptacek uses the term 'restorative justice' to convey the historical sentiment of the U.S. civil rights movement as well as global initiatives for justice. "The focus of – restorative justice' is on repairing the harm caused by crime and a bringing about reconciliation between victims and offenders through face-to-face interaction." James Ptacek, *Restorative Justice and Violence Against Women*, 7.

<sup>355</sup>The Term 'vulnerability is...the characteristic that positions us in relation to each other as human beings and also suggest a relationship of responsibility between the state and its institutions and the individual." Martha Fineman, CA Vulnerability and the Human Condition Initiative & Feminism and the Legal Theory Project Work, Emory Law.

context of the story and its hidden parts? If the Spirit revealed itself at the point of deepest hurt and suffering, how did they recognize its Presence? Finally, did metaphors used by them in sharing their stories assist to relieve their anxieties in the wake of trauma?

For example, in the case study of MK, when did she share stories that revealed the Holy Spirit she, why would she refer to her suffering as “that place I couldn’t see without help.”? I probed deeper, inviting her to explain what “that place” meant to her and then unpack what she meant by “help.” In regular sequence, she would explain the place was the trauma, often explaining the incident in increasingly greater detail with the “help” consistently interpreted by her as God-The Holy Spirit.

## Summary/Conclusion

In this study, I explored the heuristic nature of the Holy Spirit<sup>357</sup> using descriptive narrative methodology of pastoral care and counseling practitioners, whose work involves persons seeking to heal from life situations involving trauma. First, the study explores the subjective experience of the Holy Spirit as realized in the lives of women who have endured “soul-wounding” trauma.<sup>358</sup> Trauma defines its victims by the sudden onset of unanticipated and unwarranted acts of force. The violence inherent in trauma *ignores* God’s power in the human experience, attempting by its very nature to circumvent it. Trauma disrupts humanity’s relationship to God.

Second, I examined the confluence between the human voice and Divinity. What is it in the utterance of human expression that triggers the encounter of the divine in the context of human agony? Thus, the study is designed to examine ways in which the Holy Spirit encounters the chaotic and disruptive places in people’s lives, particularly in circumstances involving trauma, their voice to disrupt the kind of silence that often results from violation. Heuristically, descriptive language used by the research participants is experiential in the sense that it actively engages their stories in a struggle to release their pain and suffering. Regardless of

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<sup>357</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing The Holy Spirit*, page 25.

<sup>358</sup> Maggie Schauer, Frank Neuner, Thomas Elbert, *Narrative Exposure Therapy*, page 5.

social and economic identifiers, I believe trauma wounds souls to such an extent that their stories and narratives become a form of resistance in order to recover.

Third, in the heuristic reporting of what it may mean to experience soul care by the Holy Spirit, the stories may reflect a transformative image of God mirrored in the sacred act of recovery and healing of the wounded. These stories constitute a soliloquy of testimony. In particular, stories that reflect ways in which the women experienced trauma and their struggle to confront and move past it. Ancestral values and mores embedded in familial and community narratives become living text that line the women's stories. These texts comprise the core of their legacy. Towards this end language provided meaning to the words and phrases used by slaves, words that emerged out of suffering, began in the guttural sounds of moans, wails; later spirituals. All of which served to communicate sufficiently the pain of trauma, the survivors of slaves were then able to internal for use during the meditative moments of their own trauma. Thus, it is through these critical means of human expression that wounded souls in concert with the sacred wholeness of God begin the process of recovery.

A Review of the underlying assumptions of the study are as follows:

- Its Creator-God framed all things in heaven and earth.
- The Trinity of One suggests parallelism between God and humanity's existence, soul. Mind and body.
- The Promise of God to be with creation counters trauma and violence.
- The Oral Tradition provokes meaning out of a disruptive experience: trauma, enabling stories and narratives to function as enablers of re-claimed power.
- The human voice is a testimony to the power of God to redeem.
- When testimonies are shared, the listener's role is transfigured by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the story.
- Closer readings of the trauma narrative suggests that <sup>3</sup> there is the presence of collective remembering woven within ancestral wisdom that becomes part of the traumatized narrative and recovery.

I argued for a holistic model to be used by pastoral care practitioners in order to address deeper areas of symptomology including the human soul and spirit. Further my model inquires about how the authentic health and recovery is derived in the instance of wounded souls and fractured spirits. Thus the study is designed to examine when, how and to what extent the Spirit reveals itself in the human condition of trauma. Moreover, the power of the Spirit is made evident in the mutual relationship between the injured and the restorer. A key assertion of the research is the ontological nature of the Holy Spirit and sacred Oneness in all creation.

I have taken a normative approach to care here because I believe it reflects a more multifaceted society in which race, class, age, gender comprise the

social condition of American society today. Further, a new and emerging analysis of care -specifically trauma care must be, based not solely upon individual needs but rather a multiplicity of social identities to best advantage sustained healing and recovery. The new rubric of care must not continue within a narrow reductionist approach but rather take the pluralistic position that the well-oiled dominant meta-narrative must begin to recede in exchange for a more darkened hue- national and global discourse.

In the deep search for recovery and healing, the presence of God is made known. In the study, I endeavored to broaden the scope of experiential research to include the intuitive forms of knowing when attempting to catch glimpses of the holy acts of God's Love embodied in human trauma. I wish to enhance the value of suffering in a testimonial construct equal to empiricist data gathering. Whether it is a story or narrative, such testimony holds the same or equitable value to the research survey sheet. Both ought to be used in similar fashion without prejudice regarding status of either sufficiency or credibility. When intuitive or objective gathering is jointly used, information regarding movement of the holy may be revealed in the silence created by trauma. Hence these moments of encountering the power of God to recover may not have been lost.

An African American wisdom teaching emerging out of suffering caused by slavery: "Running water over an iron pipe, in time will bear a hole in it."<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>359</sup>Sayings of my Grandmother, Suzanne Anne Roberts Simmons, Stockton, Georgia.



At first appearance, the physicality of water, while clear and transparent seems unequal in power to the concrete mass of pipe. But with closer observation, one may notice subtle changes, first a physical change of the pipe itself, followed by its gradual change in color. What are not so apparent to the naked eye are the chemical changes occurring as a result of the constant and persistent force of one entity upon another. The science of physics contends that it is the force of motion combined with its weight that causes inertia to change the construct of the mass to which it is reportedly connected. Needless to say, at first glance the water may be considered unequal and less in weight to a concrete mass. However, the water in fact alters the physical condition by its constant, unrelenting movement.

I raise this analogy for several reasons, all of which underscore both my own values which undergird the study but also point to the critical lynchpin within it. First, the African American story of trauma told by women within a discipline of pastoral counseling conjures the image of water and the iron pipe. Static in authenticity that belies genuine diversity of theory and practice, any consideration to include the other's perspective of self and Source of redemptive recovery has been disregarded if not excluded from normative treatment protocol.

Second, the flagrancy of omission of the African American women's narrative about trauma comports with dominant themes of self-development and object relations' theorists, whose practices have not reflected authentic

power sharing in the leadership and development of treatment programs.

Third, the strength of an African American woman apparent in her courageous walk towards her past including her perpetrators of violence and trauma, some of whom are systemic while others are the result of human maliciousness, is not adequately reflected nor is it understood in current pastoral counseling pedagogy. Four, why the human spirit and the efficacy of the soul is sidelined in a field structured programmatically in the School of Theology? This seems uncharacteristically at odds with the meaning of theology and in particular, the mission of the Theology School from which this researcher's degree will be conferred.

Thus, I contend that by posing the question "What ails you" both individuals and families, traumatized by violence, can embrace a wider more inclusive response, a response in which their whole being is represented. Here they will encounter God in the midst of their pain and suffering. With intentionality to engage the Holy Spirit in an inner dialogue provokes the human spirit to reconnect with God in their journey to reclaim their selves, fractured by trauma. I believe the benefit of advocating this kind of approach by pastoral counseling as a service that caregivers can use to reach an inclusive and pluralistic model of care.

Moreover, by shifting to a reflective narrative protocol, this action does not diminish the efficacy of paradigmatic assessment and treatment. What it does is elevate the significance of the Holy Spirit as an intuitive factor in an

ongoing treatment practice that alleviates rather than diminish the importance of attending to trauma and violence within modern American society.

Furthermore, the approach promotes the belief that the communal nature of Spirit enhances the probability of authentic connectedness, thereby increasing opportunities for recovery. Hence there is a residual effect to this kind of in-depth Spirit work, which is to say not only is the wounded soul healed, in many instances so also is the practitioner.

The inner journey begins with a story.

**In the Silence created by terror and trauma stands the stillness of  
Me...Restoring, healing and making whole again.**

*Given by the Spirit.* February 7, 2015, 7:39 am.

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**Appendix A**  
**Consent Form**

**I-----Agree to participate in the research conducted by Brenda J. Smith for the explicit purpose of dissertation requirements. Smith is the designated principle researcher-Emory University Th.D. Candidate. I understand that all data shared will be regarded as confidential meaning no identifying information will be shared outside of its intended use. At the completion of the research project, I will be allowed to review the document and consult with Ms. Smith regarding any questions I might have regarding qualified assessments made herein.**

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### *Definition of Terms*

I use the term **Religion** to refer to the socialized practice of faith made distinctive by variant dogmas and doctrines.

**Science** is described as the process of empiricist rationalism in which truth claims are derived by deductive interpretation and observation.

**Self** is defined as the authentic nature of the human experience.

**Soul** is defined as the holy container wherein the Holy Spirit dwells.

**Spirituality** takes on an organic meaning illuminative of a self - transcendent connection. At the same time, I use the term spirituality sparingly in the study so as to avoid synonymous representation of it with the Holy Spirit.

**Story** is used to convey the meaning-of a lived accounts-shared between two or more persons. Herein, the story personifies the women's reading of trauma that has occurred to them and immediate family members.

Additionally, stories are part of ancestral narratives handed down through generations. Individual member accounts may be considered part of the family narrative inclusive of secrets, one whose story consist of filing memory spaces left by family members both current and deceased.

**Suffering** results from sustained pain caused by intentional and purposive acts ascribed as human violence. Phases of suffering developed by Dorothee Soelle will be discussed in Chapter Three.

When used in the study, **Theology** is meant to convey an area of religious discipline reflecting a level of conscious belief. Theology's means to commensurate with faith tradition and its accompanying doctrinal paradigm. Schilling describes theology as "conceptualizing, interpreting, explaining, theoretical part or aspect of religion".<sup>360</sup> However, in contrast to Schilling's understanding of the term, theology, I wish to add that the term theology conveys the notion of actual practice of religion rather than

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<sup>360</sup> Harold Kistler Schilling, *Science and Religion*, 68.

its seemingly theoretical effect upon culture, class, race and social condition. Theology is framed within the believer's choice to live into their faith in spite of life's hurts, disappointments and struggles and to do so with love lasting wisdom and conviction of the presence and immutable power of God. Thus, I argue theology reflects an ethical praxis that emerges out of years of disciplined prayer, mediation and suffering in order to **see** into the manifested Holy Spirit.

**Trauma** is defined as chaotic dissonance caused by human malice or natural disaster. In the study, the term "trauma" is ascribing to be an intentional human act resulting in harm that ultimately violates the dignity of another.

**Trinity** - homoousios<sup>361</sup> -Oneness (*ousia*) of God is the unifying essence of three substances identified as Jesus, Father and the Holy Spirit.

**Vulnerability**—a mediating force mired in tenable human experience of suffering and pain and the perceived praxis of healing revealed in an embedded understanding of an all-knowing God. A common trajectory between the sacred and the profane is the majestic power to restore brokenness into the sanctity of the reconciled whole. I believe the orchestrated view from the bottom has wrought an authentic understanding of God as the sacred embodied holiness in the human experience of modern day

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<sup>361</sup> William C. Placher, *Readings in the History of Christian Theology*, Volume 1, 48.

## Appendix C

Reflections of two oral histories: African American women

**#1 MK**

**#2 AJ**

*Research Process: minimum of 8 sessions for each participant*

1. Identify participants
2. Establish research protocol: Case Histories
3. Meet with each participant—Give explanation of research including purpose and intended outcome.
4. Obtained signed agreement from each participant
5. 1<sup>st</sup> session— Establish basis for genuine and ethical relationship.
6. 2<sup>nd</sup> session—Gather autobiographical data-i.e. Family history, birth community, religious praxis, etc.
7. 3<sup>rd</sup> session- Open session beginning with questions, concerns, misgivings about project. Affirm time commitment of the study.
8. 4<sup>th</sup> session –After reviewing family data shared earlier begin the process of gently probing into obvious gaps in the participant’s storyline and/or cogent.
9. Stories held within the genre of family secrets and “accepted” lies. Look for relationships, which tend to blur bloodlines.
10. 5<sup>th</sup> session—Begin the process of narrative story telling allowing the participant to free associate hot recollections with

cold family facts. Note changes in participant's breathing, body demeanor, attitude toward researcher, etc.

11. 6<sup>th</sup> session—Repeat the last session –probing for deeper memories held within the participant unconscious psyche.

12. 7<sup>th</sup> session— Pause in research for participants' comments, reflections, inquiries about next steps.

13. 8<sup>th</sup> session—Use responses from questionnaire to evoke unconscious reactions. Focus on what seems spirit- led.

## Appendix D

- Beginning to dialogue with the question, what ails you? The listener engages the affected person from a place of pain and suffering.
  - Focusing on repressed feelings and emotions caused by the trauma enables the Spirit to function as a sword, lancing the spiritual wound.
  - Using the signifier of the Spirit to release pus caused by the infected wound, uncovers repressed and conflicted feelings, thoughts and emotions. This process may be interpreted as naming the pain and suffering.
  - After which the listener employs the agency of silence as a means to allow the fever caused by the repressed wound to breathe. The step herein is identified as “sitting Shivah.”<sup>362</sup>
- 
- The listener waits patiently for tears, water to flush the wound of fractured souls.
  - This experience may range from silent tears to a rush of anger and range at what may have occurred to them physically, emotional and in their spirit.

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<sup>362</sup> Audrey Gordon, “The Jewish View of Death: Guidelines for Mourning,” IN Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*, 50. “The *shivah* brings the mourners together to retell and relive their experiences of the death and to share once again the memories from the past when the family circle was whole. The condolence call provides the mourner with the opportunity to tell his story many times to many different people, each of whom are enjoined to allow the mourner to speak first so that his interests are allowed to be the focus of the conversation. The visitor is not allowed to say platitudes, but only to listen and by listening to enable the griever to vent his feelings. If a mourner cannot find the words with which to express his grief, then the comforter comforts him with his silence and with his shared physical presence. At a time when there are no words, the comforter should feel no need to fill the air with chatter or to divert the mourner. Silence has its own kind of eloquence and sometimes it can be more precious than words.”

- The listener shares what she has heard from the shared stories nuancing in their interpretation the underbelly or trajectory of parts of the story heretofore unexposed.
- Based upon response, the listener may begin to initiate dialogue around what it may mean to recognize the Spirit in the healing and curative aspect of their recovery.
- The listener will then parse the speaker's own sense of timeliness concerning their recovery by the Spirit.
- In their process of re-alignment—Holy Spirit with the human spirit—peace appears as a frame of orderliness. Fear is absolved or lessened to the extent that the affected no longer feels they are being “held hostage by the trauma.
- Traces of re-entry into the reality of daily life that can include remains of the trauma or life situation. I.e. persons who committed the trauma may remain in their earlier role but no longer have the power to afflict pain or perceived by the previous affected to possess the means to afflict pain upon them or introduce suffering into their lives.
- Focusing on repressed feelings and emotions caused by the trauma enables the Spirit to function as a sword, lancing the spiritual wound.
- Using the signifier of the Spirit to release pus caused by the infected wound, uncovers repressed and conflicted feelings, thoughts and emotions. This process may be interpreted as naming the pain and suffering.
- After which the listener employs the agency of silence as a means to allow the fever caused by the repressed wound to breathe. The step herein is identified as “sitting Shiva.”<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> “Mourning a loved one/Proper protocol during the period of Shiva” by Alyce Baker.

- The listener waits patiently for tears, water to flush the wound of fractured souls.
- This experience may range from silent tears to a rush of anger and range at what may have occurred to them physically, emotional and in their spirit.
- The listener shares what she has heard from the shared stories nuancing in their interpretation the underbelly or trajectory of parts of the story heretofore unexposed.
- Based upon response, the listener may begin to initiate dialogue around what it may mean to recognize the Spirit in the healing and curative aspect of their recovery.
- The listener will then parse the speaker's own sense of timeliness concerning their recovery by the Spirit.
- In their process of re-alignment—Holy Spirit with the human spirit—peace appears as a frame of orderliness. Fear is absolved or lessened to the extent that the affected no longer feels they are being “held hostage by the trauma.

Sitting Shiva derives from the ancient Mosaic tradition, which detailed requirements of the community in comforting the bereaved. It included

The following: Preparing a meal with bread signifying life and hardboiled eggs which represented attributes of strength and endurance

For the remainder of the family line, a candle is lit for the period of seven days represented by the flame as life and the wick as the Both aspects

Characterized as both were connected in the sphere of life. Fourth, draped mirrors served to remind mourners and community that the focus

Of the bereaved was particularly upon the eternal rather than temporal matter or flesh. Sixth the bereavement process called “sitting Shiva” occurred for seven days after the death of a loved one, allowing a designated time for the bereaved *to sit* in the suffering and grief caused by the

Trauma is a sudden or unanticipated event resulting in loss. Finally, “sitting Shiva” begins and ends with utterance. Voices of the sufferer and the suffering of the one

Gone, mingle for a moment in expression and recollection of shared memories and distinguished past.



- Traces of re-entry into the reality of daily life that can include remains of the trauma or life situation. I.e. persons who committed the trauma may remain in their earlier role but no longer have the power to afflict pain or perceived by the previous affected to possess the means to afflict pain upon them or introduce suffering into their lives.

*Site: Starbucks: Marietta Street, SW. Atlanta*

Date: 8/23/12 –Time: 11:28am

Research Notes Taken during pre-test:

- A. Participant observations:
- B. Themes and patterns from journals:

Abandonment—mistrust—fear—

Repeated comments of MK concerning sibling: “He is a loser”—“problem child.

## Appendix E

**The Research Questionnaire** is designed to investigate how and to what extent each of these women's experience reflect encounter of the Holy Spirit. Specifically how might they upon interpret the encounter? Which terms or words used by them seem to embody ancestral coding of trauma and the Holy Spirit? The researcher will engage in participatory analysis, probing for ways in which their responses reflect particularities of their own circumstances, generational religious experiences, family history and dynamic. Secondly the researcher will examine ways in which their responses are qualitatively dissimilar, even to the standpoint of language, words, or emotive cadence reflects their own identifying attitudes and behavior. Could they cite differences in themselves and the way in which they perceived their external world after the encounter by the Holy Spirit? Contextual emotions and circumstances such as isolation, alienation, shame and guilt related to the trauma will be considered in relation to their reaction to their families and community. Lastly, the researcher will look for traces of generational collective remembering described in Nancy Boyd-Franklin section on "secrets".

## Appendix F:

### What Ails You?

#### *Research Questions*

1. In what ways is the women's description of the Holy Spirit similar and different?
2. Could they explain the "encounter" with the Holy Spirit in specific terms?
3. With regards to language, how might language assist or prove inadequate in describing the movement of the Holy Spirit?
4. Is the words used in their stories and narrative reflective of ethnographic anthropological meanings. If so, how?
5. To what extent do they use narrative describing the Holy Spirit to interpret their inner/authentic self in relation to trauma?
6. How might their trauma narrative be employed as participatory agency with the Holy Spirit to heal and restore their inner self?
7. In reflection, how did each of the women understand the moral ethic of Vulnerability as part of their healing testimony? To what extent is this aspect of their narrative a crucial factor in the process of recovery and reconnection with the outer world?
8. Regarding contact with others, when in their testimony do descriptions of interactions with others begin or resume?
9. Did some of contacts represent relationships of before the trauma or after?
10. For each category, how are they described? Regarding re-entry into social environment after trauma, how might the women's personal history interpret feelings and emotions involving constructs such as isolation, alienation, shame and guilt?
11. How does their relationship with God enable them to experience soul healing and recovery?

12. To what extent might “having a little talk with God” during the trauma experience constitute generational collective remembering? <sup>364</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> **The Research Questionnaire** is designed to investigate how and to what extent each of these women experience the Holy Spirit. Specifically how might they upon reflexive action interpret the encounter? In other words, how would they describe the phenomena “encounter” as it pertains to the Holy Spirit. The researcher will engage in participatory analysis, probing for ways in which their responses reflect particularities of their own circumstances, generational religious experiences, family history and dynamic. Secondly the researcher will examine ways in which their responses are qualitatively dissimilar, even to the standpoint of language, words, or emotive cadence reflect their own identifying attitudes and behavior. Could they cite differences in themselves and the way they perceived their external world? Additionally, descriptions of interactions with others before and after the encounter are recorded particularly emphasizing interactions with the *holy*. Personal experience of isolation, alienation, shame and guilt related to the trauma will be explored in relation to their reaction of others involved either directly or through generational collective remembering. Descriptions of trust are a secondary factor in the process of recovery and reconnection with the outer world.

## Appendix G

### Reference Key/ Names Used in Dissertation

MK. (African American Female-Case Study A) --Christian

MAK—MK's Fraternal Twin --Christian

Maternal Familial Line --Religion- Islam

KL—MK's Mother

JH-MK's Maternal Step-Sister – age 24

RK-MK's Maternal Step–Sister-DECEASED /7M

AK-MK's Maternal Step-Sister-age 15

RMK-MK's Maternal Step-Sister-age 12

FK's MK's Maternal Grandfather

KK-MK's Maternal-Uncle

KK-MK's Maternal Uncle

MM-MK's Maternal Great-Grandmother-DECEASED

BB-MM's Boyfriend

JK-MK's Maternal Grandmother-DECEASED /39

PM-MK's Maternal Great-Aunt --Christian

RJ-MK's Maternal Great-Uncle (non-marital relationship w/ PM)

RJM, Jr. (Son of RJ & PM (MK's Second Cousin-M)

SM-Daughter of RJ and PM (MK's Second Cousin -F)

DM-MK's Maternal Great-Uncle-DECEASED

KM-MK's Maternal Great-Uncle

DM-MK's Maternal Great-Aunt --Christian

KM-MK's Maternal Great-Aunt-DECEASED

LAB-MK's Maternal Step-Great-Aunt-DECEASED

### **Religion- Christian**

WL- MK's Father

RL-MK's Paternal Grandfather

AML-MK's Paternal Grandmother

"PA"- MK's Paternal Great-Grandfather

LS-MK's Paternal Great Grandmother-DECEASED

MS-MK's Great-Uncle

MS-MK's Paternal Second-Cousin (Daughter of MS)

AS-MK's Paternal Second Cousin (2<sup>nd</sup> Eldest Daughter MS)

BS -MK's Paternal Second-Cousin (3<sup>rd</sup> Eldest Daughter of MS)



## Appendix H

### Summary : DSM IV Criteria for PTSD

**“Six criteria for PTSD”... (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association)**

**Criterion A1** = experiencing or witnessing a life threatening “traumatic event.”

**Criterion A2**= subjective feelings of helplessness, fear or horror during that event.

**Criterion B**= reliving or re-experiencing of the traumatic event—‘Intrusions.’

**Criterion C**= avoidance of reminders of the traumatic event- “Avoidance.”

**Criterion D**= being overly aroused, alert, nervous – “hyper-arousal.”

**Criterion E**= minimum of 4 weeks suffering from these consequences.

**Criterion F**= severe problems in social, occupational, or other every day functioning.”<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Maggie Scahuer et al., *Narrative Exposure Therapy*,8.

## List of Permissions

