

No More Gallery Sections: Exploring Spiritual Wellbeing for Descendants of Enslaved
Africans at Predominantly White Institutions of Higher Education

by

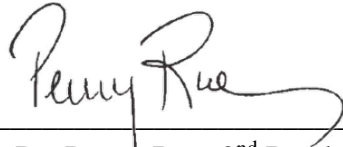
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Date: 4/13/2021

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Dr. Luke Powery, Supervisor



Dr. Penny Rue, 2nd Reader



Dr. Will Willimon, D.Min. Director

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry
in the Divinity School of Duke University

2021

ABSTRACT

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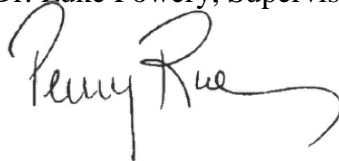
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This project explores spiritual wellbeing for descendants of enslaved Africans at historically and predominately white institutions of higher education, through the hermeneutical and phenomenological accounts of past and present Black curators of spiritual wellbeing. By focusing on the accounts of religious and spiritual affairs professionals, my research encompasses thirty years of studying the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of Black folks in higher education, in part by speaking with the oldest living Black religious professional to integrate higher education. But first, this project will look back to the historical establishment of higher education institutions being spaces that trained and equipped white clergymen with tools and practices for developing and maintaining healthy (white) souls while simultaneously omitting care and lacking concern for the souls of Black folks. This project explores the rise of "Well-Being" pedagogies in higher education while simultaneously juxtaposing them with desegregation and integration practices. By grounding the project in the historicity of higher education and the systemic exclusion of Black bodies from higher education, the curators' accounts and the stories of the constituents have roots more profound than the present. Accordingly, this thesis captures the practices for repairing one's humanity— a spiritual act— after repeated attacks to devalue one's presence and existence. The question that this thesis seeks to answer is if wellness is a desired locale for all students (faculty and staff), should administrations consider the importance of having a curator for spiritual wellbeing, especially one particularly for Black descendants of enslaved Africans (DEA) who labor under and resonate with the Black experience in America.

*For everyone in higher education whose work is to be seen,
but their voices unheard.*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my first and most enduring support system, my parents. My ever-unrepayable gratitude to her from whom I inherited my tenacity, my mother, Rose Rice. When I thought life was forcing me to sit out a semester and miss the opportunity to matriculate with my cohort, my mother, a cavalry of one, rode eight hours into town, girded me, and swaddled 12lb two-week-old Joseph, and drove us to Durham. My father and bonus mother, Herman and Mary Rice, who valiantly battle and keep the upper hand on his cancer and who, as soon as their medical report allowed, drove the eight hours to come help-out with homeschooling the children. Your care has strengthened and sustained me.

To my husband, Mamadou Aliou, thank you for your endless support, enduring love, pillared prayers, and numerous sacrifices. You have been more than a supportive spouse and a present parent; you have been my partner.

To Ms. Lynn, my children's caregiver, none of this would have been possible without you. Thank you for the extended hours, the extra care, and your loving spirit. May the Lord repay you for your kindness.

To my professional family, Wake Forest University, I gently bow to you. Thank you to my colleagues in the Chaplain's office who moved and shifted their tasks to support this project. Thank you to my immediate supervisor, Dr. Tim Auman, whose support has been consistent. To Dr. Penny Rue, who served as my second reader, thank you for planting, cultivating, nourishing, and expanding this project. Thank you, Dean Jonathan Walton, whose advice was painful to consider but was corrective and correct. This project shifted after our conversation, and I am very thankful. My sincerest appreciation to

Dr. Melva Sampson, who saw me when I returned from maternity leave, and hugged me. That hug sustained me for months. And utmost thanks to Dr. Katherine Shaner, who walked with me, in words and deeds, from the beginning of this program to the end. I am the best version of my academic self because of you, wine, and Black Jesus.

Thank you to my Duke academic family. To my advisor, Dr. Luke Powery, thank you for your oversight, expertise, and, most of all, the integrity of your witness. Your pastoral ministry and mentorship have transformed my life. To Dr. Will Willimon, thank you for your leadership of the D. Min program and for the decades that you have given to spiritual wellbeing in higher education. To Rev. Dr. Michael Long and Ashley Lunn, thank you for your dedication to the D. Min program and our cohort.

And a very special thank you to the Louisville Institute for their generosity and support. Endless thanks to my church family, The Concord Baptist Church of Christ, in Brooklyn, NY. And most of all, thank you to all the participants in this study who made this project possible.

May the Lord smile upon each of you!

INTRODUCTION: IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

“Wherever the African is, there is his [*sic*] religion; he [*sic*] carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university...” – John Mbiti¹

In the Summer of 2019, the first national gathering of Black college and university chaplains and religious and spiritual affairs professionals convened in Atlanta, Georgia, at Emory University.² There were eighteen persons present. Only four of those eighteen persons were representatives from predominately White institutions (PWIs). I was one of the four. The other fourteen attendees represented historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Brainstorming together, we counted approximately twelve additional people at PWIs whose roles functioned similarly to ours and who were missing from this national gathering. With the most gracious inclusion of possible attendants, Black Chaplains and Religious and Spiritual Affairs (CARSA)³ professionals at predominantly White institutions of higher education total about 20 persons (< 3% of all CARSA).

¹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 3–4.

² This project follows the writing style of the Associated Press and capitalizes the B in Black when referencing Black people and does not capitalize the w in white when referencing white identifying persons or institutions. While there is not consensus on either side of the conversation, this project had to make a decision. For further reading on the matter: David Bauder, “AP Says It Will Capitalize Black but Not White,” *AP NEWS*, July 20, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/7e36c00c5af0436abc09e051261fff1f>.

³ When I began this project the two largest associations for Chaplains in Higher Education and Religious Affairs Workers were the National Association of College and University Chaplains (NACUC) and the Association for College and University Religious Affairs (ACURA), and they were working towards merging into one organization. The merger took place in August 2020, and the two organizations have formed the Association for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Life in Higher Education (ACSLHE; pronounced “axle”). ACSLHE is a multi-faith professional organization that supports spiritual and ethical life in higher education. During the merger issues with the nomenclature of “chaplain” was discussed. The term “chaplain” is used broadly across different institutions. As religious life organizations continue to diversify, those whose religious tradition is not Christian find the term restrictive, and some reject it. Those whose job is more administrative (i.e., deans, directors, coordinators, et.al.) also problematize the term. Others welcome the term as inclusive in its historic connotations and emphasis towards care. In this project, I will focus on religious and spiritual affairs workers whose institutions differentiate deans and chaplains as separate entities. In addition, I use the term CARSA to represent Chaplains and Religious and Spiritual Affairs professionals.

In trying to decipher the function of Black bodies in CARSA roles at PWIs, the demarcating factors were whether they were (a) Black CARSA with broad university-wide responsibilities, with the care of mainline Christian Black bodies being a periphery responsibility, or whether they were (b) a CARSA, who happened to be Black, with no particular focus on Black bodies. The nuance here is that the Black student, staff, and faculty populations at most PWIs are more extensive than some groups' religious identities (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) with an overlap of these religious and philosophical identities. And yet, representation within CARSA staff often does not represent congruency with these numbers.

In conversation with my colleagues at historically white institutions,⁴ a pattern of similar commiserations emerged. They lacked financial support or divisional empowerment to attend to the spiritual wellbeing of the Black campus community, particularly those who are descendants of enslaved Africans (DEA). While our institutions were able to identify the need for diverse forms of representation on their staff, and in some cases, for their Black students, most of the institutions are unaware of the breadth of diversity that comprises the Black student body. Furthermore, few recognize the spiritual diversity that accompanies these Black bodies. As many universities are unearthing their memories, legacies, and benefice from American slavery—while also navigating racial incidents that occur on-campus and within the larger national landscape—what can

⁴ Throughout this project I use the terms predominately white institutions (PWI) and historically white institutions (HWI) interchangeably. Historically, colleges and universities that fit within the rubric of being historic Black colleges and universities (HBCU) are predominately Black colleges and universities, because they never held race related restrictions regarding who could enroll in the institution. In contrast, predominately white institutions are not predominately white simply by number of accepted applicants, but rather they are historically white because their governance formally excluded Black students, faculty, and upper level administration. A historically white institution is one that has benefitted from the legacy of African enslavement and racist legal systems that upheld racial segregation. In using the terms PWI and HWI, I am maintaining the tense historical and contemporary legacies these institutions still carry.

chaplaincy, spiritual and religious life, repair and or heal. What, if any, is the responsibility of Universities to the wellbeing of their DEA populations?

Universities across the country have various rubrics to measure whether their students feel a sense of belonging and reception into the larger community. Equally, most campuses across the country express concern about students' wellbeing. In this project, "Wellbeing" and "Wellness" are used interchangeably. I will use the term "Wellbeing" as defined by Margaret (Peggy) Swarbrick, "a conscious, deliberate process that requires a person to become aware of and make choices for a more satisfying lifestyle."⁵ Speaking particularly about my academic context (Wake Forest University), our Black students report lower numbers in belonging than our white identifying students. Conversely, their numbers are in the range of national figures whose contexts are similar to ours.⁶

According to Terrell Strayhorn, "having a sense of belonging is feeling as if one has a rightful place in a community."⁷ However, instances of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination in the form of statements, actions, or incidents (microaggressions) are a "daily experience" by non-white-identifying students.⁸ Although some of these experiences are subtle, their compound effect is feelings of unwelcome. Sociologist Jeremy Franklin recommends historically white institutions provide adequate support and access to wellbeing by prioritizing recruitment of affinity-specific faculty, staff, and administrators who will prioritize addressing racial campus climate and

⁵ Margaret Swarbrick, "Integrated Care: Wellness-Oriented Peer Approaches: A Key Ingredient for Integrated Care," *Psychiatric Services* 64, no. 8 (August 2013): 723–726.

⁶ In other words, Wake Forest University is a private university with NCAA athletics.

⁷ Strayhorn, Terrell L. "College Students' Sense of Belonging," 2018.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315297293>.

⁸ Sylvia Hurtado and Adriana Ruiz Alvarado, *Discrimination and Bias, Underrepresentation, and Sense of Belonging on Campus*, Higher Education Research Institute report, 2015.

providing minority students with the resources to discuss their experiences and strategize for success.⁹ Furthermore, while many PWIs have offices to support “multicultural” students, the burden placed on these offices is overwhelming, thus expanding the dissonance between DEA and wellbeing.¹⁰

The aspects that constitute "wellbeing" have most liberally been available to DEA regarding their spiritual wellbeing. According to Peggy Swarbrick, "well-being" is an eight-dimensional balancing act that—when appropriately maintained—leaves us best able to cope with adversity, build rewarding relationships and live with a sense of purpose.¹¹ These eight dimensions, in alphabetical order, are (1) emotional, (2) environmental, (3) financial, (4) intellectual, (5) occupational, (6) physical, (7) social, and (8) spiritual. Legally and systematically, Black people are barricaded from most of these dimensions. For much of the history of Black people in the Americas, emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, social, and spiritual wellbeing all fell under the cloak of religion. Without considering the historical access and ramifications that DEA have experienced in their pursuit of a "more satisfying lifestyle," universities fail their DEA populations in terms of programming and personnel.

Consider the history of integration on predominately white campuses. When DEA were admitted, Black student alliances and some variation of African American folk-song groups (i.e., gospel choirs) were chartered. On PWI campuses, gospel choirs can be the most prominent student organizations for DEAs. Many private PWI's have campus

⁹Jeremy Franklin, “Racial Microaggressions, Racial Battle Fatigue, and Racism-Related Stress in Higher Education,” *Journal of Student Affairs* (2016): 12.

¹⁰ Vanessa Hunn, “African American Students, Retention, and Team-Based Learning: A Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Retention at Predominately White Institutions,” *Journal of Black Studies* 45, no. 4 (2014): 301–14.

¹¹ Margaret Swarbrick, “A Wellness Approach,” *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal* 29, no. 4 (2006): 311–314.

ministries run by external para-ministry groups (e.g., Intervarsity, Athletes in Action, Wesley, etc.). However, rarely do DEAs participate (see: chapter 2). Many elite and Ivy institutions have a CARSA professional whose primary dominant responsibility is to maintain and cultivate spiritual well-being for DEA students to promote well-being and a sense of belonging. However, on the grand scale of private institutions with a significant number of Black students, this figure is abysmal. Racial integration is an ongoing process. The year 2020 has revealed the depths of the wellbeing chasm that still exists between DEA and white-identifying students. While PWI campus ministries may open their doors to everyone under the guise of inclusivity, Black students are distrustful due to historically built apprehension within these ministries—even though DEA students theologically align with these organizations.

DEA communities have far higher numbers than the national average in terms of church attendance and religious observance.¹² Although Black students are neither monolithically nor homogeneously Christian, this trend points to the largely conceived importance of spirituality for DEA. Nonetheless, the practices that DEA already employ for their wellbeing should not be understood among higher education administrations as an opportunity to dismiss DEA (and Black people generally) as hyper-spiritual. Higher education must humanize their DEA population to clearly see Black people's virtues—among which resilience is one of the strongest. And while resilient, DEA need equitable (not equal) access to personnel and programming that aims to shape their whole lives in their pursuit of a better lifestyle.

¹² Jeff Diamant and Besheer Mohamed, “Black Millennials Are More Religious than Other Millennials,” Pew Research Center, last modified July 20, 2018, <https://pewrsr.ch/2uzj3rd>.

In their persistence to survive, enslaved Africans and their descendants developed various responses to help blunt the effects of racialized trauma. These practices include individual and collective "humming, rocking, rhythmic clapping, drumming, singing, grounding touch, wailing circles, and call and response."¹³ If this is true, then when university administrations are having conversations around increasing wellbeing for their students, especially for DEA, proper weight should be placed upon the utilization of spiritual wellbeing as the catalyst for conversing about wellbeing for DEA.

My central question, therefore, is this: If wellness is the desired state for all students (and faculty/staff), should administrations consider the importance of having a curator for the spiritual wellbeing of Black and DEA students, one who has labored under and resonates with the Black experience?¹⁴ The writing that follows is not meant to compress all DEA into the spiritual and/or religious spectrum. Instead, it seeks to capture the idea that repairing one's humanity in the face of repeated attacks aimed at devaluing an individual based upon that person's racialized embodiment is a spiritual act. This means in order to pursue wellness, one must first be offered guided experiences and resources for healing.

Having considered higher education's long-standing and intertwined relationship with religion and wanting both historical and contemporary lived and observed accounts of DEA persons pursuing wellbeing, I follow hermeneutical, phenomenological, and qualitative methods, interviewing Black CARSA professionals, as my primary research

¹³ Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery, 2017), 15.

¹⁴ All Black people are not descended from enslaved Africans, though they do suffer under the constraints of white-body supremacy when they cannot be identified as immigrants. I make this nuance for those in higher education who have a higher immigrant Black student body, that may be slightly removed from the DEA Black experience but are not exempt from anti-Black racism. To graft African students into the rubric of Black without nuancing out the DEA Black experience whitewashes American history.

method. I explore the historical use of CARSA professionals in higher education and examine how higher education institutions originated as places to cultivate wellbeing. I will identify the legacy of segregation that has hampered DEA pursuits of wellbeing in higher education while also briefly examining the gap in American religious history that ignores the blaring and pronounced strain that segregation has left on campus ministries. As a qualitative study, this project asks Black CARSA professionals (1) What does spiritual wellbeing for DEA persons look like at predominately white institutions of higher education? (2) What do Black souls need to thrive in historically White spaces? (3) Why does spiritual wellbeing matter? (4) Does having a professional in the office of religious and spiritual life that looks like and/or is a part of the DEA community, matter for the wellbeing of Black bodies? (5) How did/does being in a hyper-visible body affect how you perform your duties? Each participant's interview was read and highlighted for themes that were compared to the themes of other participant responses. And from these themes, elements are discussed to conclude this project's exploration.

The qualitative study aims to contribute to the limited but growing body of literature that explores chaplaincy, religious and spiritual life, and wellbeing. The analysis and exploration of Black CARSA experiences provide a window into the Black experience at PWI's. CARSA's in this group have witnessed, with their own eyes, institutional secrets that are rarely shared. These secrets, while confidential, are paramount for future planning.

CHAPTER 1
RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE CURATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

“Ministry is the curating of these places, these in-between spaces, through facilitation of locales that allow people to share in each other's needs, to see each other as persons. No pastor has the power to create these places. They are spiritual; they are outgrowths of the work of the Holy Spirit manifest in the mystery of persons seeing each other face to face, of wiring their brains together by encountering each other. We cannot force these places, but we can curate them.” – Eric Worringer¹⁵

This chapter will explore religious and spiritual affairs professionals' designation as curators of spiritual wellbeing in higher education. It will briefly explore the history of chaplaincy in higher education, then proceed to the historical exclusion of Black students from white higher education spaces. Lastly, it will conclude with Black student efforts towards inclusion and achieving wellbeing even in the absence of institutional support.

Religious life curators encompass chaplains, deans, directors, campus ministers, and more of various distinctions.¹⁶ I use the term "curator" because religious life in higher education is widely variant and a resilient institution within itself. While some religious life professionals still host and preside over religious liturgical gatherings, others focus on religious literacy and creating equitable religious—inclusive of spiritual and philosophical—expressions on campus. A curator, from the Latin word "cura," meaning "to take care," is a manager or overseer.¹⁷ The word curator's traditional use is attached to the upkeep of a gallery, museum, library, or archive. In its simplest form, it means a keeper of cultural heritage—a content specialist who is involved with the interpretation of

¹⁵ Eric Worringer, “Encountering the Other: Curation and Pastoral Identity,” *Arts in Theology and Religious Studies* 26, no. 1 (2014): 25–30.

¹⁶ In this project, when the term “Campus Minister” is capitalized and listed as CARSA, the position is employed by a university and not a parachurch or auxiliary organization. Otherwise, if “campus minister” is lower case it generally means a person who ministers on campus regardless of employment status.

¹⁷ “Curator,” *Wikipedia*, last modified October 26, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curator>.

"heritage" material, including historical artifacts. In this paper, I propose that religion is an artifact in many ways, while spirituality is the effect of encountering the artifact.

Before this project can ultimately ask whether higher education institutions have an equitable responsibility towards providing access to wellbeing for their descendants of enslaved Africans, the penultimate question is what *has* been higher education's response to cultivating spiritual wellbeing and access to spiritual and religious programming for their campuses? This section focuses on a brief history of chaplaincy and its evolution towards spiritual and religious life curation.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHAPLAINCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The history of religion in America and the history of higher education in America are inseparable. The earliest higher education institutions in America have their origins rooted in being centers of education for clergy persons—the people who will cultivate American colonists' religious experience. These same institutions were all established inaccessible by the enslaved population even into years of freedom. For nearly two centuries after establishing higher education institutions, no Black student received a degree in any shape or form from an American college or university. The same institutions established in the early 17th and 18th centuries were not integrated until the 20th century and are still diversifying in the 21st century. The very institutions founded to equip people with the capacity to facilitate spiritual wellbeing for the masses did not include the massive enslaved population or their descendants.

In 1636, Harvard College was the first institution of higher education in colonial America, and it was established to educate clergy.¹⁸ The school is named after the Reverend John Harvard. The early motto of Harvard was *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae*, meaning "Truth for Christ and the Church." Ten of Harvard's first twelve presidents were ministers, and the President was the presiding spiritual curator. A "dispute" over the appropriate preparation of ministers led to Yale College's founding in 1701 by ten ministers.¹⁹ Later, other settlements established institutions for training clergy which lead to the establishment of Log College—Princeton, King's College, and Philadelphia college, which, respectively, became Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania, for which—all Presidents were clergy and held the responsibility of preaching.²⁰ In *The Resilience of Religion in American Higher Education*, John Schmalzbauer and Kathleen Mahoney record that as late as the 1840s, clergy comprised two-thirds of state college presidents and eighty percent of denominational (read: private) college presidents. On most campuses, participation in chapel services was mandatory.²¹ This trend of presidents religiously presiding continued into the early 20th century when there was a shift away from clergy presidents serving as the spiritual leaders of daily chapel services to universities employing a chaplain as administrator.

In 1902, only fourteen schools employed college chaplains. In the 1920s, the hiring of university chaplains gained traction as religious formation was separating from

¹⁸ The first Black graduate of Harvard University was Richard T. Greener in 1870, 234 years after the university's inception. Robert Bruce Slater, "The Blacks Who First Entered the World of White Higher Education," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 4 (1994): 47–56.

¹⁹ Judith Schiff, "A Brief History of Yale," accessed November 12, 2020, <https://guides.library.yale.edu/c.php?g=296245&p=1974165>.

²⁰ Conrad Cherry, *Religion on Campus* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 2.

²¹ John Schmalzbauer and Kathleen A. Mahoney, *The Resilience of Religion in American Higher Education* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 97.

academic development. During the postwar era, the number of chaplain positions increased dramatically in response to the national surge in religious curiosity.²² In the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement energized changes in both racial and religious diversity in higher education and bolstered a sustained need for chaplaincy as a conduit of mediation and creating a holistic campus. But even in those turbulent times, administrative changes and attitudes about the relevance of chaplaincy were timid. It is important to note that chaplaincy was "an overwhelmingly white, male, and clerical" profession during those times.²³

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLACK EXCLUSION FROM WHITE HIGHER EDUCATION

While there were traces of Black bodies in historically White higher education institutions as early as the 1830s, it was not until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that private PWIs had a substantial number of Black students and women.²⁴ Many studies credit John Russworm as the first Black person to graduate from a PWI with a bachelor's degree in 1826.²⁵ Nonetheless, Russworm's graduation was not followed by a significant enrollment of black students at PWIs. It took an additional 138 years before there was a considerable influx of Black graduates. Even still, when previously excluded Black bodies entered the world of White higher education, Black bodies encountered the societal -isms (racism and sexism) circulating across the country. During this tumultuous time, several campus clergy—Dr. Howard Thurman at Boston University and Rev. William Sloane

²² Lucy Forster-Smith, *College & University Chaplaincy in the 21st Century* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight, 2013), xii.

²³ Phillip E Hammond, *The Campus Clergyman* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 12.

²⁴ I am not ignoring women's exclusion from higher education but rather am focused more narrowly on the topic of racial disparities in higher education. higher education, but it does seek to stay on topic.

²⁵ Joe R. Feagin, *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Coffin at Yale—led an appeal for transformative shifts in the role of chaplaincies in academic communities. And, it was heard. Eventually. At least for a moment.

In 2005, all the Ivy League institutions had Black descendants of enslaved Africans employed as Chaplain and Religious and Spiritual Affairs (CARSA) professional within their spiritual and religious life offices. In the October 2005 publication of *EBONY* magazine, a feature article entitled, "Spreading 'the word' on campus: African-American chaplains take the lead in the Ivy League."²⁶ It features:

Kenneth I. Clarke, Sr., as director of Cornell University United Religious Work,

Peter Gomes, as the Pusey Minister in the Memorial Church at Harvard University,

Jewelnel Davis as University Chaplain at Columbia University,

Frederick J. Streets as the University Chaplain and Senior Pastor of the Church of Christ in Yale,

William Gipson as University Chaplain and special advisor to the president at the University of Pennsylvania,

Deborah Blanks, as the Associate Dean of Religious Life and of the Chapel at Princeton University,

Sakena De Young-Scaggs as Associate Protestant University Chaplain at Brown University, and

Stuart C. Lord is Dean of the Tucker Foundation and overseer of chaplaincy at Dartmouth College.

The Ivies all having Black representation amongst their spiritual affairs professionals held significant enough meaning for *EBONY* magazine to feature these Black CARSA professionals and circulate it to their roughly 1.3 million readers and feature it in their 50th-

²⁶Joy Bennett Kinnon. "Spreading 'The Word' On Campus," *Ebony* Magazine, Vol LX, NO.12 (2005): 134. I am grateful to Frederick J. Streets for reminding me of this article.

anniversary edition.²⁷ While these figures are impressive when grouped, they are still abysmal when inserted into the larger conversation of religious life curators in higher education.

In 1963, Phillip Hammond published *The Campus Clergyman*, in which a survey found that only 4% of campus clergy identified as African American and 1% as other.²⁸ In a 2006 survey of college chaplains conducted by John Schmalzbauer, 5% identified as Black or African American.²⁹ To summarize, in forty-three years, that is a 1% increase of Black chaplains and religious and spiritual affairs (CARSA) professionals. The percentage of Black students matriculating through PWIs is significantly higher, averaging around 13-14% nationwide.³⁰ The 2006 survey *perhaps* included the eight names that were featured in the *Ebony* magazine article.

CREATING PATHWAYS FOR SELF-CARE

In the absence of Black CARSA professionals on independent historically white campuses, Black students in pursuit of spiritual growth reportedly create culturally familiar spaces to sing, testify, encourage one another, and grow religiously. While parachurch campus ministries are present, they are also overwhelmingly White – which can create a sense of alienation rather than inclusion. Reflecting upon his experience as an undergraduate student at Wake Forest University, Marcus Ingram ('99, DIV'06) said,

“Lacking an institutional religious home was disconcerting. African American students [assume] that all of campus ministry is going to be white which creates a level of

²⁷ “*Ebony* (Magazine),” *Wikipedia*, last modified, September 22, 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebony_\(magazine\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebony_(magazine)).

²⁸ Hammond, *The Campus Clergyman*.

²⁹ John Schmalzbauer, “*The Evolving Role of the College and University Chaplaincy: Findings from a National Study*,” Report to Council of Independent Colleges and NetVUE (2014), 6.

³⁰ *Ibid*.

discomfort. I am thankful for the sense of place provided by the Gospel Choir; it cannot be underestimated.”³¹

Many researchers assert that a sense of belonging and a sense of social membership produce growth and accomplishment.³² For many Black students at PWIs, the sense of belonging and its byproducts are not felt. In their examination of the Black student experience at predominately white institutions, researcher Oluwashola Gbemi argues that integration failed to "bring about the necessary fundamental changes to the cultural norms of PWIs."³³

Research reveals that human beings experience the best psychological development in environments where they are valued and accepted.³⁴ For the descendants of enslaved Africans, racial discrimination is directly connected with wellbeing. Racial discrimination has been shown to contribute to the prevalence of psychiatric disorders (anxiety and depression) in descendants of enslaved Africans.³⁵ Nonetheless, in historically white institutions of higher education, the descendants of enslaved Africans have persisted. How?

³¹ Mark Anderson, "Weathering Wake: The African-American Experience," *Wake Forest News*, last modified February 26, 2009, <http://news.wfu.edu/2009/02/26/weathering-wake-the-african-american-experience/>.

³² For more information see: Alexander W. Astin, *What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited*, 1st ed., Higher and Adult Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

³³ Oluwashola Gbemi, "Examining Primarily White Institutions of Higher Education: Black Student Experience in the 1960s," *Alpenglow: Binghamton University Undergraduate Journal of Research and Creative Activity* 2, no. 1 (2016): 19.

³⁴ Walter Allen, "The Color of Success: African-American College Student Outcomes at Predominantly White and Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities," *Harvard Educational Review* 62, no. 1 (1992): 26–45.

³⁵ Freida Hopkins Outlaw, "Stress and Coping: The Influence of Racism the Cognitive Appraisal Processing of African Americans," *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 14, no. 4 (1993): 399–409.

CHAPTER 2
WELL-BEING, SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING, AND THE STRUGGLE TO BE WELL IN
HIGHER EDUCATION

“Racism is so universal in this country, so widespread and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal.” – Shirley Chisholm³⁶

“The neglect of black history not only distorted American history, but also distorted both white and black Americans' perceptions of who they were. For a people to "lose" their history, to have their story denigrated as insignificant, is a devastating blow, an exclusion that in effect denies their full humanity. Conversely, to ignore the history of another people whose fate has been intimately bound up with your own is to forgo self-understanding.” – Albert Raboteau³⁷

This chapter will define "wellbeing" and "spiritual-wellbeing" and then explore the Black struggle to be well in predominantly white higher education. It will give dimension to the struggle to be "well" in historically white settings and how, historically, Black practices for wellbeing have been ignored and thusly cloaked within the rubrics of spirituality. It will then historically examine how DEA have engaged spirituality to embody wellbeing and how this has or has not been duplicated in predominately white institutions of higher education. And lastly, it will move towards why Black spiritual and religious life professionals at historically and predominately white institutions of higher education are the best witnesses of Black students, faculty, and staff, pursuing wellbeing and are integral to the exploration of spiritual wellbeing for the descendants of enslaved Africans.

Since the 1980s, higher education has given attention to cultivating "wellbeing" for students. Studies on wellness and occupational therapy reveal that students could thrive in academic settings if their wellbeing thrived. For clarity, "health" and "wellbeing" are not

³⁶ Julian Weissglass, “Racism and the Achievement Gap,” *Education Week*, last modified, August 8, 2001, <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2001/08/08/43weissglass.h20.html>.

³⁷ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 325.

synonymous. In this project, health is defined as the "integrity of body, mind, spirit, and emotions both in the presence and absence of disease or disability."³⁸ The definition for wellbeing is mercurial. Borrowing from Johnson & Schmid's 1983 brochure—which influenced many social scientists—"Well-being is a state that transcends the limitations of the body, space, time, and circumstances and reflects the fact that one is at peace with one's self and with others."³⁹ Since the early 1990s, Margaret Swarbrick's "wellness model" and "dimensions of wellbeing" have influenced medical, professional, and higher education communities.⁴⁰ In an interview in 2012, Swarbrick said her eight dimension model for wellbeing "evolved over many years based on the lived experiences of people facing traumatic life experiences, substance use, and mental health challenges."⁴¹ During the hermeneutical research of this project, Swarbrick's eight dimensions model is referenced on seven current CARSA professionals' campuses.⁴²

If it is true that "wellness" is a context for living that enhances health and quality of life, higher education administrations have been correct in implementing contextual guides that help achieve wellness as a goal via programming and personnel. This shift in thinking about higher education being more than a place that houses students and the academy, but rather, a place where one comes to cultivate and develop their whole lives,

³⁸ Johnson, J., & Schmid, H (1983). Resource Center for Health and Well-Being, Inc., as cited in: Mo Yee Lee et al., *Integrative Body-Mind-Spirit Social Work: An Empirically Based Approach to Assessment and Treatment* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

³⁹ Ibid.,

⁴⁰ Swarbrick was inspired by Jerry Johnson's 1986 *Wellness and Occupational Therapy*.

⁴¹ Joseph Detrano, "Mapping Mental Health: Dr. Swarbrick & The Eight Wellness Dimensions | Center of Alcohol & Substance Use Studies," n.d., accessed November 19, 2020, <https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/mapping-mental-health-dr-swarbrick-the-eight-wellness-dimensions/>.

⁴² I was at the end of the project before I noted how many times the phrase "spiritual well-being – a dimension of well-being," was spoken. At the time of collecting themes, I did not include this phrase because there was no way to account for whether it was mentioned because, as the researcher, I used the language, or whether the emphasis was organic.

not just their intellectual life, however, is not novel.⁴³ Specifically, cultivating "Well-being" (or wellness on some campuses), is developing an individual's ability to actively seek to change their life situation to function at perceived maximum capacity and satisfaction.⁴⁴ In *Wellness-Oriented Peer Approaches*, Swarbrick argues that the individual determines the "criteria for success and satisfaction...the individual assumes personal responsibility for creating their own patterns and motivations for change."⁴⁵ From the definitions presented above, each individual is capable of stating what and where for them is the state of being well in any particular dimension of wellbeing. But for the sake of project specificity, I will define spiritual wellbeing as the humanistic, religious, and spiritual practices (and beliefs) through which a person seeks to find purpose, meaning, understanding, and peace with oneself, others, and the world.

Spiritual wellbeing is not synonymous with spirituality—which is the rites, rituals, and practices that an individual engages in comprehension of their worldview, particularly engagement with that which they consider "ultimate concern."⁴⁶ Nonetheless, spirituality can be utilized as a means of attaining spiritual wellbeing. Spiritual wellbeing is also not a continuous variable. It is not a matter of whether we have it. Instead, it is a question of *how much* and what method can enhance the degree of spiritual wellbeing.⁴⁷ This project

⁴³ It should be noted that while higher education is expanding their pedagogical designs to be inclusive of student's "whole lives," students have always brought their religious lives to campus. The institutions, especially, but not limited to, those who have maintained religious affiliation though the curriculum has secularized, have allowed and cultivated many forms of religious beliefs and practices. Many even sponsor programming and hire personnel when student needs change.

⁴⁴ Swarbrick, "Integrated Care."

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ "Ultimate concern" is the terminology used by theologian Paul Tillich in referencing the concept of "God" and bridging the conceptualization beyond religion or one particular philosophical ideal. See Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), 9

⁴⁷ Craig W. Ellison, "Spiritual Well-Being: Conceptualization and Measurement," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 11, no. 4 (2018): 330–38.

explores how the descendants of enslaved Africans find purpose, meaning, understanding, and peace with themselves and others in historically White institutions of Higher Education. Fleshed out, this project is an exploration of how DEA seek purpose, meaning, understanding, and peace at predominately white institutions that are riddled with traumatizing white supremacy and racialized acts for the devaluation of Black folk.

THE PROBLEM: HISTORICAL ACCESS TO WELL-BEING

In the year 2020, 401 years after the earliest record of enslaved African bodies being trafficked to North America, Black people proclaiming that their lives matter is considered a political statement and a divisive idea.⁴⁸ By the definition of wellbeing used in this project—transcending the limitations of body, space, time, and circumstances to reflect upon the fact that one is at peace with one's self and with others—in the year 2020, Black wellness is a novel idea, even, an obtrusive and obtuse idea, perhaps, an ethereal idea where wellbeing is something to be sought, but never acquired. Being alive is the furthest allotment of "wellness" that white supremacy and its sympathizers have allowed Black folks, and even this is under examination. The sentiment that Black people should "just be happy that they're alive" is the unspoken posture that white supremacy embodies when a complaint of life circumstances, especially after a racist encounter, is reported. Similarly, this is true when one considers the history of segregation in the U.S. and the iconic record of anti-integrationists—especially of educational spaces. The sentiment that Black folk should "just be happy that they're here" – that is, content with being present in a historically white institution, is often the attitude and energy that Black bodies encounter.

⁴⁸ Jelani Greenidge (@gelanigreenidge), "Black Lives Matter' Is Not a Political Statement," Medium, June 12, 2020, <https://medium.com/@jelanigreenidge/black-lives-matter-is-not-a-political-statement-80f7ef93129a>.

On October 23, 2020, an article entitled "Racism fuels poor mental health outcomes for Black students," published on *Inside Higher Ed*, records an incident where Colbie Lofton, a Black student, asked her macroeconomics professor a question during class and heard someone sitting behind her say, "I guess n****rs don't understand."⁴⁹ It is reported that Lofton was "completely shocked" at how cavalier the racial slur was used, and even more so, shocked that the professor, having heard the comment and paused, said nothing. And neither did she. While this is a physically nonviolent, aggravated account of racial assault, there are less aggressive experiences of racism aimed at Black students, faculty, and staff with varied intentions but one effect – communicating "you don't belong (here)." While higher education administrators repeatedly list mental health and wellbeing as a principal concern on their campuses, there is still a lack of diversity in college counseling centers—the place where most students go to seek mental and emotional care. The same article encloses a student recalling that "being a Black woman and ... going to counseling to talk about how taxing being a Black woman is, is hard to talk to someone who isn't a Black woman...".⁵⁰ If "wellbeing" is a state that transcends space and circumstances, and reflects that an individual is *at peace* with one's self and with others, then there are challenges to DEA achieving wellbeing in predominately white spaces without outlets and guides to process and combat the traumas of racism.

The invention of race and the racism that followed it created a historical chain of dehumanizing and traumatic events that plague Black people and, thus, human progress.

⁴⁹ Greta Anderson, "Racism Fuels Poor Mental Health Outcomes for Black Students," *Inside Higher Ed*, October 23, 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/print/news/2020/10/23/racism-fuels-poor-mental-health-outcomes-black-students>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

As stated by the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research project, housed in New York University's Silver School of Social Work,

the trauma of racism refers to the cumulative negative impact of racism on the lives of people of color... encompassing the emotional, psychological, health, economic, and social effects of multigenerational and historical trauma. Trauma of racism relates to the damaging effects of ongoing societal and intra-social-group racial micro aggressions, internalized racism, overt racist experiences, discrimination and oppression within the lives of people of color. When repetitive and unresolved, these experiences rooted in racism can create severe emotional pain and distress that can overwhelm a person's and community's ability to cope....⁵¹

In *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, psychiatrist, and trauma specialist, Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk presents the idea that "the search for meaning is a critical aspect of traumatized individuals' efforts to master their helplessness and sense of vulnerability."⁵² He argues that since one cannot "undo" their experience, giving it meaning is a central goal of "therapy." In *Integrating Spirituality into Treatment: Resources for Practitioners*, William Miller posits that "spiritual and religious involvement is not only common but is often important in clients' lives and has been generally linked to positive health outcomes."⁵³ The search for meaning is also a component of spiritual wellbeing.⁵⁴ During their research on the "Impact of stressful life experiences and spiritual wellbeing on trauma symptoms," Sandra Lee and Catherine Waters found that spiritual wellbeing can act as a "buffer" to traumatic stress associated with cumulative or multiple exposures to traumatic stressors.⁵⁵ If Shirley Chisholm is

⁵¹ Dottie Lebron, et al., *Facts Matter! Black Lives Matter! The Trauma of Racism* (New York: McSilver Institute for Poverty Research, 2015), 10.

⁵² "Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society," *Guilford Press*, <https://www.guilford.com/books/Traumatic-Stress/Kolk-McFarlane-Weisaeth/9781572304574>.

⁵³ William R. Miller, *Integrating Spirituality into Treatment: Resources for Practitioners* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1999),

⁵⁴ The "search for meaning" is more substantive than assumptions that often equate the phrase with religion, religious practice, or church. Meaning making, as I use the term here denotes how people wrestle for peace.

⁵⁵ Sandra S. Lee and Catherine Waters, "Impact of Stressful Life Experiences and of Spiritual Well-Being on Trauma Symptoms," *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 26, no. 1 (2003): 39–47.

correct—that racism in this country is so widespread and deep-seated that it is invisible. It is also true that DEA's wellbeing practices are also invisible because racism undermines the humanity of Black folk and devalues any and everything that they do, including wellbeing practices.

BLACK WELL-BEING: THE INVISIBLE INSTITUTION

Black people are often subjugated as being sub-human and un-human. However, another denigration of Black humanity is "superhumanizing" Black people.⁵⁶ By superhumanizing Black people, I mean the ways in which the racist lens through which Black people are observed is perverse and distorted. I address this because with the misperception of "superhumanization" comes the omission of mechanisms and tools for building and sustaining wellbeing – which is to say, reports of Black people being more religious than their White and Latinx counterparts is potentially not about religion at all.⁵⁷ With superhumanization also comes the attribution of "supernatural, extrasensory, and magical mental and physical qualities."⁵⁸ For the record, Black people are not super human; we are not even *actually* magical. By including this basic information, debunking the myth that Black people are sub or super-human, I set a mainframe for DEA needing to be well. I also raise the question of whether institutions that proclaim wanting "wellbeing" for their campus population have considered the dehumanizing and devaluing effects of racism? I now seek to build the argument that DEA's wellbeing practices have been ignored and subjugated as being hyper-religious activity rather than

⁵⁶ The term "superhumanization" is explained in Adam Waytz, Kelly Marie Hoffman, and Sophie Trawalter, "A Superhumanization Bias in Whites' Perceptions of Blacks," *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6, no. 3 (2015): 352–359.

⁵⁷ For data on Black being more religious than white and Latinx see: Jeff Diamant and Besheer Mohamed, "Black Millennials Are More Religious than Other Millennials," Pew Research Center, July 20, 2018, <https://pewrsr.ch/2uzj3rd>.

⁵⁸ Waytz, et. al., "A Superhumanization Bias," 356.

apparent attempts at accessing the multiple dimensions that encompass wellbeing. This is important as we explore spiritual wellbeing for DEA because it heightens the evolutionary reasoning for pursuit of wellbeing in hostile, historically white settings being a spiritual activity, for which Black curators of spiritual wellbeing are and have been witnesses. By no means do I argue that Black people have not engaged the dimensions of wellness that congregate to form wellbeing outside of the cloak of spirituality. But, I am presenting the perspective that for generations enslaved Africans cloaked their practices and attempts towards establishing wellbeing under the rubrics of spirituality, and that elements of this have been retained within their descendants.

As this project moves towards historical exploration of the religious institutions that were traditional spaces for cultivating spiritual wellbeing for DEA, we realign the institutional religions often overlooked as cultural expressions into their more significant discipline of American Religious History. Black history and Black religious history are not to be thought of as only "black history," while White religious history is considered "American History." To move towards an adequate understanding of *our* religious and spiritual present, we must encompass the religious history that higher education is presently grappling with integrating into the campus religious life experience.⁵⁹ Thus, I wish to point out that the pursuit of wellbeing is most visible in examining DEA and their religious institutions, especially the Church. In a historical examination of the relationship that

⁵⁹ Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, "The Birth of African-American Culture," in *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, ed. Timothy Earl Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), 50, writes: "We do not believe that the present can be 'understood'—in the sense of explaining the relationships among different contemporary institutional forms—without reference to the past."

enslaved Africans and their descendants have had with Christianity and the Church, the dimensions that comprise wellbeing are better able to be distinctively seen.

“THE GENIUS OF THE NEGRO CHURCH”⁶⁰

Taken directly from the opening description of Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson's contribution to the 1933 book, *The Negro's Church*:

In the summer of 1930, the institute of Social and Religious Research—a Rockefeller financed agency established in 1921 to apply scientific methods to the study of socio-religious phenomena—spent fourteen months collecting data and ten months writing *The Negro's Church*. This book, based on information gathered from 609 urban churches in twelve cities, both northern and southern, and 185 rural churches in four southern counties. It was the first of its kind and it 'thoroughly' represented the black church at the time.⁶¹

Within this study, themes about the Negro Church formed mirroring Margaret Swarbrick's dimensions as desirous when pursuing wellbeing. Important to this project is the 1933 revelation that the development of the Negro church resulted from American Christianity's failure in the realm of race relations.⁶² What the study produced was that the Negro church was:

- 1) The only thing governed by Negroes; many negroes were unable to own homes of their own, so they took particular pride in their churches. It gave a sense of ownership.
- 2) Offered the freedom to relax and release from the restraint, strain, and restriction of the "daily grind." In their services Negroes show more emotion

⁶⁰ This subheading is a direct quotation from Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, “The Genius of the Negro Church,” in *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, ed. Milton C. Sernett, 2nd edition, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 423.

⁶¹ Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, *The Negro's Church* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933), 278-92

⁶² I distinguish between the term “Negro Church” as church for Black people, in contrast to the “Black Church” which is rooted in pressing back against white supremacy and the social constructs of race.

than members of other racial groups, but it can hardly be proved that they are by nature more expressive.

3) Community center and social center.

The Mayor's Interracial Committee of Detroit reported in its 1926 survey:

The Negro has been humiliated in so many public and privately owned institutions and amusement places that he[sic] has resorted to the church as a place in which he[sic] can be sure of spending his[sic] leisure time peacefully. To a large extent it takes the place of the theatre, the dance hall...and fills the vacancy created by the failure of public and commercial places of recreation and amusement to give him[sic] a cordial welcome.⁶³

4) Encouraged education.

5) Nurtured business.

6) Offered democratic fellowship; there are no social classes in the Negro Church.

Though certain congregations wanted a "certain brand" for members, for the most part, the Negro church was the place where the Negro banker, lawyer, professor, social worker, physician, dentist, and school teacher meet the skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen, the maid, the cook, the butler, the common laborer, and the bootlegger, all associated.

7) Transcended Racial Barriers; the Negro church preaches love and tolerance toward all races and abides by these ideals in its practice. Chinese, Japanese, and white people are never deliberately given the back seats in Negro churches; "they are never ushered to the gallery for worship."

8) Produced the Negro minister, who the writers believe was the "freest," and "the most influential."

⁶³ Mays and Nicholson, "The Genius of the Negro Church," 429.

Being the underdog, he[sic] has nothing to lose and all to gain when he goes forth in the name of God advocating a square deal for all of men [sic]. It is not an accident that possibly the most outstanding prophets of religion such as Jesus, Moses, Jeremiah... were members of an under-privileged race.⁶⁴

It is easy to connect Peggy Swarbrick's eight-dimensional framework for the pursuit of wellness to the themes that surfaced in this 1933 phenomenology report.⁶⁵ For the descendants of enslaved Africans who participated in Christianity, their pursuit of spiritual wellbeing had the potential of producing "Well-being." Nonetheless, the question may be raised, "Why is a 90-year-old report on the Negro church relevant to higher education today?" The answer is simple – we bring our whole selves and our family histories to campus with us; including, our expectations of religious communities. It is important enough to note that institutions' desegregation did not precipitate integration of the personal institutions that institutional occupants brought with them. Also, Black Christians' relationship with White-Christians on predominately white campuses must be preceded by a more extensive, more robust religious history.

CHRISTIANITY, CHURCH, AND THE PURSUIT OF WELL-BEING

From the very beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, the missional conversion of the enslaved population to Christianity was touted by Western Christendom as a justification for the enslavement of Africans. In *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*, Albert Raboteau records that any "pangs of guilt over the cruelty inherent in enslaving fellow human beings were assuaged by emphasizing the grace of faith made available to Africans, who otherwise would die as pagans."⁶⁶ However, Africans

⁶⁴ Ibid, 433.

⁶⁵ Swarbrick's eight dimensions are: Emotional, Environmental, Financial, Intellectual, Occupational, Physical, Social, and Spiritual. See Swarbrick, "A Wellness Approach."

⁶⁶ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 96.

were not eager to accept Christianity. Raboteau records that missionaries in the field complained that the "wicked life of [white] Christians" was an obstacle impeding conversion without coercion.⁶⁷ It is important to note that for enslaved persons, ministers, in particular, were deserving of condemnation because they kept persons enslaved and acted inhumanely towards them. William Humbert, a fugitive slave from Charleston, South Carolina, held contempt for ministers because of hypocritical actions. He recalls,

I have seen a minister hand the sacrament to the deacons to give the slaves, and, before the slaves had time to get home, living a great distance from church, have seen one of the same deacons, acting as patrol, flog one of the brother members within two hours of his administering the sacrament to him, because he met the slave... without a passport, beyond the time allowed him to go home.⁶⁸

Some enslaved persons' rejection of "white folks' religion" was expressed outwardly by refusing to join the same denomination as their enslaver. I wish to point out that the rejection of the enslaver's religion did not mean a rejection of Christianity altogether. Enslaved persons were survivalists and found ways to hear a message of liberation despite one-sided white supremacist preaching, even though it was discouraged and, in some places, illegal for a Black minister to preach to enslaved Blacks without White supervision.⁶⁹

Before Blacks could legally congregate in their own religious circles, it was not unusual for Black bodies to outnumber white bodies in a single congregation. In the southern states, many Blacks converted into Baptist and Methodist congregations. The influx of Black converts into Baptist and Methodist congregations led to mixed, though

⁶⁷ Ibid, 121.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 293.

⁶⁹ Until state legislatures passed laws restricting Blacks from preaching, Baptist churches licensed and ordained Black men who felt the call to preach after they demonstrated their gifts before a committee. Even still, slave preachers were only allowed to preach with permission from their owners.

segregated, congregations, where Black congregants were relegated to sit in the galleries or back pews.⁷⁰ When Black congregants became too numerous, separate services were held for them, and in some cases, white members withdrew, leaving Black members to form amicably separated churches under white leadership. The monitoring of Black bodies in spiritual spaces created a boundary of content and spirit expression, which was remedied by "invisible" gatherings of Black bodies.

At the start of the Civil War in America, most of the Black enslaved community participated in Christianity. The majority of enslaved persons were American-born, and the cultural and linguistic barriers of early conversion attempts had faded away. Raboteau argues that the "religion of the slaves was both institutional and noninstitutional, visible and invisible, formally organized and spontaneously adapted." He posits that the enslaved community "had an extensive religious life of its own, hidden from the eyes of the master. In the secrecy of the quarters or the seclusion of the brush arbors ('hush harbors')," where the enslaved made Christianity truly their own.⁷¹ While sermons preached in white governed churches preached obedience, temperance, and segregation continuing in the afterlife, in hush harbor gatherings, the enslaved were able to sing, pray, and proclaim as they saw fit. Beyond the watchful eye of their captors—who would flog and beat their enslaved people if they found out about their secret gatherings, the descendants of Africans, although enslaved, would affirm their humanity and engage in practices that offered them communal hope, such as praying—"Lord, deliver us from under bondage."⁷²

⁷⁰ The title of this project, "No More Gallery Seats," invokes this history.

⁷¹ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 212.

⁷² *Ibid*, 217.

According to Diana Hayes, professor emerita of systematic theology, the term *Black Church* encompasses the history of the people of African descent and "stretches a nearly unbroken line of resistance to slavery and dehumanization back to the first Africans brought to the Americas and grudgingly, often cynically, introduced a form of Christianity that sought to demonstrate their [Africans] fitness for slavery.⁷³ Nonetheless, this project needs to point out that *the Black Church* provided structure and meaning for African people and their descendants as they struggled to survive the "ravages and brutality of slavery and racial oppression."⁷⁴ To this point, W.E.B. Du Bois argues,

In origin and functions the Negro church is a broader, deeper, and more comprehensive social organization than the church of white America. The Negro church is not simply an organism for the propagation of religion; it is the center of the social, intellectual, and religious life of an organized group of individuals.... It is, in fine, the central organism of the organized life of the American Negro for amusement, relaxation, instruction, and religion.⁷⁵

If this is true, then the *Black Church* has been a massive place of wellbeing for black bodies. Nevertheless, with the shifting demographics of church participation amongst Millennials and Gen Z, traditional religious outlets may be circumvented. At the same time, cultural and ritualistic engagement is rising for the persons who cultivate spiritual wellbeing.

THE PROBLEM IN CAMPUS MINISTRIES

A national study on campus ministries' involving college and university chaplaincy was conducted in 2014 by John Schmalzbauer. Based on the 2014 study, data shows that

⁷³ Diana L. Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2012), 94.

⁷⁴ Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), xxiii.

⁷⁵ W.E.B. Dubois, *W.E.B Du Bois: On Sociology and the Black Community*, ed. Dan Green and Edward Driver (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), as cited in Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace*, 95.

while Black student presence increased between the 1960s and 2000s, Black chaplains and religious and spiritual affairs professionals did not increase. Furthermore, there has not been an increase in para-ministry organizations focusing on Black folk's spirituality presented in a non-Eurocentric package.⁷⁶ According to the report, white Catholic and white Evangelical organizations have a dominant presence on historically white campuses. While most campus ministries may tout that they are a welcoming space and invite all who want to join them to be included, Black students are relegated to desegregating the space with their presence rather than being integrated into the space. To combat this trend, campus ministry groups InterVarsity and Campus Crusade for Christ "stepped up their efforts" to connect with African American students.⁷⁷ In *The Resilience of Religion in American Higher Education*, published in 2018, containing data from 2016-2017, John Schmalzbauer and Kathleen A. Mahoney record that Campus Crusade's Impact Movement has attracted over 15,000 African Americans, and InterVarsity's influence reaches 5,000 Black students.⁷⁸ Taking the liberty of interpreting these figures and placing them within a scale, during 2016-2017, *InterVarsity* and *Campus Crusade Impact* collectively reached 20,000 Black students out of a possible 1,659,000 (1.3% of the Black undergraduate population).⁷⁹ Again, these "stepped up efforts" reflect data from 2016-2017, which

⁷⁶ Schmalzbauer, "The Evolving Role," 22

⁷⁷ Schmalzbauer and Mahoney, *The Resilience of Religion in American Higher Education*, 110.

⁷⁸ Eadem, 110.

⁷⁹ "African American Students," Post-secondary National Policy Institute (PNPI), last modified January 2021, <https://pnpi.org/african-american-students/>. According to the June 2020, PNPI factsheets, there were 2,100,000 Black students at four-year institutions in 2018—According to The Pew report (Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, 79% of African Americans identify as Christians. Since InterVarsity and Campus Crusade do not distinguish between HBCU's and PWI's, the aggregated average of Black students these organizations reached was 1.3%. I arrived at this figure based upon data that (in 2018) there were 2,100,000 Black students enrolled at four-year institutions of higher education. Applying the laws of statistics, I applied the variables of seventy-nine percent of African Americans identifying as Christians. Since there is nothing withholding these organizations from venturing onto the campuses of HBCUs, I didn't account for PWI campus presence alone.

notably precedes the age of Donald Trump. Unfortunately, college campus ministries are subject to the current national racial climate and the subsequent mass departure of Black bodies from Evangelical-White-Christian spaces.

During the Presidential election and administration of Donald Trump, data shows that significant amounts of Black Christians "departed" predominately white worship spaces. In a 2018 New York Times article by Campbell Robertson, Robertson records that Black congregants in predominately white congregations had "already grown uneasy" witnessing their white-identifying pastors fail to address police shootings of African-Americans.

“They heard prayers for Paris, for Brussels, for law enforcement; they heard that one should keep one's eyes on the kingdom, that the church was colorblind, and that talk of racial injustice was divisive, not a matter of the gospel.”⁸⁰

And then, White evangelicals overwhelmingly voted for Donald Trump. They cheered the election outcome even with Trump's comments about Mexican immigrants, his open hostility to N.F.L players protesting police brutality, and his earlier "birther" crusade against President Obama—claiming he was not a United States citizen. In the article, Chanequa Walker-Barnes, a Black woman who was raptured away in the informal mass "exodus" of Black people from white-majority churches, is recorded saying, "we were willing to give up our preferred worship style for the chance to really try to live this vision of beloved community with a diverse group of people; that didn't work... something is profoundly wrong at the heart of the white church." ⁸¹

⁸⁰ Campbell Robertson, "A Quiet Exodus: Why Black Worshipers Are Leaving White Evangelical Churches," *New York Times*, March 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/blacks-evangelical-churches.html>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Black America's inability to shed their Black skin from their religious experiences or life experiences is dumbfounding to some white Christians. Wellbeing cannot be sought after or attained without the body. Therefore, the issues of life that attack Black bodies are also attacking Black people's souls. Howard Thurman, the first Black CARSA professional at a historically white institution of higher education, illustrates this in his autobiography. In *With Head and Heart*, Thurman reflects upon his matriculation through Rochester Theological Seminary, a historically white institution. He recalls during his training an interaction he had with an influential white Canadian professor. He recalls that

...at the end of my senior year, Dr. Cross and I had a final conference (private meeting). I told him that I had been invited to become the pastor of a Baptist Church in Oberlin. It was my hope, I said, to study New Testament with Dr. Kemper Fullerton at the theological school. He was smiling and enthusiastic as I told him my plans. Presently his demeanor became sober, even grave. What followed astounded me. He told me that I had superior gifts and that he felt it probable that I would be able to make an original contribution to the spiritual life of the times. That said, he went to the heart of his concern,

'You are a very sensitive Negro man,' he said, 'and doubtless feel under great obligation to put all the weight of your mind and spirit at the disposal of the struggle of your own people for full citizenship. But let me remind you that all social questions are transitory in nature and it would be a terrible waste for you to limit your creative energy to the solution of the race problem, however insistent its nature. Give yourself to the timeless issues of the human spirit,' he advised.

When I did not reply, he said, 'Perhaps I have no right to say this to you because as a white man, I can never know what it is to be in your situation.' I pondered the meaning of his words, and wondered what kind of response I could make to this man who did not know that a man [sic] and his [sic] black skin must face the 'timeless issues of the human spirit' together.⁸²

In Schmalzbauer's 2014 report, of the 335 respondents from various institutions, 18% of respondents (60 institutions) reported having historically Black church campus ministries. For perspective, 37% reported Hillel or Jewish campus ministries, 43% reported Muslim Student Associations or other Muslim campus ministries, 26 % reported Buddhist

⁸² Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman.*, First Harvest/HBJ edition. (San Diego: Harcourt, 1981), 60.

groups, 24 % reported Hindu groups, 18% "other" Asian religious groups, and 12% Latter-Day Saints. Meanwhile, again, the national average Black student population hovers around 13% of the student body population. What is not clarified in Schmalzbauer's report is whether the 60 institutions who reported having a historically Black Church campus ministry were including the student-organized Gospel Choir. This data subtly articulates that there is a dearth of spiritual spaces on predominately white campuses where Black bodies can seek wellness and relief from racism or the threat of racialized ostracization. Suppose higher education administrations are serious about creating campuses where Black bodies can flourish. The data persists that Black people are more religious than their White and Latinx counterparts. In that case, an exploration of wellbeing through the lenses of spiritual wellbeing reveals a singular narrative of incongruent support for spiritual wellbeing based upon data on the significance of religion and spirituality for DEA.⁸³

In an article entitled, "5 Facts about the Religious Lives of African Americans," David Masci highlights five data-driven facts about the religious and spiritual lives of African Americans. Of those five points, the most pertinent for this study are:

1. Roughly eight in ten (79%) African Americans self-identify as Christian. Half of all African Americans (53%) are associated with a historically Black Protestant church.
2. The largest historically Black church in the U.S. is the National Baptist Convention U.S.A, Inc. Other large historically Black churches in the Church

⁸³ "Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>. This study does not specify whether they specifically interviewed Black people who identified as African American descendants of enslaved Africans, or Americans with African diasporic roots (i.e., Africa, Caribbean, etc.).

of God in Christ, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), and the Progressive National Baptist Church Association, Inc.

3. 3% of African American's identify as Muslim (880,000), which is a fifth of the total U.S. Muslim population.
4. African Americans who identify as religiously unaffiliated (nones) have increased in recent years, mirroring recent trends—18%.⁸⁴

In the next section, this project will further explore the historical and institutional religious spaces that have cloaked pursuit of wellbeing for descendants of enslaved Africans—to better understand campus culture—through examining Black Muslims and African Indigenous Religious practices. By doing so, this project makes visible that which is “invisible.” It will examine how the trauma of anti-Black racism affects non-Christian identifying students seeking wellbeing through spiritual wellbeing.

⁸⁴ David Masci, “5 Facts about Blacks and Religion in America,” *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/02/07/5-facts-about-the-religious-lives-of-african-americans/>.

CHAPTER 3
BLACK EMBODIMENT OF SPIRITUAL AFRICANISMS
IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

“Yes, I am Black and Muslim. Muslim and Black. I rock my hijabs and headwraps. Bow my head when I pray; say ameen and asé.” – Aliyah Hakim El⁸⁵

This chapter explores Black religious and spiritual presence in higher education by first tracing the history of African Mohammedans (Muslims)—the first Africans to express spirituality on American shores—their descendants and their influence on Black Christianity. It then explores the discrimination that both African and African American Muslims encounter when engaging Islam on-campus. Lastly, it will conclude with a discourse on the "invisibility" of Black spirituality in predominantly white spaces of higher education.

AFRICAN MOHAMMEDANS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

When enslavers brought Africans to the Americas, they attempted to eradicate all African culture forms because African enslavement was dependent upon cultural identities being destroyed; this made it difficult to unify and thus rebel or resist. Nevertheless, African belief systems and customs were able to survive the attempted cultural genocide and, though influenced by western restraints, were able to pass on Africanisms to their descendants. Albert Raboteau argues that one of the "most durable" and "adaptable" constituents of the enslaved African's culture, that linked African past with American present, were the religious practices of the enslaved.⁸⁶ Further, he says that it is essential to realize that under the duress of slavery, the religions of Africa have not been preserved

⁸⁵ Aliyah Hakim El, "I AM #BLACKANDMUSLIM," June 12, 2019, directed by Ahmed Eid for *Hijabi Chronicles*, spoken word video, 2:54, <http://thehijabichronicles.com/i-am-blackandmuslim/>.

⁸⁶ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 4.

as static "Africanisms" or as archaic "retentions," but rather, have become like unique "hybrids" of American origin.

When the first Africans were exported to the Americas, Islam was already well established in West Africa. Among the Africans who were enslaved were the Wolof, Serer, Mandinke, Bambara, Fulani, and Hausa, who were Muslim.⁸⁷ According to Albert Raboteau, the first black Africans with whom white Europeans made initial contact on the west coast of Africa were "black Moors," as distinguished from "Tawny-moors."⁸⁸ The constraints and oppression of enslavement proved detrimental to the upkeep and promulgation of Islam in America by the descendants of enslaved persons in a presentation that modern practitioners of Islam would recognize. Nonetheless, African Islamic practices seeped into aspects of Christianity and contributed to the spiritual practices of DEA. The Islamic history that traveled to the Western world in the hearts of African chattel cargo is not obsolete in our exploration of spiritual wellbeing for DEA because it holds within its history elements of American religious past and present.

After Catholicism, Islam was the second monotheist religion introduced into the post-1492 Americas. It preceded Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Baptism, Santería, Vodum, and Candomblé, to name a few. All of these religions are still thriving and being practiced by the descendants of enslaved Africans. However, not one community currently practices Islam as passed on by preceding African generations.⁸⁹ In *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, Sylviane Diouf proposes, "Islam brought by the enslaved West Africans has not survived. It has left traces, and it has contributed to the

⁸⁷ Ibid, 5.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 5.

⁸⁹ Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, 2nd edition (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 251.

culture and history of the continents, but its conscious practice is no more." American enslavers' brutal and dehumanizing tactics decimated the probability of Islam being transmuted to one's progeny or being spread through proselytization.

The first obstruction was a significant imbalance between the number of African males and females exported from Africa. For example, in the eighteenth century, among the Senegambian, 66 percent were males. The numbers for the Central Sudanese were even worse, with about 95 percent men.⁹⁰ The demographics of plantations did not provide adequate possibilities for developing families, and for this reason, many African men could not form families. According to Diouf, women were later included over the years for the sheer purposes of reproduction and domestic work. Nonetheless, there are indications of endogamy tendencies, with American native-born women and men marrying and living among themselves and the Africans who could, doing the same.⁹¹

The next barrier was the low fertility rate and high infant and adult mortality rate. If this obstacle had been conquered by chance, there loomed the always present possibility that family members could be sold—which could and did forever destroy the family unit and any possible biological, cultural continuity. Therefore, the chances of a Muslim man finding a Muslim spouse, having children, and keeping them long enough to train them in the religion were slim. For the Muslims who did have children, the difficulties with literacy may have coincided with preventing Islam's passage from generation to generation. As a minority religion, Islam was surrounded by religions with a much larger following that

⁹⁰ Paul Lovejoy, *Background to Rebellion: The Origins of Muslim Slaves in Bahia. Unfree Labour in the Development of the Atlantic World* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 161–62.

⁹¹ Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 252.

may have been more appealing and accessible to younger Muslims searching for conformity and a sense of community.

SHAUTING, SHOUTING, AND CARRYING ON...

While African participation in Islam was not able to be preserved in terms of being a religious practice, Islam's influence on the spirituality of the descendants of enslaved Africans is still visible to date. While Islam, as maintained by West Africans, did not outlive the men and women who brought it to the New World, their story still speaks in remnants of practices seeped into other religions still practiced in the Americas and American college campuses.

The Islamic influence in Christianity is speculative but also reasonable to fathom. In her book *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands*, Lydia Parrish was the first to report an interesting hypothesis regarding the "shout" while studying Africanisms in the Gullahs' language and culture of Georgia and South Carolina.

"There appears to be a difference of opinion regarding the use of the word 'shout' in designating a religious ring-dance, which was enjoyed during plantation days after prayer meeting and church service. Formerly writers thought that the Negro used the word because dancing was so sinful that it was wise to avoid even the name. But Dr. L.D. Turner has discovered that the Arabic word Saut (pronounced like our word "shout"), in use among the Mohammedans of West Africa, meant to run and walk around the Kaaba. I believe he has provided the right explanation for the difference in the meaning of the word, as used by the whites and the blacks [sic], for I have seen Negroes do the holy dance around the pulpit in their churches in such a manner."⁹²

In his linguistic book, published in 1949, Lorenzo Turner explains, "...the shout is a religious ring dance in which the participants continue to perform until they are exhausted." The word could come from the Arabic *shaut*, which means, according to

⁹² Lydia Parrish, Olin Downes, and Art Rosenbaum, *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 54.

Turner, "to move around the Kaaba...until exhausted."⁹³ In *Servants of Allah*, Sylviane Diouf asserts that the linguistic hypothesis seems reinforced by observing the "dance" itself.⁹⁴ Similar to pilgrims in Mecca, the shouters turn counterclockwise. Diouf imaginatively ponders whether enslaved Muslims, knowing that they would never go to Mecca, re-created the central and most important pilgrimage a Muslim can make.⁹⁵ Other evidence of places where Islam may have influenced the practices of Black Christians is in the pronouncement of the three-fold "amen" at the end of prayers.

Unlike other traditional African religions, Islam could not be fully integrated into other religions. The Africanism present in American Christianity today was able to persist and be transmitted by those enslaved to their descendants because of their malleability. Islam, as it was practiced in Africa, could not easily be transmuted because of its inability to be intertwined or engulfed into other Christian practices without contradicting key principles of the religion. While Yoruba practices could easily amalgamate into Santería, Candomblé, and Vudu, under the guise of Catholicism, it would have been haram and heinous to declare anyone or anything "God" except Allah. The Islam that arrived in the New World in the hearts of the enslaved practitioners has no residual connection to the

⁹³ Lorenzo Dow Turner, Katherine Wyly Mille, and Michael B. Montgomery, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 202.

⁹⁴ Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 97.

⁹⁵ Diouf acknowledges that this hypothesis cannot be verified with empirical evidence. Nonetheless, her scholarly conjecture suggests a puzzling phenomenon of retention and recreation.

twentieth-century Islam among African-Americans starting in 1913.⁹⁶ The Black Muslim movement that eventually gave rise to the Nation of Islam under Elijah Muhammad is not considered an opposing interpretation; it was a completely different religion. For this reason, Diouf argues that it is improbable that the last African Muslims would have been involved in constructing these organizations.⁹⁷ There is no documented continuity between the Islam brought by the African Muslims and the early twentieth-century movements that claimed to be Islamic.

In Higher Education, while there may be pockets of students who identify as descendants of enslaved Africans who also hold identities within current congregations of the Nation of Islam, their practices are not descended from their enslaved ancestors. The Sunni sect of Islam is the Islam most practiced by transatlantic DEA. Nonetheless, on predominately white campuses' DEA still report being ostracized and treated differently by other Muslims from Middle Eastern origins, who embody a colonizer mindset towards Black bodied folk – particularly DEA.

While America's most famous Muslims – Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali – are notably Black, Black Muslims have articulated a double consciousness about their religious identity and cultural identity. To be Black and Muslim presents challenges in both affinity

⁹⁶ Timothy Drew (b. 1886 in North Carolina) took the name Noble Drew Ali in 1913. He founded the Moorish Holy Temple of Science in Newark, NJ. Noble Drew Ali's teachings became the basis of a black nationalist movement that extolled black pride and a sense of confidence by linking disenfranchised, humiliated, and exploited people to the conquering and cultured Moors of the Middle Ages. He presented himself as a prophet from Allah. This claim disregarded a crucial tenet of Islam, which considers Muhammad the last prophet. The few African Muslims who were still living in the early years of his movement would not have recognized what Noble Drew Ali presented as Islam.

For more about Noble Drew Ali and the Black Muslim movement, see: Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971) and Albert J. Raboteau, "Muslim Movement," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

⁹⁷ Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 279.

groups. Statistically, Christianity is the dominant religion in American, with Islam being the second largest. Following this statistical curve, for Black America, Christianity is most prominent, with Islam being the second-largest religion. Black Muslims, however, have a unique experience as a result of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Black racism that impacts both African Americans and Black immigrants.⁹⁸ While most of this unwarranted bias is external to the religion, there is implicit and explicit bias within the religion against Black Muslims.

Within Higher Education, Muslim students report the effects of islamophobia on campus—feelings of ostracization, bias incidents, and xenophobia. Many Americans, including some in political office, do not distinguish between the violent ideologies of extremist groups and mainstream Islam. Rarely is there a comparison between extremist Islamic followers and extremist Christian followers – both undeniably capable of terrorizing society. As a result of this, there is often an anti-Muslim backlash in the wake of attacks, despite the broad condemnation of terrorism and the Quran’s use to justify terrorist behavior. Moreover, the discriminatory behavior of targeting all Muslims for the vicious acts of a few, seeps onto college campuses.

The university setting acts as a social laboratory, a microcosm of the larger world governed by mission statements and strategic plans that aim to steer the university towards its highest ideals. While most liberal arts universities’ principal goal is to foster understanding and respect among people by encouraging diversity, Islamophobia needs only the tiniest fissure to burst the seams of religious tolerance.

⁹⁸ For more information about these perils see: Akinyi Ochieng, “Black Muslims Face Double Jeopardy, Anxiety in The Heartland,” *Code Switch*, NPR, February 25, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/02/25/516468604/black-muslims-face-double-jeopardy-anxiety-in-the-heartland>.

One of the most violent manifestations of Islamophobia took place at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. On February 10, 2015, Deah Shaddy Barakat, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, and Razan Mohammad Abu-Salhu were killed at their home in Finley Forest Condominiums in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Barakat was a second-year student at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Dentistry, his wife Yusor was a North Carolina State University (NCSU) graduate planning to enter UNC Dentistry School in the fall, and her sister Razan was a student at NCSU majoring in architecture and environmental design.⁹⁹ A resident who lived in the vicinity of their home murdered them. After national or global incidents of terrorism carried out in the name of Islam, micro and macro aggressions increased against “visibly” Muslim people.¹⁰⁰ Within the religion itself, micro-aggressions abound for those who are visibly Black.

In addition to Islamophobia, Black Muslims experience anti-Black racism within Islam and, sequentially, on campus. Black Muslims, especially DEA, experience both racism and Islamophobia within both their religious and racial identities.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, in campus populations, research shows that Black Muslim students report exclusion from Muslim student organizations and pressures to choose between being Muslim or being Black. In her article, “Black and Muslim: How Chaplains can Empower Marginalized Students,” Nisa Muhammad records this account of a Black student named Halimah:

Halimah was so excited to go to the state university. Her parents had attended another state school and had told her wonderful stories of being in the Muslim Students Association (MSA), where they met their best friends. They told her about the exciting events and programs they attended as young Muslims trying to make their way in the world,

⁹⁹ “Here’s What We Know about the Triple Homicide in Chapel Hill,” *The Daily Tar Heel*, February 11, 2015 accessed August 21, 2020, <https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2015/02/heres-what-we-know-about-the-triple-homicide-in-chapel-hill>.

¹⁰⁰ Tyler Bishop, “Being Muslim on Campus,” *The Atlantic*, November 20, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/muslim-students-university/416994/>.

¹⁰¹ Female students who wear traditional Islamic clothing experience tri-fold stigmatization as they experience sexism too.

the *halaqas*, the amazing guest speakers, and the trips to other schools to socialize as well as network with other young Muslims. Halimah wanted the same things. She was eager to get started, and with freshman enthusiasm, she went to the first MSA meeting of the semester. She was surprised to be one of only a few Black students there. She was even more surprised at the looks she received when she got there. Halimah chalked it up to being new and figured more Black students would attend later in the semester. That didn't happen. However, Halimah was undaunted. She came to every meeting, but by mid-semester realized her ideas and suggestions were always rejected. Maybe it was just because she was a freshman, she thought. She kept coming and kept trying until, at one meeting, she suggested that at the next event they have something other than Desi (South Asian) or Middle Eastern food, have a more diverse menu. One of the other students responded with a snarl, 'Do you want us to have bean pies?' 'That's not a bad idea,' she thought, but the message was clear. That was her last meeting with the MSA. She took her hurt feelings and started going to the Black Student Union meetings. There she was welcomed because of her race, but there were no activities related to her religion. She felt as if they tolerated her breaks for prayers, her requests for 'Cheese pizza only, please,' and her hijab and modest attire. Halimah found herself at the intersection of race and religion, as do so many Black Muslim university students at predominantly white institutions (PWI).¹⁰²

In the article, Muhammad asserts that the “challenges of being Black and Muslim for many mean you are often too Black to be Muslim, and for others, you are too Muslim to be Black. When people talk about Blacks, they are rarely also talking about Black Muslims. When people talk about Muslims, they seldom include Black Muslims.”¹⁰³ Why is this the case within Islam? In the article “Assimilating to a White Identity: The Case of Arab Americans,” Kristine Ajrouch and Amaney Jamal present that immigrants come to America and see the “nexus” of power and privilege, and see the lives of people who identify as White and the lives of people of color, and without reservation they opt-in to assume all the rights and privileges that come with identifying and accepting Whiteness, which for many, includes anti-Black racism and oppression.¹⁰⁴ As stated by Muna Mire:

¹⁰² Nisa Muhammad, “Black and Muslim: How Chaplains Can Empower Marginalized Students,” *Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research*, last modified February 27, 2020, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/nisa-muhammad/black-and-muslim-how-chaplains-can-empower-marginalized-students/>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Kristine J. Ajrouch and Amaney Jamal, “Assimilating to a White Identity: The Case of Arab Americans,” *International Migration Review* 41, no. 4 (2017): 860–79.

It's an implicit contract with explicit aims: when you come to America, you'd better not ally yourself in any way with Black people or Blackness if you expect to get ahead. Black people are bad news.¹⁰⁵

While each campus has its ethos and uniqueness of circumstances, Black Muslims generally report experiencing a lack of peace in religious and affinity spaces. As Black Muslims pursue well-being, these tensions are important nuances to navigate.

The use of the words “descendants of enslaved Africans (DEA)” is to parse the unique history that transatlantic, North American soil-born descendants of enslaved Africans have had as a distinct Black life experience. Blackness is not monolithic, and the pursuit of wellness by Black people has not been a singular track. While Black people are overwhelmingly Christian, they are and have historically also been Muslim. By far, not all enslaved Africans converted to Christianity; but their descendants overwhelmingly did. The history of Black Muslims in America's religious history is vital to understanding the duplicitous awareness of race and Islamophobia that Black Muslims experience in higher education. While the original Islam practiced in West Africa could not survive the cruelty of American slavery, as previously stated, elements of Islam seeped into the Black Christian spiritual expression and the pursuit of wellness. America's religious history of Black Muslims is both a determination to be well by one's definition of wellness and persistence in the face of religious and racial trauma.

AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS AND PRACTICES

One of the most malleable and deep-rooted African cultural elements linking the African past with the American present is religion. African styles of worship, forms of ritual, superstitions, and systems of beliefs, remained significant in the Americas, not

¹⁰⁵ Muna Mire, “Towards a Black Muslim Ontology of Resistance,” *The New Inquiry*, April 29, 2015, <https://thenewinquiry.com/towards-a-black-muslim-ontology-of-resistance/>.

because they were preserved in their “pure” practice but because they were transformed. Common to many African societies was the belief in a singular High God or Supreme Creator. It was also commonly believed that this High God was, to an extent, removed from the activities of humanity—especially in comparison to lesser gods and ancestor-spirits who were actively and constantly concerned with the daily life of individuals and society.¹⁰⁶ In addition to the lesser gods, a powerful class of spirits in the world of traditional West African religions are the ancestors. The ancestors—both those who died long ago and those of more recent memory—are revered as founders of villages and kinship groups. It is believed that ancestors can intervene in present affairs and grant fertility and health to their descendants.¹⁰⁷ Rites honoring the ancestors vary from the simple private offering of food and drink to more elaborate public ceremonies.

For historical West African peoples, religious beliefs were carried into action through ritual. These rituals carried elements of “vibrant patterns of music, dancing, drumming, and singing,” which were integral parts of worshiping the gods and ancestors.¹⁰⁸ Among the Yoruba and the Fon, the orisha and the vodun are called to take possession of their devotees by the songs and the cult group's drumming. Each god or spirit had their own songs and rhythms. When “mounted” by their gods, the devotees' dance to the accompaniment of songs and music, the distinctive steps revelatory of their gods.

From these descriptions of West African religious expressions, it is easy to form the direct resemblances of these practices in Black religious practices in the Americas,

¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and Kindred Peoples*, 2nd edition (London: Epworth Press, 1961), 18.

¹⁰⁷ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Parrinder, *West African Religion*, 22.

especially in Christian Black churches. Raboteau argues that “the most obvious continuity between African and Afro-American religions is the style of performance in ritual action. Drumming, singing, and dancing are essential features of African and Afro-American liturgical expression and are crucial to the ceremonial possession of cult members by their gods.”¹⁰⁹

Baptisms are another place of ritual continuity from the practices of West Africans in the Americas. Raboteau argues that “the strong appeal of the Baptist denomination for ‘Negroes’ was due partially to the West African religious background, where water cults are extremely important.”¹¹⁰ The Baptists’ insistence on immersion was an attractive rite to Africans familiar with water cults.¹¹¹ In Africa, Dutch Guiana, and Haiti, possession by water spirits drive the possessed devotees to hurl themselves into a stream, pond, or river. Raboteau notes that, similarly, “in the baptismal service of rural Black Baptists, the spirit occasionally falls upon the new Christian emerging from the water, causing them to shout.”¹¹²

Diana Hayes argues that the “ring shout dance” was a common means of building community for the enslaved.¹¹³ In the hush harbors, the enslaved would form a circle and revolve around singers, moaners, and shouters, providing a spiritual as well as an emotional release.¹¹⁴ In an account recorded by Harold Courlander:

[It consists of] a circle of people moving single filed (usually counter-clockwise) around a central point, to the accompaniment of singing, stamping, and heel-clicking. ...the steps

¹⁰⁹ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 35.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 57; Raboteau cites responses to myths about the Negro by Melville Herskovits.

¹¹¹ As previously noted, currently, the largest historically Black church in the U.S. is the National Baptist Convention U.S.A, Inc. Also mention in the section on Black Christians is that upon conversion, many enslaved Africans flocked towards the Baptist denomination.

¹¹² Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 57.

¹¹³ Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace*, 52.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 52.

are akin to a shuffle, with free foot movement prohibited, and little versatility permitted. Sometimes the clearly defined single file gives way to a sort of amorphous crowd moving around a central point. At the high point of the excitement, such exclamations as ‘Oh, Lord!’ and ‘Yes, Lord’ turn into nonsense sounds and cries; seemingly wild emotional responses....¹¹⁵

Moreover, herein is where Christianity and Islam for enslaved Africans and their descendants meet. If Sylviane Diouf’s hypothesis in *Servants of Allah* is true—that the “shout” dance is the absorption of Islamic practices into DEA Christian practices, then all of these spiritual practices are indigenous to the people of Africa and transverse the Atlantic to American soil through them, with remnants of their diasporic roots still present in modernity. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that these Africanisms were able to survive in the practices of African descendants because they were hidden from watchful white (person’s) eyes. Currently, many African ritualistic elements are present in American worship services that are sans Black bodies—and intellectually—sans the knowledge that they are grafting African religious practices into Mainline (read: White) liturgical practices. And while I may use the terms “African religious practice” and “African spiritual practices” interchangeably, spirituality is not synonymous with religion. Religion is the amalgamation of rites, rituals, and dogmas institutionalized, and thus one can be religious without ever experiencing God. Spirituality is the encounter of the Divine, and spiritual practices are to an end—an encounter with Spirit, evidenced in outcomes. For the descendants of enslaved Africans, their cultural identities are steeped in spiritual practices inherited from their African ancestors, cultivated as a means of surviving the inhumanness of American chattel slavery. Spiritual practices were how the descendants of enslaved Africans accessed well-being.

¹¹⁵ Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 194–95.

WELL-BEING CLOAKED IN SPIRITUALITY

Black Religion, and concomitantly, Black spiritual practices, under slavery, have been termed the “invisible institution” because independent religious meetings by enslaved persons were illegal and had to be conducted secretly. In the foreword to Lawrence Levine’s essay “Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness: An Exploration in Neglected Sources,” Raboteau says, “because of the secrecy involved and the fact that most participants were illiterate, slave [sic] religion was considered invisible to historians until the 1970s when several scholars demonstrated that there were indeed ample sources deriving from the slave [sic] themselves in the forms of grace art, folklore, slave [sic] narratives, and autobiographies.”¹¹⁶ If historians could overlook the very prominent religious experience of the enslaved population until the 1970s, then their spiritual practices were also ignored. Moreover, their mental health strategies were socio-scientifically invisible too. However, some resources are examining contemporary African practices for ancient and ancestral roots and comparing them to folklore from enslaved and formerly enslaved person narratives for continuity. For example, Levine records that “in Africa, songs, tales, proverbs, and verbal games served the dual function of not only preserving communal values and solidarity but also of providing occasions for the individual to transcend, at least symbolically, the inevitable restrictions of his [sic] environment and his [sic] society by permitting him [sic] to express deeply held feelings which he ordinarily was not

¹¹⁶ Lawrence W. Levine. “Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness: An Explanation in Neglected Sources,” in *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, ed. Timothy E. Fulop, and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), 57.

allowed to verbalize.”¹¹⁷ As explained to him by an Ashanti high priest, English anthropologist, R. S. Rattray records that,

...among the Ashanti and the Dahomeans... periods were set side when the inhabitants were encouraged to gather together and, through the medium of song, dance, and tales, to express openly their feelings about each other. The psychological release this allowed seems to have been well understood. ‘You know that everyone has a sunsum (soul) that may get hurt or knocked about or become sick, and so make the body ill.’ Very often ...ill health is caused by the evil and the hate that another has in his [*sic*] head against you. Again, you too may have hatred in your head against another, because of something that person has done to you, and that, too, causes your sunsum to fret and become sick. Our forebears knew this to be the case, and so they ordained a time, once every year, when every man and woman, free man and slave, should have freedom to speak out just what was in their actions, and not only their neighbors, but also the king or chief. When a man has spoken freely thus, he will feel his sunsum cool and quieted, and the sunsum of the other person against whom he has now openly spoken will be quieted also.¹¹⁸

In higher education, Black curators of religious and spiritual life are skilled with the ability to craft programming and confessional space where Black students, faculty, and staff, can relieve, retell, and repair their “sunsum” and thus, why they have been witnesses to the pursuit of well-being by the descendants of enslaved Africans at predominately White institutions.

In alignment with Schmalzbauer’s 2014 study on the “Evolving Role of the College and University Chaplaincy,” Black chaplains and religious and spiritual affairs (CARSA) professionals spend “a large part” of their jobs (1) interacting with students, (2) presiding over rituals and worship services, and (3) mentoring, coaching, or spiritual direction.¹¹⁹ For Black CARSA, as extracted from this project’s study, pastoral care and psychological counseling rank higher in day-to-day duties than it does for their white counterparts. Initially, this project was designed to capture the

¹¹⁷ Levine, “Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness,” 67

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Schmalzbauer, “The Evolving Role,” 18.

experiences of Black students matriculating through predominately White institutions of higher education, but COVID-19 derailed that plan. An effect of this, however, is that the researcher had to rethink the research design. In doing so, the researcher realized that Black CARSA professionals – whose jobs are or have been to curate religious and spiritual well-being on higher education campuses, are a better swath of historicity. Though Black CARSA professionals at predominately white institutions are comprised of a small number of individuals, their collective accounts capture a comprehensive examination of Black student presence from integration to the present. Plus, Black CARSA professionals in higher education can articulate the ethos of religious and spiritual life in higher education to reveal the essence of being Black and desiring to be spiritually healthy and well in a historically and predominately white institution of higher education.

As this project explores how the descendants of enslaved Africans at historically white institutions of higher education find purpose, meaning, understanding, and peace with themselves and others, it progresses to the narrative experiences of curators who have sought purpose, meaning, understanding and peace for themselves and others while occupying Black bodies in a historically White institution. The next portion of this project explores how DEA seeks purpose, meaning, understanding, and peace at predominately white institutions that are riddled with traumatizing white supremacy and racialized devaluation through the hermeneutical recollection of Black CARSA professionals.

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.”
– Zora Neale Hurston¹²⁰

PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

There is a limited amount of research across disciplines that is directed towards hearing the spiritual experience of Black students in historically and predominately white institutions of higher education. Some institutions have offices dedicated to cultivating spiritual well-being and curating religious experiences (e.g., Chaplain Offices, Religious and Spiritual Life Offices, Chapels). These offices are amenities of private higher education institutions. To hone in on a particular spectrum of bodies that could retain within them access points to the religious life experience and well-being report of the descendants of enslaved Africans at historically white institutions, it seemed best to avoid a broad reach of any DEA from any private institution, but rather, to reach for those who identify as Black, especially as a DEA, and are, or have been, employed within the offices dedicated to cultivating spiritual well-being. This study's overall goal was to explore, for the sake of understanding and describing in text, the shared or common experience of DEA at predominately white institutions as they pursue well-being – particularly spiritual well-being. I added a non-DEA Black identifying CARSA to the interviewee cohort for the sake of nuancing whether the spiritual experience was unique to DEA than to all persons who identify as Black. I discovered in studying the phenomenological data that the survival mechanisms and practices to affirm one’s humanity as anti-Black racism rages against one’s existence are common denominators for the necessity of spiritual well-being.

¹²⁰ Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996), 143.

This phenomenological study desires to find the commonality in the lived experiences of several individuals. A phenomenological study describes the “common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of concept or a phenomenon.”¹²¹ The intent is to discover what the essence of the experience is for the participants collectively, respectively. Therefore, phenomenological research is considered a human science, in contrast to natural science, because its structure is always steeped in the meaning of humans' lived experiences.¹²² Phenomenological research considers broader philosophical assumptions, some of which have a heavy bearing on this particular topic because of what the research reveals about university hiring practices and a university's animation of the mission.

Further, a phenomenological study including these particular voices, with the label “phenomenological research” attached to the common themes, is scholastic reparations. There is a history of academic and scholastic dismissal and diminution of Black voices when their experiences are recounted publicly. Historically, scholars drenched in racism are blind to see phenomenology. The narratives from the enslaved, the formerly enslaved, and their descendants, were not, at the time of collection, considered “data,” and rarely was their humanity and experience considered a “phenomenon.”¹²³

¹²¹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd edition, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 23.

¹²² Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).

¹²³ Timothy Fulop, “Introduction,” in *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, ed. Timothy E. Fulop, and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1, captures the preface words of W.E.B. Du Bois’ in *Souls of Black Folk*, claiming that his purpose was “to sketch, in vague, uncertain outline, the spiritual world in which ten thousand Americans live and strive.” Until the publication of Du Bois’s book in 1903, the religious experiences of African Americans (DEA) found little expression outside of denominational publications and spirituals. With the Du Bois book, the souls of black folk were finally given their long deserved due in a scholarly treatment designed for a broad audience. See also W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 1903), vii.

In his book, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, John Creswell suggests two phenomenological research types: hermeneutical phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology values the researcher's practice exploring the similarities between their own lived experience and that of the participants. When using this process, efforts are made to set aside similarities and approach the process as objectively as possible.¹²⁴ However, humanity's natural egoism creates skepticism about the full attainability of that practice. The lived experience precipitates a relational quality that once the researcher engages a participant, they also become a part of the process of interpreting what has been experienced. Since the goal is to describe the experience as it is presented, hermeneutical phenomenology considers the researcher's bias. It requires an awareness of it, so the research participants' experiences are as accurate as possible.¹²⁵

Hermeneutical phenomenology is the best methodology for this project because it provides room for interpretation and the search for meaning. Though the researcher—in this case, me—does the interpretation for the study, the hermeneutical interpretation is steeped in data, reflecting how the participants interpret their own experiences.

Although it can be argued that pure phenomenological research has no methods, there are guiding steps that include traditions, bodies of knowledge, insights, history, and other factors that provide a methodological framework for research. The goal of hermeneutical phenomenological research is to transfer the essence of a lived experienced into a text that is both a “reflective re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful.”¹²⁶ It is both a description of the experiences lived through and a description

¹²⁴ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 98.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 101.

¹²⁶ Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 36.

of the meaning of those lived through experiences. Therefore, hermeneutical phenomenology considers the researcher's bias, but it challenges the researcher to be aware of these limitations in an effort to hear the participants' experiences more purely. For these reasons, the initial assumptions are particularly significant to name. Similarly, the researcher's role and location are essential to how the data was analyzed and themes are interpreted.

ASSUMPTIONS

There are several philosophical assumptions to be acknowledged. Many of the assumptions listed here are connected to the shared survival of anti-Black racism experienced while working in higher education as a CARSA. There is an assumption that early integrationist CARSA professionals were contracted for the sole purpose of being a resource for all of campus, and particularly for Black students. There is an assumption that current CARSA were not hired to curate wellness for Black bodies, specifically. There is an assumption that higher education institutions do not understand the magnitude of work that encompasses caring for Black bodies in historically and predominately white settings. There is an assumption that anti-Black racism affects both students and Black CARSA. There is an assumption that Black CARSA want to share the racialized indignities they experience in religious and ethically astute spaces. There is an assumption that the Black people who occupy the role of CARSA are present because they feel it is vocational rather than occupational. There is an assumption that the participants will be honest about their experiences, but they will temper their honesty with the knowledge that their interview is being recorded.

STUDY DESIGN

The beginning of the research process included completing and passing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) human subjects training and gaining approval from both Wake Forest University and Duke University.¹²⁷ The research included in this study only needed approval from Duke University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). And then—COVID19. I had to rewrite my research plan and regain approval during a life-threatening pandemic. Between gaining initial approval for this research project (February 2020) and beginning the research (August 2020), my research subjects endured collective trauma associated with living while Black in United States of America.¹²⁸ It is important to note—and I will, often—that participants participated during the midst of a dual pandemic – which is, data within itself.

It would be antithetical to this project not to pause and honor the lives that in their most minuscule presentation—simply—mattered, but were dramatically cut short at the hands of state-sanctioned violence, which is a trauma to Black people who share the common “threatening” denominator— a Black body. Below, I list the names of the nationally elevated deaths that happened during the spring and summer of 2020 that enveloped the nation's attention and the participants of this study. Many of the participants in this study referenced the contextual events and were administering spiritual care to their campus constituents while participating in this study. After the names are listed, the next

¹²⁷ Wake Forest University is my base institution. My initial research included surveying a portion of the undergraduate population. Thus, I applied for and was given permission from IRB committees at both WFU and Duke University.

¹²⁸ As I write this project, I am aware of my own PTSD from the trauma of surviving avoidable death for both my immediate family (which includes two respiratory compromised individuals) by exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and victimization by state sanctioned violence capable through prolonged and frequent exposure to racist emblazoned terrorists who have infiltrated law enforcement.

page is intentionally left blank to represent both meditative silence and watchfulness for outcomes of justice.

Arbery Ahmaud.

Breonna Taylor.

George Floyd.

Elijah McCain.

John Neville.

No Justice – No Peace

Asé

After gaining IRB approval, I reached out to possible participants via email. Because of the environmental factors circling in our nation during the time, I exercised care while inquiring about their participation. I altered the initial email greeting to include after the salutation, “Are you well? Is your family well? If so, please proceed. Otherwise, your silence will be reciprocated with prayers for well-being.”¹²⁹ Interested parties responded to the affirmative, and uninterested parties politely declined.

Next, I sent an extensive email that included: 1) instructions for reviewing the consent form and sample questions before signing the consent form, 2) a link to schedule their interview, 3) a link to electronically sign the consent form and recording release, 4) a link to capture their demographic information. After these instructions, which were all considered one step, interviewees were asked to consider the setting they would be interviewing via *Zoom*.¹³⁰ Instructions were sent on how to utilize internet links to order, at no-cost to the interviewees, materials to aid in capturing the audio-visual interviews. Because the interviews hinged on the internet's stability, Wi-Fi boosters and lighting kits were provided, as needed.¹³¹ Participants were asked to test out their equipment before logging into *Zoom*.

Due to the excessive and repeated traumas participants were subjected to between the initial email inquiring about participation to the timing the scheduled interviews took place, I designed the interviews with room on both the front end and close of the interview for care and inventory to be offered, reciprocally. As a vocational cultivator of spiritual well-being, it would have been callous and erroneous of me not to take into

¹²⁹ See Appendix A.

¹³⁰ During the SARS CoV2 pandemic, state and local officials issued “stay-home” orders. Video teleconferencing became the primary tool for research, with my preferred application being *Zoom*.

¹³¹ See Appendix B and Appendix C for an example of the instructions.

consideration the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual health of my interviewees at the time of their interview, because as Alia E. Dastagir records in her May 29, 2020, USA Today article:

Racism is associated with a host of psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety, and other serious, sometimes debilitating mental conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders.... High-profile incidents of racism and police brutality, especially when accompanied by viral videos, are triggering for people of color who see how little changes in their aftermath. ... 'Racism is traumatic for people of color,' said Monnica Williams, a clinical psychologist and professor at the University of Ottawa in Canada, who studies African American mental health. 'Everything that you have to carry around anyway as a black person in America, to add onto it having to watch people in your community who've done nothing killed at the hands of people in power who will probably suffer few, if any, consequences. I think there's no better word to describe it than traumatizing.'¹³²

Dastagir includes in the article, statistical reports that:

Police kill more than 300 black Americans – at least a quarter unarmed – each year in the U.S., according to a 2018 study in *The Lancet*, which found these killings have spillover effects on the mental health of black Americans not directly affected. Research shows black Americans are 20% more likely to report serious psychological distress than non-Hispanic white Americans. In a study on black youth suicide, researchers found suicide attempts rose by 73% between 1991-2017 for black adolescents and listed exposure to racism as a factor. Roberto Montenegro, an assistant professor in child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Washington School of Medicine who studies the biological effects of discrimination, says 'living in a world where your body is a threat is painful and taxing. ...People of color must engage in extra processing demands to try and assure safety. This leads to states of hypervigilance, arousal and avoidance, which can manifest physically as hypertension and insomnia. It's called 'racial battle fatigue,' a term used to explain the psychological stress responses – frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear – experienced by people of color in historically white spaces.'¹³³

Dastagir recognizes that people of color witness these brutal deaths amid a global pandemic that is hitting African American and Latino communities especially hard. The article includes that many front-line jobs are disproportionately held by people of color, thus exacerbating the rate at which Black people are dying of COVID-19 compared to their

¹³² Alia E. Dastagir, "George Floyd Video Adds to Trauma: 'When Is the Last Time You Saw a White Person Killed Online?,'" *USA TODAY*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/05/28/george-floyd-ahmaud-arbery-covid-emotional-toll-hits-black-families/5270216002/>.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

non-Hispanic, white identifying counterparts. According to Dastagir, “people of color are more likely than white adults to report significant stressors in their life as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including getting coronavirus (71% vs. 59%, respectively), basic needs (61% vs. 47%), and access to health care services (59% vs. 46%).”¹³⁴ Considering this data and Monnica Williams’ statement above that “people of color have to sit on their anger and stuff it down... and (we know) the horrible physical and emotional toll (that takes) on our communities,” I chose to design this project with enough room to do a reciprocal check-in due to the environmental variables.¹³⁵

To accommodate the variability of check-ins and the tangential nature of phenomenological research, that is – long-winded preachers, I asked participants to allot ninety minutes towards the interview. Interviews were efficiently conducted within a fifty to sixty-minute time frame. Because the amount of Black CARSA professionals working at predominately white institutions of higher education is small—less than 25 persons nationwide—this meant that some of the participants were familiar colleagues, while other participants were initial meetings with strangers. Put another way, some participants entered the interview space with a trusting rapport for me as the researcher, while others built upon their blind trust during the check-in that preceded the interview.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

The people recruited for this study met the following criteria: (1) Identify as African-American or Black—inclusive of African in America, (2) are currently or previously employed as a religious life professional by a private historically and

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

predominately White institution of higher education, (3) if currently employed, have been at their institution for a minimum of two years.

Eighteen people were recruited for this project. I identified (relatively) twenty people who met the currently employed criteria and seven people who met the previously employed criteria as CARSA. For a national survey pool, this is a small yet comprehensive and extensive data pool. Of these twenty-seven possible persons, eighteen were approached for participation. Fifteen accepted.

To calibrate this project's gravity, it is important to note that two of those declinations were attached to a lack of confidence in the ability to de-identify participants. These were valid concerns attached to the minuscule amount of Black folk that have been employed as CARSA since desegregation and the origination of CARSA offices. In fact, upon their hire, some of the recruits were integrationist – that is, they were the first Black hires in their Offices by their institutions. After receiving a declination from a voice whose experience would have created a full continuous phenomenological report, I went back to the research design, and I amended the IRB to include identification of participants because I could not guarantee de-identification.¹³⁶ Therefore, fourteen of the fifteen participants agreed to interview, on-camera and in-text, identified.¹³⁷ Consensus for identification shifted the research questions and tailored the project because I choose to protect the most vulnerable participants.

This project records the dynamic experiences of fifteen current and previous Black CARSA. While most participants identified as a descendant of enslaved Africans, all do

¹³⁶ The number of CARSA with a minimum of fifteen years of employment as CARSA is small.

¹³⁷ One participant interviewed under the condition that their identity would be concealed and only audio-would be captured.

not. I knew this when I recruited the voices because I wanted to examine my assumption that anti-Black racism is not limited to DEA but is projected towards all Black identified bodies – that is, bodies that either appear non-white, or appear DEA Black via physical features, and/or are either racially or ethnically ambiguous—but who upon self-identifying as being a Black DEA—are subjected to anti-Black racism, particularly, anti-DEA Black racism.¹³⁸

Due to environmental factors, I interviewed participants based upon their availability; thus, both current and previous CARSA were interviewed on a varied schedule of dates based upon their availability over several weeks. At the conclusion of this project, I realized that a better design would have been to interview the previous CARSA first to alter the conversation guide for the current CARSA. Midway through the research, I realized that two separate voices were emerging: 1) former CARSA, 2) current CARSA. I leaned into this phenomenon and became suspicious of what the data would reveal but continued with the research designed the IRB approved.

PARTICIPANTS

Though de-identification is not necessary, since all interviewees consented to be recorded and allowing their identities to be known, again, I choose to de-identify current CARSA in order to protect the most vulnerable CARSA professional. Plus, it will create mental acrobatics while reading this report.

All direct identifiers (i.e., pieces of information that are sufficient, on their own, to disclose an identity), such as proper names, institutional names, and position titles, have been removed from current CARSA professionals. Similarly, to the best of my ability,

¹³⁸ The project will unveil phenomenon that call for this nuanced parsing of Blackness.

indirect identifiers (i.e., contextual information that can be used, often combined with other information, to identify a participant) have been obfuscated. Indirect identifiers are often found throughout the responses and information that participants use to convey meaning. I have tried my best to handle the erasure of these details with care.

IMAGINATIVE PARTICIPATION

Howard Washington Thurman (1899 - 1981) was a mystic and model for contemplative and sacred living. His mentorship shaped a generation of civil rights activists. His book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, was a constant companion for Martin Luther King, Jr. He was an author, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader. Moreover, Dr. Thurman was a groundbreaking CARSA professional. He was the third person in the country to be designated to carry the title “Dean of the Chapel” at an institution in the United States¹³⁹ and the first DEA to curate spiritual well-being in a historically and predominately white institution of higher education.¹⁴⁰

I add Thurman to this project posthumously because after collecting the data in Chapter 5, I noticed that his legacy still influences contemporary Black CARSA professionals' work. Therefore Thurman—via his autobiography—will be interwoven into the themes.

DE-IDENTIFICATION CODE

¹³⁹ The designation of “Chapel Dean” had only been made twice before on any American university campus—at the University of Chicago and at Princeton University.

¹⁴⁰ Thurman was appointed “Dean of the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel” at Howard University (1932–1944), and later accepted an appointment as “Dean of Marsh Chapel” at Boston University (1953–1965). In his autobiography, Thurman records feeling “distressed by the isolation of the young black people of Oberlin (College).” He was not a CARSA professional at Oberlin University, but he did foster, with his prayers, the few Black students present in the 1920. Howard Thurman. “With Head and Heart: the Autobiography of Howard Thurman,” First Harvest/HBJ edition (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1981) 68,

Because the field of CARSA is small and the employment of Black CARSA represents about 2% of all CARSA at historically White institutions, I cannot maintain continuity of storyline and de-identification at the same time. I must cloak both institutional names, position titles, involved parties and their relationship with the institution, gender identities, and tenure. Again, while participants agreed to have their experiences recorded with their identities known, participants, nor I, could have anticipated the themes and patterns that would develop. To mitigate and reduce risks, I choose to scramble the identities of current CARSA while revealing former CARSA.¹⁴¹ Former CARSA – who I respectfully choose to reference as Elder Black CARSA professionals, rather than former CARSA, will be identified.¹⁴²

ELDER BLACK CARSA

The Reverend Floyd Thompkins, Jr., is the current CEO of the Foundation of Justice and Peace. He was a CARSA professional at both Princeton University and Stanford University. From June 1987 – August 1989, he served as Assistant Dean of Princeton University Chapel before beginning his tenure as Stanford University’s Associate Dean of Memorial Church from August 1989 – 1996.

The Reverend William C Gipson is Associate Vice Provost for Equity and Access at the University of Pennsylvania. In that role, he is responsible for the day-to-day administration of critical grant-funded institutional access and retention initiatives in service to undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students at Penn. He was a

¹⁴¹ One outlier technically falls within the parameters of former CARSA but is still very involved in religious and spiritual affairs on campus. Therefore, they shall be identified, and their proper name will be used. Plus, it would have been impossible to de-identify them because of their religious identity and job title.

¹⁴² I choose to use the language of Elder CARSA rather than former CARSA, because “elder” emphasizes wisdom and usefulness to younger (chronologically younger or experientially younger) sojourner practitioners. Whereas “former” implies a moving beyond that has completed its attachments to the role.

CARSA professional at both the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University. He served as the University Chaplain and Special Advisor to the President of Penn from 1996 to December 2007. Before that, he was the Associate Dean of Religious Life and of the Chapel at Princeton University from 1990 – 1996.

The Reverend Dr. Frederick J. Streets is the former Carl and Dorothy Bennett Professor in Pastoral Counseling at the Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University, New York City. He served as Chaplain of Yale University and Senior Pastor of the Church of Christ Yale from 1992 – 2007.

The Reverend Dr. Deborah K. Blanks serves as pastor of Mount Pisgah African Methodist Episcopal Church in Princeton, New Jersey. She was a CARSA professional at both Brown University and Princeton University. Prior to her time in higher education, she was an active duty United States Navy chaplain for 10 years, 3 months, and 28 days before being honorably discharged and achieving the rank of Lieutenant Commander. As a civilian, she served the Brown University community from 1994 – 1997 as Assistant University Chaplain, before succeeding William Gipson as the Associate Dean of Religious Life and the Chapel at Princeton University (1997 – 2015).

Imam Khalid Abdul Fattah Griggs is the Imam of the Community Mosque of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He was a CARSA professional at Wake Forest University (2010-2017) while also serving as Vice President of Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) and Board Chairman of the ICNA Council for Social Justice.

CURRENT BLACK CARSA (DE-IDENTIFIED):

Ten of the fifteen total participants are current CARSA professionals. Their titles span the breadth of directors, deans, associate chaplains, university chaplains, campus ministers, and assistant vice-presidents. One identifies as Muslim, while the other nine identify as Christian. All identify as cis-gendered and there is a mix of both men and women at various stages in their careers as CARSA. Their names have been altered and randomly assigned a phonetic spelling of the Swahili alphabet, A - J. And, their genders are cloaked under the universal pronoun—they. The pseudonyms and descriptions of the current CARSA are: 1) Asali, who is best described as justice focused; 2) Bilal, who is best described as an activist; 3) Chura, who is best described as harmonious; 4) Dunia: who is best described as a prophetic voice; 5) Embe, who is best described as a deconstructionist; 6) Fisi, who is best described as a bridge; 7) Gazeti, who is best described as self-defined; 8) Hadithi, who is best described as a priest; and 9) Ijumaa, who is best described as a preacher; and 10) Jua, who is best described as a revolutionary.¹⁴³

QUESTIONS

Participants were asked to provide some demographic information about their educational and institutional residency. The following questions were included in the initial email to serve as a possible conversation guide and path for continuity between one participant to the next. These questions later provided the basis of the essential themes and the thematic statements provided in chapter five. The conversations relatively flowed along the context of these questions: (1) Tell me about your position? What is your job

²⁰The first names used in this study are pseudonyms provided by the researcher for purposes of confidentiality.

description? What is the bulk of the work that you perform? (1b) *if the person has vacated the position*, tell me what your position was and how you would best describe it? (2) Was your position created or was it previously occupied? (3) What is spiritual well-being for descendants of enslaved Africans at predominately white institutions of higher education? (3b) what does it look like? (3c) what elements are needed? (4) What do Black souls need to thrive in historically White spaces? (5) Why does spiritual well-being matter? (6) Does having a professional in the office of religious and spiritual life that looks like and/or is a part of the DEA community, matter for the wellbeing of Black bodies? (7) How did/does being in a hyper-visible body affect how you perform your duties? (8) How did/does being a DEA affect how you care for non-Black bodies? (8b) *where applicable* –Does being Black, but not DEA, affect how you care for non-Black bodies? (9) With the changing landscape of religiosity and spirituality, will/does spirituality still have as much meaning today amongst DEA as it did when you were present/began this work? (10) What do you want the field of Chaplaincy, Religious and Spiritual affairs in higher education to know?

EPOCHÉ-REDUCTION

Hermeneutical phenomenological research gives special attention to epoché-reduction—bracketing, which are assumptions that can prevent the researcher from receiving the significance of phenomena that arise. According to Max van Manen, “opening up and making explicit assumptions is part of the phenomenological reflection itself.”¹⁴⁴ The researcher's challenge is to be critical in self-awareness throughout the research process in an effort to create room for the parts of the participants’ experience that

¹⁴⁴ Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, 2014), 212.

is speaking. It is important to note that van Manen acknowledges that releasing all of one's assumptions is not possible, requiring "explicating" within the written text.¹⁴⁵ Thus, while I have listed the assumptions with which I entered this project, it is vital to locate me, the researcher, and my hermeneutical circle before sharing the data.

This study's researcher shares the same racial background as most participants and the same gender as some of the participants. In addition to the researcher and the participants shared experiences, the researcher holds assumptions based upon the historical examination included in this study. The researcher is also a current CARSA professional at a historical and predominately White private institution of higher education. The researcher held frequent conversations for guidance with other researchers familiar with qualitative phenomenological studies but did not reveal any data.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

When the data collection was complete, the process of conducting a thematic analysis began. Consistent themes from the experiences of the participants were determined using Max van Manen's criteria for themes.¹⁴⁶ According to van Manen, in phenomenological research, themes are used as an attempt to "unearth something telling, something meaningful."¹⁴⁷ This research process extracts meaning from the experiential accounts of the participants. It is important to note that (the) themes are the best way of getting to the meaning. However, they cannot "completely unlock the deep meaning, the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 214.

¹⁴⁶ While there are numerous electronic data analysis tools and methods available, due to the SARS CoV2 pandemic, I was limited to the books available previous to library closings. I found this method sufficient.

¹⁴⁷ Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 86.

full mystery, the enigmatic aspects of the experiential meaning of (a) notion.”¹⁴⁸
Nonetheless, van Manen offers three approaches to identifying thematic aspects within a text:

- (1) Holistic or sententious approach – the researcher reads the text as a whole then formulates a phrase that captures the fundamental meaning;
- (2) Highlighting approach – the researcher selects specific phrases or sentences in the text that capture the essence of the phenomena; and
- (3) Detailed, or line-by-line approach – the researcher combs every sentence to determine what it reveals about the experience.¹⁴⁹

I used all three approaches.

As the researcher, I was challenged by van Manen’s methodology when it came to being sensitive to language and the utilization of anecdotes or stories to illuminate the true character of participants, because the participants have such dynamic personalities and deep probing stories, that to report them, uncensored, would possibly reveal their identities. Again, this would not be detrimental to the project since participants consented to have their identities revealed; however, it would create a process of elimination to determine the most venerable participants. Therefore, I experienced conflict while deciding how to report the narratives. Nevertheless, the thematic analysis is inductive and grounded in data and the experiences of the participants.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 88.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 92.

In combination with van Manen’s three approaches, my analysis begins with a search for meaning and then finds combinations or relatability of experiences with other participant experiences. This method aims to understand the complexity of meanings in the data rather than measure their frequency. The use of narrative in hermeneutical phenomenology creates a hybrid text by “combining the power of philosophic or systematic discourse with the power of literary or poetic language.”¹⁵⁰ After the themes or phenomena are named, the text will highlight the themes through the participants' stories and other bodies of knowledge that connect to the subject and particular themes. As van Manen highlights, “the lived experience of any group of people is full of ambiguity,” therefore, the process of expressing that lived experience will require reflecting, rethinking, and in some cases, rewriting portions of the text to capture the essence of what has been said—which, speaks to the ethical necessity of this work.¹⁵¹

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS – INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

The researcher completed all the necessary steps required by the IRB of Duke University. The researcher did not use any form of deception in this study, nor did the researcher expect participants to sustain any physical, emotional, mental, or professional harm. All participants were English-speaking residents of the United States and literate in both reading and writing. The invitation email and consent form are in Appendices A and B.

Though this research project did not target a protected population, there were some ethical considerations. Black people in the United States classify as a marginalized group.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 121.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 127.

Though sharing one's experience can be reparative, therapeutic, and casual, it can also trigger undesired emotions, thoughts, or memories. It was important for participants to be encouraged to engage in healthy practices to help mitigate difficult emotions. Further, some current CARSA professionals were hesitant to reveal the fullness of their actual experience on the record. In those cases, I paused the record and received their stories as a minister. When the moment passed, I verbally restarted the record. Though probing questions were asked, participants were reminded of their liberties to share or not share based upon their comfort level. The intentions of this study were made clear. Each participant attached their own meaning to their reasoning for sharing.

Using the conversation dialogue that flowed from the questions provided above and listed in Appendix D, six essential themes were extracted from the research.

CHAPTER 5 – RESULTS

“Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” – James Baldwin¹⁵²

Chapter five consists of the results found within the participants' experiences. The researcher has named assumptions in the previous chapter as part of the epoché-reduction process designed to help the research remain as open as possible to the themes that emerge from the data collected. Each participant's interview was read and highlighted for themes that were compared to the themes from other participant responses.

The text of hermeneutical phenomenology is the core of the process. Writing is the method of phenomenological research. The object of this project is to explore through the lived experiences of those who have manifested, curated, and observed the pursuit of well-being by the descendants of enslaved Africans at predominately white institutions of higher education. There were fifteen participants who range in institutional titles. Participants serve in institutions located in the South, Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, West Coast, and Mid-west regions. Participants identify as African-American or Black—inclusive of African in America and are either currently or previously employed as a religious life professional by a private historically and predominately White institution of higher education. At the time of the interview, all participants have been at their institutions for a minimum of two years.

Utilizing the responses to the questions that guided our conversation (Appendix D), six essential themes were extracted from the research. Those themes are: 1) Institutional Intentions, 2) Performative Blackness, 3) Representation Matters, 4) Spiritual Well-Being is Well-being, 5) The Necessity of Mediation, and 6) The Healing of Identities. For brevity,

¹⁵² James Baldwin, “As Much Truth As One Can Bear,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1962, <http://tweetsofanativeson.com/pdf/As-Much-Truth-As-One-Can-Bear.pdf>.

each of these essential themes includes two to four thematic statements that help organize the theme and explore deeper meaning.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF ESSENTIAL THEMES

Institutional intentionality and lack of intentionality describe how participants perceived the hiring motivations at their former and current institutions. The elder CARSA professionals describe, in their own words, what intentionality from their institutions was placed into their hiring and retention process. Of the five elder CARSA present, three of the five were specifically sought after by the top administration because of their academic aptitude, quality training, and for the express principle of curating care for Black bodies at their institution. Of the ten current CARSA:

- all ten were hired because they are highly qualified and skillful in the care of all people in higher education.
- Four of the ten current CARSA were hired from a large pool of applicants with no intentionality towards care of Black bodies from a Black body. That is, their hire was not body-specific.
- Another four (of the ten total) were hired from a large pool of applicants with intentionality towards re-hiring a Black body, with some attention to the care of Black bodies.
- Two current CARSA were intentionally hired because of academic acumen and occupation of a Black body, but with no intentionality towards specific care of Black bodies.

THEME I: INSTITUTIONAL INTENTIONALITY

When asked the first and second conversation prompts – “Tell me about your position? Was your position created or was it previously occupied?” the aforementioned pattern of thought around their hiring process – that is, whether their hire was for the intentional care of Black bodies or whether they were employed in a Black body but not specifically to care for Black bodies, was revealed. Those who felt their hire was intentional for the sake of caring for Black bodies felt emboldened to advocate and craft programming specifically for the spiritual well-being of Black and non-White identifying bodies. They were also very clear about their roles, job descriptions, and figurative geography. Posthumously, I begin with Howard Thurman’s reflection upon his appointment to Dean of Boston University’s Chapel. There were not many Black bodies at Boston University at the time of his hire. His appointment was explicitly to break and ground the idea that a Black body can offer spiritual care to all people. One of the limitations to adding him to this project is that he cannot articulate how he offered care to Black bodies in a historically white setting. Nevertheless, we do know that his influence lives on.

Howard Thurman, reflecting upon his time at Boston University:

...in 1953, I accepted an invitation from Dr. Harold Case, President of Boston University...to talk about a plan he had for Boston University. He said,

‘I am inviting you to become a part of the faculty and the administration of Boston University. I am prepared to offer you the deanship of the university chapel and a professorship in the School of Theology, where you will be designated Professor of Spiritual Disciplines and Resources. My dream is that you may be able to develop in the chapel at Boston University the kind of inclusive religious experience that you have developed at the Church of the Fellowship of All Peoples at San Francisco. I think your opportunity at Boston University can be more far-reaching and significant than you now realize...’¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 166–67.

Floyd Thompkins, reflecting upon his hiring at Princeton University and Stanford

University:

(1987) I was brought on intentionally by the president of Princeton University and the president of Princeton Seminary... and as a part of the Third World movement, you know, they established the center and there was a whole bunch of hiring going on. They had hired Toni Morrison and Cornell West, and Albert Raboteau was there. ...They (the presidents of the university and the seminary) came to me (because) basically after (drinking) Sherry, [animated recollection] 'do you have somebody over there that can do this?!' They had interviewed 110 candidates. ... so I said, 'I'll apply to get you off my back.' And then (after) that one interview they decided to hire me. So, the president's office then gave me money and said, 'y'all (the students and I) go and have lunch together without us, without white people in the room.' ...Bill Bowen, who was the president of Princeton University... gave me a list of five people and said, here is a list of the faculty and staff who didn't want to hire you, go see them and win them over.' And that's what you do. So, I went to their offices and shocked the heck out of them, because I was like, 'I'm going to be here, I'm Black, and I have student loans that I want retired....' (Boisterous laughter).

And I should also put it out there, that it was after they hired me that they asked me how old I was. I was only three years older than the students. I'm the youngest person ever to be dean at Princeton University. It was totally an accident... But that's okay because I was hired by the youngest president to ever be president. So, it worked out well. But they literally did not know. Which is why, for a long time, they said, 'Okay, here's the deal. You always have to wear a suit and you know you are not socializing with the students.' And so that's how I got into it, totally accidentally, totally for the pastoral point of view. And totally at a rich moment in history. But race was not accidental. This is what we were doing. We were enfranchising people of color. Now it also means that I had other portfolios, but that was other portfolios *and* race... And I think when you do this position, you have to do that (race) intentionally. And when I left... it was basically because Stanford came and got me because they wanted me to do the same thing over there. And it is quite intentional that William (Gipson) was hired after me.

William Gipson, reflecting upon his hiring at the University of Pennsylvania and

Princeton University:

After Princeton (1990-96), I came to Penn in 1996 at the invitation of then President Judith Rodin, who was the first permanent female president of an Ivy League school. I was excited about what she was doing, how she was imagining things. She was an alumna of the University. She had spent over 20 years at Yale and had observed how Yale did some things incredibly well. But it's relationships with its neighbors left much to be desired; I'll put it that way. So, that 'Special Advisor' [portion of my job description] had much to do with why I came to Penn. And she said to me, I want you to do all the traditional things that a Chaplain would do. And by the way, build a chaplaincy program because the chaplain who preceded me, a wonderful man a Princeton alum, Stanley Johnson, who had been here for 34 years, he was literally present everywhere on campus, but it was basically a one-person enterprise.

Deborah Blanks, reflecting upon her hiring at Brown University, and then later succeeding William Gipson:

I don't think that it was in writing anywhere that ... a high percentage of your work would be to attend to black students, but I think that having someone who is African American who mirrors [Blackness], creates this space, this opportunity for students to recognize that the institution has somebody there they can look, listen, and speak to, I mean all of our experiences are different in life, but there's someone who could possibly speak to your life experience or understand your life experience in terms of Blackness.

.... Well, I was a stranger in a strange land, but this was a different experience. I mean, Brown, Princeton, doesn't matter which institution because they are predominantly white, whether they're very liberal or very conservative, they are whole institutions that have a particular kind of ethos. And so I think that Brown, from my perspective, has done a much better job at reflecting the student body. ...And so, there were places where you certainly provided the support and the buoying of the student population, but you also had these opportunities that were extended to other places and spaces in the life of the university. In doing so, they were student facing, which is the primary responsibility, just because we are located in the life of the university. But it transcends that to begin to incorporate all these other persons that you are going to interface with during your time there.

...Everyone who has ever held that particular position at Brown has been an African American person. At Princeton, the role started with Floyd Thompkins. Then William Gipson; William was there about six years or so before he left to go to Penn. And as we know, in these "Elite" universities, there are these positions that are relegated for persons who are black. And that can be a good thing on one hand, but then it can be challenging, on the other, because I don't think people make space for you [to move about the University]. Penn does, I believe, but I don't believe certain institutions make space for you to move into other spaces in the life of those universities and that's the challenge. Columbia has done it, Penn has definitely done it, but I'm not sure about the other Ivy Leagues; Princeton has not done it. I don't think personally that they've done a good job at all in that regard; and they have had opportunity to do it.

INTENTIONAL BUT UNSUPPORTED

In line with Deborah Blanks' perception that institutions reserve roles, it is evidenced that some institutions seek out the utility of Black bodies to occupy spiritual and religious roles without much-delineated attention towards Black bodies. Other responses to the first and second conversational prompts delivered responses with an interpretative tinge of overbearing responsibilities - due to the magnitude of expectation from their position. Gazeti, reflecting upon their hiring in their current role, says:

...So the things that kind of piqued my interest when this job came across my email was that they wanted someone who had particular experience in the black church and who also had worked across denominational lines. ... Within my role, I am essentially the only Protestant minister. I work with students, journey with students who identify as Protestant or, as they say, "Students who are non-Catholic," whether they are non-Catholic Christians, or Christian other; and do weekly worship services. Every Sunday we (non-Catholics) do a worship service together. I am the primary preacher for that. I also do spiritual formation with students leading retreats, both in the fall and the spring, and then I have a particular connection with the Multi-Ethnic Education and Engagement Center, which is our multicultural office on campus. I spend a great deal of time in that office. That is actually a part of how I maintain my wellness.

I am the first *full time* person in this role. The person before me, actually occupied this role in a split position. They were split between campus ministry and a campus life position for several years. And from what I understand, they were completely overwhelmed by two positions that required a lot. So, every minister that has had this position has been a black person. This role at one point completely functioned under the Office of Multicultural Affairs. It was not connected to campus ministry at all. And the people who occupied this role were not full-time staffers, most of them were students-graduate assistants and they were kind of contracting folks to work on campus in this role.

But that is how it functions, you know, essentially, they will not say it, but I am the black campus Minister, and I am supposed to be the one to bridge Protestant Christian denominations, and do "black" (finger quotes) religious things.

INTERVIEWER CLARIFIES: "You are the only Protestant campus Minister for the entire campus for all non-Catholic persons red, yellow, black, white, all precious in God's sight; you are the only person?"

Gazeti: Yes. Yes. ... a position that apparently appears to want one particular thing for which 'Black church' experience is required, but has an additional rider of everyone else non-Catholic attached to it. ... It is definitely an interesting thing to navigate because it is trying to figure out how to do this work on a predominantly white campus. Whereabout 88% of our student population is white. So, I am expected to figure out ways to journey with students, black students, and the black church experience. It's a journey with students who are black and come from diverse denominational backgrounds and then to also figure out both, together and separate . . . How to navigate with white students who come from diverse Christian backgrounds and all that is intermingled. And, separate all the particularities of both.

I am to the point of, I don't know what to do or how to do. I have named several times that the work that I am asked to do is overwhelming for a department of one because essentially, I am the only one. So, I am the only one.

Jua, reflecting upon their hiring in their current role:

I am the first person to hold this position. I knew when I read the job description that they were searching for someone Black without specifically saying they wanted someone Black. Between my interview and beginning the position, something must have happened. (Laughter) I guess the University lost its nerve. ... By the time I started the position I was informed that I was hired to be the chaplain to all [said with sarcasm] people, not specifically to Black people, but rather, to be a chaplain who ‘happens to be’ Black. Unfortunately, this wasn’t communicated to the Black people on campus because there was an expectation that I should be doing Black specific things. But it wasn’t encouraged. It was actually discouraged. I was told it would send the wrong message to all of campus about my presence. I was fine with having a broader presence, but I wasn’t okay with the fact that this left a spiritual void for Black students, faculty, and staff, who clearly had been promised something. I also wasn’t fine with the fact that the administration thought...thinks... just having me, a Black person, present, is enough. I need resources. I need support. And I need some of the University’s expectations taken off of my plate so that I can have room to do the job that’s needed. But I don’t think they understand that racism tears at people’s souls and putting people back together again is a full-time job. While I understand that my role and services are needed for the whole university, I need the university to understand that if I’m supported in my work, then all of campus benefits, and not *just* the Black people.

Chura, reflecting upon their hiring in their current role:

I inherited this role. ...On paper there is nothing that says I have to allow a certain amount of time to black students. However, I do. And it becomes a lot of the work that I do. So, as a result, a lot of the support for black students tends to fall on my shoulders.

I don’t think they appreciate the fact—or they don’t see—that that’s an extra job within itself. And this is something that I’ve brought to their attention. And it’s like, ‘Well, this is kind of the reason why we hired you.’ But I’m like, ‘then take some of this other stuff off of my plate!’

...I think it’s a combination of a few things. I think we have different offices now; we have a Center for Students of Color, we have an office for undocumented first generation... and low income center, and we have a center for Slavery and Justice. So, we have different offices that could potentially do very similar work. However, what we’ve been finding is that there has been an erasure when it comes to identity specific places of support. Therefore, while a black student 20 years ago would have gone to the Brown Center for students of color because it was created for black students, now it’s become a more holistic Multicultural Affairs. But there are still more black students coming to see me when it comes to issues.

So, the thing is (insert pause), a lot of the work that I do behind supporting black students goes unnoticed because the administration thinks that all I do is just religious affairs or if I do help out with Black issues. “Well, you’re black, you’re supposed to.”

This is the thing, I do my job well. There’s a performative aspect to what we do. But it becomes exhausting at times.... My boss knows what I do. Does the administration know the impact that I have? I don’t think so. I think there’s a disconnect. The thing about it is, when you try to advocate for just a small raise or something so, so small, in my eyes, (like literally \$5,000 increase) and they feel as though you already make enough. And I always try to find different ways to try to say, no. It becomes very frustrating.

LACK OF AWARENESS. LACK OF INTENTIONALITY.

There are CARSA professionals for whom, in the occupancy of their roles, their *skin* color is a subject but was not intended to be the object of their hire. In some cases, their skin tone origin (i.e., being DEA vs. African) and the anti-Black DEA racism that accompanies excludes them from inclusion within their religious tradition.

Khalid Griggs, reflecting upon his hire as one of few Imam's in higher education and the first Black Imam:

There was a student, I'll try to be general enough that it doesn't point back to any particular person, but there was a student of Middle Eastern descent and I think because of my appearance, for some reason, she didn't realize that I was African-American. Maybe she didn't have conversations with other people who had been there before, but she came on campus and she would come by the office a lot. We used to have a lot of good talks. She was particularly interested in politics; Muslim political issues. She would come by the office and we'd have long discussions and she seemed to enjoy the exchange that we had. This was her freshman year. But, by the second semester of her sophomore year she discovered that I was African American. And I'll never forget. She came to my office one day and she said "Imam Griggs, Is it true?" and I thought something horrible had happened on campus or something. 'Is what true?' And she said, "are you really African American?"

I told her 'yes I'm African American. Why is that so surprising?' And she had to catch herself. I mean, she was a little off guard. She didn't want to say anything (I think at that point) that would be offensive; or, maybe I will get upset about it. And so, she said, "Well, I just didn't realize you were African American". And I said, well, what is it about me that you would think I'm not African American. She said, Well, you don't look like you're African American and you seem to know quite a bit about Islam. And so, this is where I had to stop the young lady. You know the two are not mutually exclusive, because I know about Islam and because I'm African American, they're not incompatible. They go together with a lot of people.

I think this is a kind of common attitude that many of our Muslim students have when they come to universities where the African American student body is small, a relatively small African American student body and the Muslim African Americans even smaller. So many of the stereotypes that I found that campus ministers or professors had... they were surprised that Wake Forest would bring on an African American Muslim Imam, and particularly one coming on a relatively conservative campus like Wake Forest. I had such a history of community activism and being outspoken on issues involved in community. So, I sort of caught it from both angles.

Asali, reflecting upon their hiring in their current role—a role that did not consider the implications of performing CARSA duties from a Black body:

Unlike most people who walk into positions of chaplaincy on campuses, I was one of the few people probably in the nation who had prior experience because you know there's only a handful of us, right. ...So, I came in with a very clear understanding of how I saw my role and I also came in with a framework for leadership and strategic projection and planning. I came in and I did an assessment. I did a power assessment. I assessed the needs. I got to know the people and then I determined what was needed from me in that space. And I also determined—and this is particular—as a Black person, that which I'm willing to provide in this space. Like where my boundaries were. One of the pieces of that power analysis was determining where they were in relation to my gifting, my expertise, and what I could provide; as opposed to what they thought I needed to provide in the space. I learned very quickly and clearly—I'm not sowing seeds in this place. I'm tilling the ground.

And so, I came in with clear boundaries that I'm not sowing seeds, so that kind of set the parameters. A large part of my work has been relegated. One, to pastoral care. Because that's what is most needed. Then, because I do a lot of pastoral care, then what does advocacy look like?

I was told, *specifically* (said with emphasis and animation) that they weren't necessarily looking for a diversity hire.

Have I been well received? Yes. In so far as how people know to receive someone, if that makes sense.

You know, I am well spoken. Oration is one of my strengths. The presentation of who I am and how good it (I) looks and how good it (I) sounds is very, very well received and it works in my favor in some ways because then I'm able to say whatever I want to say. Because I know how to say it and/or I've done the work to gain the trust of the people who need to be pressed.

Were they ready for who I am in my totality? Absolutely not. I have not brought my whole self. I don't even know if I want to give my whole self in that way. Like, I don't even know that. Yeah, I don't want to give my whole self. And a part of me... not bringing my whole self... is a part of my well-being.

THEME II: PERFORMATIVE BLACKNESS

In his book *Whistling Vivaldi*, Claude M. Steele addresses how pervasive stereotypes—and efforts to escape stereotyping—can influence both behavior and performance. The book's title refers to the story of a young Black graduate student who

realizes he can defuse the fears of white people by whistling melodies from Vivaldi.¹⁵⁴ While attempting to curate spiritual well-being for everyone regardless of race, religious tradition, or philosophical ideals, Black CARSA professionals report having to press through racial barriers of perception and stereotypes to perform their job requirements' primary duties. Like DEA students, faculty, and staff, Black curators of spiritual well-being struggle to be well in predominately white spaces. This is a tragically poetic portrayal of wounded healers. Leaning into elder CARSA Deborah K Blanks' metaphorical definition of spiritual well-being as "the place where your presence isn't a protest,"¹⁵⁵ the enclosed accounts are a fraction of the comments that capture what Hadithi calls the "painful contorting that Black people do."

In this section, we hear from elder and current CARSA professionals who 1) felt their Blackness must be constricted on campus, 2) are determined to *show up Black* on campus, and 3) are becoming unfettered. On feeling constricted, Deborah Blanks reflects that:

It's about survival in some instances. As a Black person, as an African American... a woman...you're not really able to be fully who you are or bring your full self to the experience because ... you're not allowed. You're not allowed to bring your full self. There are these restrictive unspoken rules of conduct... and it's not to say you would be whatever, whatever [gesturing: hand flail]...or one would be moving out of boundary lines because everybody brings a uniqueness of who we are in terms of how we live out our lives in the world. ...I can think of an occasion when I preached at the university chapel, which I preached in quite often, and one particular Sunday... I remember being a bit more passionate...and it wasn't even close to what it would be if I were preaching in my own African Methodist Episcopal or black church context but whatever I was saying I was feeling it. And I remember one of the parishioners of the chapel came up, it was a white person, saying, 'I felt really connected.' But I could see from the persons who were in leadership that—that was not, you know— although it was never said... the words were not spoken, the non-verbal cues communicated that it was not acceptable. You're not fully allowed to bring your full self into the space.

¹⁵⁴ Claude Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*, (New York: WWNorton, 2011).

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Deborah K. Blanks, "Exploring Spiritual Well-being for the Descendants of Enslaved Africans at Predominately White Institutions of Higher Education."

Similarly, current CARSA professional Embe reports also being overwhelmingly aware of their demeanor and presentation. Embe says,

I definitely struggle, especially when I have to do a memorial, or I have to give a speech. In the back of my mind, I'm thinking, 'all right, let me not do something too overly Black.... It's that double consciousness and sometimes I might forget it. I want to be myself, you know, I want to be 100% me but I don't know if this space can handle that. And then I don't want to feed into stereotypes. I don't, you know, want to feed into anything ... I'm very conscious of my Blackness. Am I a threat? Am I welcoming?

And yet, Floyd Thompkins recalls refusing to be constricted. He says,

I was given all the other stuff too (meaning more than the Black population), but it's a negotiation. ...Like me, when people are interviewing, they're like, 'you know I really want this job, so whatever you say – and then I'm going to have to retranslate it myself, but that's okay (laughter).' Meanwhile, I'm thinking 'I ain't Martin Luther King, do you think I'm Super-Man, I can't do all that and do this!' (boisterous laughter) But we take the job. The issue is...and I must say... because I had already done this at Princeton, I was able to say at Stanford, 'Look at me. I am this Black the day you hired me and I will be this Black everyday-there-unto. So instead of running away from that definition of me, why don't we embrace it and use it as a powerful part of this ministry. In fact, I could make you famous.' (boisterous laughter) And because of the way I do race, it will help me to do all these other portfolios. You really do have to educate those offices and the way they think about ministry... which is given to us by seminaries and schools of divinity... which doesn't work... which is why they're dying...so a part of what you're doing is a part of the education revolution and the ministry revolution, which is say – you don't have to lose your identity, and you don't have to lead with it either. I'm going to lead with that identity, I'm 6'5, I'm a huge guy, I'm really Black and I'm really loud. So, I don't have anything to surprise with. ...when I minister out of my Blackness it is inclusivism. When my colleagues minister out of White bodies it is an exclusivism. So, they think, if I say Black, then I'm going to exclude non-Black, and my response is, 'no, I'm not as sick as you. I do not come from that culture.'

There are current Black CARSA professionals who feel that their presence is so starkly contrasting to the Whiteness surrounding them, that they want to be present for the students by “showing up Black” every day. Perhaps it is related—perhaps it is not—but the persons who reported intentionally “showing up Black” also reported feeling overwhelmed by the amount of expectations from their departments. Howard Thurman – whose groundbreaking Black presence was the equivalent of contemporary “showing up

Black,” also records a moment of exasperation and feeling overwhelmed by the demands placed upon him. He records,

“...two days before classes were to begin, I was informed ... that in addition to my course in spiritual disciplines, I would also be a part of a team teaching homiletics.... When I was presented with this proposition, I threw up my hands. I said, ‘In the first place, I don’t think homiletics can be taught, and... I am trying to get adjusted as dean of the chapel. I simply can’t do it.’”¹⁵⁶

It should be noted that despite his protest, he did it.

In conjunction with the amount of time spent doing full CARSA duties, and with echoes of Thurman’s frustration, Gazeti says that:

I am the only black person in my department out of 35. I am the only Black person on staff. There are other people of color, but they are students. I am the only Black person and we have a significant enough number of Black students. ...I’m at the point where I don’t know what to do or how to do all that I’m being asked to do.¹⁵⁷ I have named several times that the work I’m being asked to do is over-whelming for a department of one. Because essentially... I am... I am the only one. ...there are situations where I have to navigate my Blackness and it becomes quite difficult. But show-up...that is one thing that I consistently have to do, and I consistently do (it). Eighty-five percent of the time, I try not to *not* code switch... I try to be authentically who I am, and I encourage my students to do the same. So when you walk into my office, my office is going to be Blackity Black. Whenever you see me, I am bringing the fullness of who I am...and I believe that it is important to show that we don’t have to placate to Whiteness...there is nothing taboo about being Black. There's nothing taboo about black culture. And you can show up in the fullness of who you are. ...Professionalism is steeped in Whiteness, you know, I always remind my students of that. ...Even in how I dress. There are moments when I put on a blazer, and there are moments where I walk campus in African garb, to show that both are professional. So, I try my best to bring myself to work. But it becomes difficult to navigate.

Similarly, Chura said:

That’s the thing – I do my job well. There's a performative aspect to what we do. But it becomes exhausting at times. We’re not invisible to students, the students know where the Black people are. I used to try and make myself small. I’m no longer doing that. No, I’m not. And I stopped doing that about five years ago. ...People find me intimidating? That’s not my problem, that’s yours. Even still, because of who I am, because of my presentation as Black, I still have to defy the stereotypical notions of what someone who looks like me is and it’s amazing how people (inferring White people) won’t respect you just by looking at you, but when they find out your job title they shift. And because of that I always speak within a manner that is lighthearted. When I walk around campus... I

¹⁵⁶ Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 175.

¹⁵⁷ Gazeti is also in charge of a large denominational swarth of students.

can't have a bad day. I have to smile. Because I don't want to appear not to be non-threatening. And I don't know if other people have to navigate that when they're at work.

Moreover, there are current Black CARSA professionals who attempt to be spiritually well themselves are liberating themselves from the weight of performing their Blackness in the presence of Whiteness and "returning to themselves." To this, Hadithi says that

...when I walk into a room, I'm both a God representative and (but) a Black person. So how does that affect me... it's the sort of painful contorting that Black people are called to do in everyday life. ... there's the changing of my gait and changing of my voice tone. And I try really hard not to do that, I try hard to be free, but Black people in America are conditioned to contort under the White gaze. I'm very much aware of that and challenged to not contort there. ...yeah, it affects me, but I affect them.

And lastly, Ijumaa says that they experience the White gaze through the means of judgment and scrutiny.

...you get it slant; you don't get it directly. Like, 'why are they doing this, why are they doing that...what's that all about.' These questions about how one embodies a sermon...when these things started coming, I realized, well I'm just being me. And the truth is, over time, you learn the people and the space, you grow and adapt, but I'm still myself, and in the last few years, I've returned to myself in a greater way. I've become more free in terms of 'I'm here, take it or leave it (laughter). This is who I am, and this is who God has called me to be.'... even just to say 'ain't'... but to do it intentionally, it's disrupting the colonialism, the history of Whiteness, and what is proper speech. But I do it intentionally. ...I'm trying to be ecumenically eclectic... I'm bridging worlds because the truth is if I only talked about Shakespeare, Mark Twain—the classical folks—folks would be fine. It's not until I bring in Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Paul Laurence Dunbar, then all of a sudden, it's 'they're always quoting Black folks.' Well that's not true, but you're finally hearing some. All of a sudden, one mention, and it's 'they're always quoting (Martin Luther) King,' which is not true. But what I've noticed is the body (of delivery) matters. ... a different body can say the same thing and it's received differently. Who's saying it matters.

THEME III: REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Diverse representation of staff and faculty within higher education matters towards students, faculty, and staff's well-being. Enclosed are accounts from participants whose presence served as either a source of comfort, an expansion on the sense of belonging, or a place of communal pride. While many of the elder Black CARSA were hired to expand their universities' staff diversity, current Black CARSA professionals

articulate their presence still mattering to the life of the University beyond filling a diversity quota.

On “representation,” elder CARSA professional William Gipson emphatically declared:

... Absolutely it makes a difference! At that point in Princeton's history, we're talking the early 90s when I arrived on campus, there weren't any other black male staff. There were a number of notable faculty—you know Al Raboteau was there, and the magnificent Ms. Morrison; Cornel West. There were a number of people on the faculty of the African American studies program, but I don't think there was any other African American male administrators.

...not only were students coming to talk to me about issues around faith, they were also talking about what it felt like to be black and brown and gay and Asian American at Princeton University.

Addressing what it meant to the larger University community that a Black body occupied a notable CARSA position, Frederick Streets recalled:

... I was so deeply touched by how well and how the Black community responded to my appointment. Not many people knew about chaplaincy at Yale. Didn't know it from a hill of beans. But there was nothing but love and support—all with— “you know, I'm happy for you. I know you'll do a great job. Whatever we can do to be supportive.” Of course, they were interested in learning more about me. So that was a real feeling of the community owning this appointment as well.

What it meant to me was an opportunity to represent that the black religious experience that I had been had grown up with and had been nurtured by and liberated by WAS as mainstream as any other tradition.

Adding to the depth of why representation matters, Ijumaa, adds:

I think visually—psychically—even if there's no close personal connection, it matters. I do think... it's like (in this role) I've acquired the hope of the slave. It's symbolic. And for me, [reflective] even in my own life, seeing people (in the role of) a Black professor or administrator... I was like, 'wow, that's possible.'

I mean, just a couple of years ago—I was teaching a [university] course—I had a black student, a young African American man, a graduate student, and he said I was his first Black professor. First Black Teacher PERIOD. I thought, 'Oh, my gosh.' So, I think for students. Yes, there's a sense of pride about my position. Like, 'okay, there are leaders here at the university.' ... We know just because you got bodies [meaning students], it does not mean there's structural change – right, systemic change. But I do think there's a sense of symbolic hope, that maybe these [black] people are *at* the table and when they're there – maybe, hopefully, they will have some of our [black student] interests and concerns in mind around the table. Especially in predominately white settings; that maybe we [black people] *are* here and we're doing more than just cleaning the

bathrooms. [insert: dramatic stare] Oh, it's real. It's socialized. There's a caste system and in the university, that's the reality. The housekeepers—most of them are black and brown—and that does something to the mind of people, just visually. Nobody says anything. So, until you start asking, 'why is it that way? Why has it been that way?' So yeah, it matters.

It means more than me. Because I recall the greeting I got from the black community in [historically racist and segregated city], even to this day. ... I don't know these folks and they don't know me. But it's symbolic; because I know it's not really about me—it's about what God is doing and the story that God is writing and it's symbolic, it's hope. I had people tell me 'You just don't know. This is [historically racist and segregated city]! You coming in that role is major!' So, I realize it's about more than me. It means more than me. Whether it was the confederate statues, or all the monuments to dead racists who upheld segregation. You know I get up, and I look straight at it... I say, 'Hello, I'm here.'

Chura, reflecting upon their presence:

... I know they [students] see the value of someone looking like me, and they[the students] say it all the time, especially my graduate students. So, I always do the invocation at the end of the year and last year (2019), I counted five or six people that may have identified as black folk. And I pulled one of them to the side and I said, 'you know what, y'all make me so proud looking out into the audience and seeing your five faces.' She says, "no Chura, it made me proud, looking up at the podium and seeing you, this beautiful black person, with your hair, and in this regalia, and being on *that* stage." She said, 'that inspired me'.

... I never thought about it like that. And I know representation matters but I'm always looking for other people to represent (meaning: to do the representing). I didn't realize that I was the one representing in that case. I'm the representation. It just hit different.

The historical relationships of trust and pastoral care that Black people have placed upon "the Black preacher" spills into the expectations Black parents place upon Black CARSA professionals. Jua reflects upon interactions with parents.

... representation truly matters. I know it sounds cliché but it truly makes a difference. There have been times when perspective students have been on campus with their parents and the parents specifically come to my office 'for the truth' about the institution. This isn't a rare occurrence. It happens quite often. And I don't blame them. If I had children, I wouldn't leave them in a place for four years with no Black people. Not in 2020.

I recall a time when I was walking in my clerical collar and a campus tour was taking place. There was a Black family in the tour and the husband nudged the wife to alert her of my presence. At that point, both of the parents gave me 'the head nod' (insert gesture and laughter). But then the wife, gave me another nod and held it, which I interpreted as her asking, 'is this place okay?' For which, I responded by nodding, 'yes, sort of, but mostly yes,' and she nodded back, 'okay.' White people don't speak black non-verbals. I'm not sure whether that student enrolled. But for those parents, my presence, garbed in administrative authority, mattered.

And there are Black CARSA professionals whose presence matters beyond liminal time and space. To this, Bilal told a redemptive story of reparative presence.

I must answer this in a longer story. When I applied to the position, I mentioned it to my Father and he was like, “did you say Williams College?” He said, “your great grandfather and great grandmother worked for Williams College.” And I wasn’t sure how it was possible that I had never heard of this. He said, “well it’s a painful story and I’ve never shared it, but when I was 13 years old...” [interjects to add context: ‘my father, he grew up in New York. In Harlem. And that’s another painful story on how my family got from the south, up to Harlem. But anyway, but anyway.’] ... He said, ‘when he was 13, he would basically go every summer to visit with his grandfather. Now his grandfather worked for the college. He used to take these white men out to the woods and teach them how to hunt and fish; the ins and outs of nature. That’s what he did for the white men on campus. So, my father and my uncle used to come up as children. One summer, he [my father] was walking down the street with his brother [my uncle] and their grandfather, and some men in town were like, “Harry, who are those niggers you got with you?” And my father and my uncle being from Harlem were like, ‘oh, oh, you want some?!’ And so, you know, there was an altercation. Um, well one of the white boy’s noses got broke. [Dramatic Pause] My father, you know, put it on them. It was a professor’s son and they said if my [great] grandfather wanted to retain his job, my father and my uncle could never come back to Williams’ town, again.

And so that ended. That severed my connection and my father's connection with his grandfather.

I knew his grandfather, because he would come up to New York to visit, but I never knew where he lived. It was never spoken of because of this trauma; because of this racialized trauma.

And so... [dramatic pause for reflection] My father said, ‘if you become a finalist, let me know.’ My father lives out on the west coast. I became a finalist. He said, “I want to come. Maybe this is God’s way of reconciling this within me because it’s been a painful part of me. Maybe God is trying to say something here. And I want to go and finally confront this.”

And so, he came. And we drove up to the final interview. And we went into the town. And he was like, “I want to go visit my grandfather and grandmother. I want to visit their graves. Can we please stop there first?” I said, ‘Oh yeah, sure. Let's go.’

We get to the graveyard. It’s a military graveyard. There’s three sections and we can’t find him. And there’s this white guy there tending the grounds. And he’s like, “Hey, you need some help?”

And my father was like, ‘yeah, we’re looking for Harry Logan,’ and he was like, “Doc?! Oh yeah, I know where he’s buried. I know where his wife is buried too.”

And so, he took us. He took my father to his grandfather’s grave and he wept and prayed. And then we went to his grandmother’s [grave], and we prayed and wept. And then I

went to my interview. And it was God’s will that I got the job and became the first Muslim chaplain.

And lastly, Elder CARSA Howard Thurman reflected that:

“One element in my thinking was the unique vocational dilemma that I faced. I could not think only of my own self-fulfillment; I had to consider the implication of my choice [to be present at Boston University]. If I accepted this invitation, I would be the first black man to occupy such a position in the history of the country. The potentialities for positive social change were enormous.”¹⁵⁸

THEME IV: SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING IS WELL-BEING

Ritika Srivastava defines spiritual well-being as the “ability to experience and integrate meaning and purpose in life through a person’s connectedness with self, others, art, music, literature, nature, or a power greater than oneself.”¹⁵⁹ She further differentiates that “spiritual well-being does not just reflect religious belief although for people of a religious faith it is obviously a central feature.”¹⁶⁰ As stated in chapter two, for the descendants of enslaved Africans, pursuit of Well-being was often forged under the rubrics of religious faith and within faith spaces. In predominately White spaces, especially institutional spaces that have participated in historical Whiteness, a determination to be “well,” is a spiritual act because to be Black and well is to combat the idea that Blackness does not matter and has no purpose. A declaration of one’s humanity in the presence of white supremacy is a spiritual act that is often buoyed in the religious gatherings of Black people but is not limited to religious gatherings. Further, I posit that any gathering of Black people for the sake of affirming their humanity and removing dehumanizing systems is a spiritual act that is sacred and religious—because we have to do it over and over again, both with and without God.

¹⁵⁸ Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 169.

¹⁵⁹ Ritika Srivastava, “Spiritual Wellbeing at Work: How to Do It Right,” *HRZone*, March 14, 2018, <https://www.hrzone.com/lead/culture/spiritual-wellbeing-at-work-how-to-do-it-right>.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

UBUNTU: THE COMMUNAL PURSUIT OF WELL-BEING

Deborah Blanks recalled:

... faculty and staff find other ways to nurture the inner life. ... We built a really wonderful strong community, because persons recognized our need of one another especially if we were going to make it through this [university] unscathed. Because we had each other, we were able to provide a kind of sanctuary for students. We wanted it for ourselves.

When I first came to Princeton, I'll say this really quickly, the Third World Center was a place that we were in at least three or four times a week. Students were in that place often. Over time, people would take the long trek down the street to get there. And because it was something happening and it provided a wonderful place, as did the Third World Center at Brown, a place of community.

Frederick Streets on the communal pursuit of well-being:

Granted, we bring certain things that may be fixed to [the college] experience but particularly at the college age level and even graduate student level overall, people are still forming. And the contribution a college and university can make to help a person to be formed into a whole human being, with integrity, to recognize again the value of spirituality, you can't ignore it.

When I see, and coming from a place like Yale, when I see some of Yale's graduates who are on the national and global scene doing what they do, saying what they say. I asked myself, 'What happened to them during those four years at college'?

...And so you can't turn it around if you don't see students, particularly as whole persons, that you don't equally value, and figure out ways structurally, programmatically, resource wise, figure out ways to attend to encourage people to be mindful of the mind, body, and the spirit. We do a hell of a job with the mind. Look at our library. Places like Princeton and Yale and other places. I mean look at the library. The academic content is clear. The life of the mind, the skills around teaching, research skills, and critical thinking – that's all great. Look at what we say about the life of the body. Look at the gymnasiums we have, the swimming pools, the playing fields. LOOK AT THE MILITARY, LOOK AT THE BUDGET that goes into athletics, we clearly value the body in that sense.

Now let's ask what are the symbols of value in the spirit?

I mean it could be a spiritual component in the athletic world and in the intellectual world. But how is that held up distinguishing enough for people to really think about themselves and their relationship to the world and to all of creation and certainly to other people in a spiritual way as well. This is not promoting one particular religion by no means.

Ijumaa recalls a period on campus where the road to well-being first had to be decolonized.

... the things I've seen have been powerful. The Black Lives Matter movement was getting some traction on campus. There were various marches through dining halls. But, a

lot of that stuff happens in front of the chapel. But there was one group that was really interesting to me. They were made up of mostly divinity school students; I think they would have graduated last year. They were marching and when they landed on the steps [of the chapel], they had different people speak, but they were out there praying too, speaking in tongues and praying [in tongues]! ... I had never seen that on campus. I thought, "this is interesting." So, it's becoming unbound, the spirituality—I think. There's a shift happening. I think this is beyond 'belonging.' There is a longing. a longing to be valued, to be accepted, to be loved; it goes back to the basics. But I also think that it looks different in our time, right. We're trying to figure that out. I think it's like a moving target. There are some, the traditionalist for sure, that will be in church, so to speak, every Sunday. But then there are a lot of others who are kind of more on the margins. They're not anti-spiritual, they're traditional, but they're looking for something else. They are trying to engage in faith or spirituality in a different way, but it's still communal.

Echoing similar observations of Black students wanting both formation and communal pursuit of wellbeing. Dunia reflects that,

...while a lot of black students I've met are in no hurry to rush to church on Sunday, they are in a hurry to feel connected. They are in a hurry to feel like there is something more. It doesn't even have to be, necessarily God, but that there's something greater. And that there's something good. I think that religion has always been about meaning-making, and I don't foresee a future where black people are no longer going to need to make meaning of the world. And because the world we live in is a failed secular world because it was built on a theological understanding of race, I think religiosity, spirituality, is always going to be central to the type of storytelling that needs to be done. To find a place for blackness in the world and at least for me, I'm not aware of too many spaces that simply just affirm blackness. I know that black feminism, womanist theology, black theology, these spaces, these schools of thoughts, these ways of being, this liberative practice; it embraces and affirms blackness and all humanity. And I think that's important. I have yet to meet a black student who upon learning about black theology has not been intrigued and has not wanted to learn more about it. I think that Black spiritual curiosity is evolving and that we are finding ourselves, again. We are finding ourselves in community. And we are finding our strength, and a positive sense of self. While I don't think spirituality is the end all be all of it, I do think it's definitely a part of it and yeah, I don't foresee a future where it's not going to be.

On the communal elements present in the pursuit of wellbeing, Asali says:

... you will hear this word from me a lot: Decolonize. Decolonize our spirituality and our belief system, in order to lean into the things that ground us—the very things that our mothers and grandmothers did that we laughed about, but now we know can save our life. We need to do all that. In each other we have a level of accountability. There has to be both release and restoration; a grounding and a releasing kind of component. There has to be constant growth and expanding, but I would also say that God is not bound by religion.

I am truly sick and tired of seeing how white culture will hear something that black and brown cultures have been doing—done as modes of spirituality, embodied spirituality,

things we grew up living and breathing and doing... they witness it once or twice then they modify it and try to teach it to you.

Spirituality is the acknowledgement that what is in you cannot be changed. And it's of great value, but that you cannot do it by yourself. If we could hold ourselves accountable, we would. How do you check your own blind spots? You have to have somebody else. In mindfulness, if that is all someone is doing, there is no need for God in that; and that is self-idolatry, that is slave-holder religion; 'all I got, all I need is in me'. Miss me with that.

And this is the core of de-colonizing spirituality for Black people. Because Black people, in particular, we know that if this God thing isn't real—however this God thing plays out—that we are damned. We feel it, there's this desperation. You go into a black church, you go into a black space where spiritual things are being talked about and, literally, you are feeling and sensing this desperation like 'we need God' – because God is equated with wellness. Whereas you go into counter spaces or to dominant spaces and it feels like option; it feels optional.

Hadithi adds:

... it is a certain mutual desire for survival. It's not just my survival but it's making sure my roommates make it through here too. Or that my colleague... in a faculty meeting where we're the only two black people in the school and we kind of look at each other and give each other (the nod). It's making sure that she will make it too and that she gets tenure. I think that's a part of black spirituality there, Black spiritual wellness.

...it has become sort like hash tags but I think that they are so essential, this notion of 'black girl magic' and 'black boy joy'... it's hard not to get emotional, I really sort of hold it for a little bit, but the sort of defiant expression of joy in the face of being dehumanized and hated. . .there's a profundity in that. And so, when you go to a black step show on our campuses and you see just the joy there or like some Saturday night party and you see us getting it in or us laughing on the benches on campus or like . . . that to me is just as spiritual and just as essential as like the church service that we're going to pull together for Sunday morning. I think cosmically our worship of the Divine, worship of God, is why we made it [meaning through the American experience]. I think in terms of spiritual practices, us laughing together—when they try to kill us, they try to fail us—is such an important part of what spiritual wellness looks like for us on these campuses. I think as professionals we want to do our best to sort of create spaces and curate events and conversations that can make that happen.

I had a mentor who said once be somewhere where all the different parts of you can breathe. And to me, as someone who loves preaching and speaking; I also love to teach. I love to write and I love mentoring and love being a part of a team. The university is a great space for that. It has to kind of do all of those things that interest a whole lot of us. You want to be somewhere where the different parts of you can breathe and I think higher education chaplaincy makes a lot of sense for future ministers who look like us.

Speaking to the evolution of spirituality as people pursue well-being. Bilal says:

I am always amazed when I can't tell the difference between the spiritual and the religious preference because they're so interwoven. And really for me it's every time I'm in [Black colleague's] presence or in the presence of others because there is no black

church and there's no black Mosques here in town—the nearest one is an hour away—I have church every time I'm in another's presence. I make it so that I'm going to have my church somewhere during the day during the week because the absence of it doesn't negate the need for it to be a part of my wellbeing. So, a lot of the time, that's what I'm experiencing and because people are so used to the white male kind of intellectual spiritual Christian leadership, I don't know if they can appreciate it unless you are from a marginalized group. Maybe there are some who are already 'woke' or that have had an awakening. But I don't think its appreciated unless you have lived without it, and live with it, and then lived without it... and when it's there in your presence, that you can really appreciate it truly.

There is a growing sense of apathy or distance with religion in general, and especially on the college campuses. Some of them have a full out assault on religion, period. Or any type of spiritual practice or expression. It's a full out assault because they have experienced it as an anti-rationalist belief, and it can be pretty hard for students at this age who are navigating their identity and 'what's what' and 'who's who' in the world, to hold on to religion, to hold on to faith and spirituality. Therefore, this is why our presence or spirituality in the embodied lives of those who are matriculating, and working is that much more important. Especially at the colleges and universities who are sometimes very hostile towards the idea of religion and the expression of our spirituality, so sometimes students don't know if it's okay. However, I have witnessed spiritual practices from the native art forms coming in the forefront, where they [students] will sit in a circle, they will burn some sage. Or they will burn some sage to begin a protest. These are all spiritual practices and they may not be what we're used to, but they're still part of our resources, our spiritual resource deep in our DNA from being enslaved. These were the enslaved, who ran to the bush, who then escaped the plantation, and met up with the natives in the bush. This is how they got through! So, these practices are now becoming more prevalent in the marches and protests, and as practices at these White institutions.

We've had to educate them like, 'They're not in violation. This is a spiritual practice when they're burning their sage.' So anyway, there's so many stories I can tell you, but I can't discount that as spiritual [a spiritual practice] it is different. But still the potency of spirituality is still front and center. It's just taking on a different formation currently.

THEME V: MEDIATING MINISTRY

Black CARSA, regardless of religious identification, seek and deliver spiritual well-being rooted in Black social ethics. One of the primary functions of being a leader is moral education—a fundamental value. Hence, according to Peter Paris, a “moral education can never take place within a vacuum; rather, it takes place in relation to a set of normative values.”¹⁶¹ He further posits that harmony occurs in the context of mutuality

¹⁶¹ Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 58.

between persons and institutions when the values of the latter are experienced by the former as self-affirming, that is, as a source of nurture for the self-actualization of persons; and between the institution and persons when the values of the latter are supportive of those of the former, that is, when persons have a spirit of loyalty aimed at enhancing the power of the larger whole.¹⁶² Similarly, disharmony occurs whenever the values of the institution are experienced by persons as “alien” to their well-being. Paris argues:

The moral implications of a sociopolitical context (institution) that restricts or prohibits the actualization of human potentiality are immense not only for the well-being of individuals but also for the integrity of the state (institution). ...But the greater hurt is nevertheless experienced by those who are excluded, since their loss is not merely quantitative but profoundly existential. Their humanity is threatened.¹⁶³

As Howard Thurman says,

If there are any citizens [students] within the state [institution] who by definition, stated or implied, are denied freedom of access to the resources of community as established within the state [institution], such persons are assailed at the very foundation of their sense of belonging.... The term ‘second class citizen’ is often used to describe such a status. This means that such persons are ‘outsiders’ living in the midst of ‘insiders,’ required to honor the same demands of sovereignty [the University] but denied the basic rewards of sovereignty [the University].¹⁶⁴

When this chasm occurs, CARSA—especially Black CARSA—respond with mediation. Enclosed are the accounts of Elder and current Black CARSA professionals whose ethics mandate balanced scales. The themes that occurred with mediation were (1) redirecting the university’s moral compass, (2) being present *in* the protest to mediate peace, (3) intervening for student agency, and (4) guarding the bones of the buried bodies.

REDIRECTING THE MORAL COMPASS

¹⁶² Ibid, 58.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground: An Inquiry into the Basis of Man’s Experience of Community* (Richmond, IN: Friends United, 1986), 87–88.

Floyd Thompkins:

Chaplain's offices, at the time, sat under the presidential cabinet. It's a different relationship in the university. The rest of them (student facing offices) sit in the Dean of Students Office. And so that means they think of you as programming. They don't think of you the same way. Is your office like that? If so, get out from under that structure. Everyone that has done that [aligned outside of the President's office] historically, has had the chaplain office reduced and then sometimes removed. That's what happened to Columbia. So, you don't want that to happen. You don't want that to happen, that means they see you only as Student Services. You must hold the President's ear and *you* [meaning me, the interviewer] must have the administrations ear because you can't trust White people to speak about the Black experience, boldly.

I do think that the other thing that needs to be talked about is the courage of the Chaplain's office. Every single first generation that hired us [Black CARSA] were courageous. They allowed us to be ministers and define what ministry is. Now, it helps that Princeton has its own endowment. At the same time, that's why there is a danger in taking chaplain offices and putting it under Student services, right. Because you need that kind of freedom because you know when the Black Lives Matter protest happened, it *should* happen in front of the chapel. They *should* see you as *the* person and the rest of the administration should say, 'well, thank God they're there.' Because, in point of fact, I know that this [the protest] isn't just a destructive anger, not that anger is a bad thing, but there is some educational influence, spiritually, there. It's about what's about to—as they say—jump off, at any and on any campus in the next five years. They really need us more now, than ever. Because, at two o'clock in the morning, I went to all the little organizing meetings and whatever and they [the students] were like, 'oh wait, no Molotov cocktails? Now y'all need to think about that.' [Insert laughter] Because you know students at that age are going to do some stupid stuff. And if you point out, 'you know that you are about to get stupid here', they usually stop. But if you're not there... that stuff doesn't happen. Some stupid stuff arose among those students, but because they saw you as an ally and not as one of them [the administration], which is what pastoring is, right. So, I think the age of courage has returned for the time. They'll need it if they're going to get through this right now.

On proximity to the University's moral compass, Frederick Streets added,

... So now there's a new model. The position [Yale Chaplain] has been divided into two and the student life kind of activity is the focus, and not the institutional life, per se. And I think that's a real loss because a university can lose aspects of its compass when it doesn't have ways of signaling to the wider community, the value of spirituality - however it's defined and struggled with. So, when I would show up at an alumni meeting or a banquet or dinner or a faculty meeting or a committee meeting—in particular—in times of stress, when we experienced 9/11 and all the things we had to do after 9/11. And then when it was students who got ill and died, or parents of a student who died unexpectedly, and we've had students who committed suicide, and you know Yale is divided up into now 14 residential colleges, so if a student gets ill or passes away unexpectedly, that whole college is in a tizzy, right. So, you go, and you have a relationship *already* with the deans and the heads of colleges, and so you go and you nurture that community. So, it's a real wide presence that you have to create.

I forgot also to mention that for one year, I was head of one of the colleges, because they called them masters then but they've changed that. But the key to all this is building relationships.

From the first week I took the [position] office of chaplain, I started calling all the deans. I called all the heads of colleges. I called the deans at the graduate schools, professional schools, the Yale College dean's office. I made appointments. I went and said, 'You need to see this face. I need to see your face'. I would check in with them periodically. So, I would get a call from the dean of the medical school about a medical student who was struggling or a doctor who was struggling or with family or whatnot. You have to build relationships and maintain them in order to have a presence in a university. I reported to the President on a regular basis, several times throughout the year. Both verbally and written reports to say 'this is what I see, this is what's going on. You might want to think about this.' So, I loved the work. I felt a real synergy between my gifts and my sense of call and what that mission of chaplaincy at Yale was all about and ushered in a multicultural ministry, which was on the horizon back in the late 90s.

Chura also reflected upon elements of CARSA work that intervenes *as* the University's moral compass.

...Chaplaincy in Higher Ed matters because we know the pulse of the university. And I promise you, if we were to go away, a whole lot of people are going to be impacted, not just students but staff and faculty, too. We keep a whole lot of stuff together [insert: long intentional stare]. I would like to say we are the Olivia Pope's of universities'; we fix stuff and the thing is handled and no one even knows that we're doing it.

Hadithi echoed similar sentiments under the language of CARSA professionals being the university's conscious. Having Black representation exemplifies that the university is trying to aim its compass in the right direction.

... (when we are) serving on different committees, sitting in different rooms, being a part of different task forces; either the token black person, or as the voice of reason... or being the conscious of the university—like they *say* we chaplains are. ... A buddy of mine and I have talked about the sort of 'safe Negroes' on campus [laughter of familiarity] and that there are [black] people who the administration is a little nervous about; and others who they feel safe around. There's something deeply messed up about that whole designation, and deeply messed up about that whole use of certain black folks and the fear of certain black folks. There's a historical precedent for that. But I definitely feel it. I think that the invitations come for a number of reasons. Sometimes it is because I've been here a significant amount of years and I know where the bodies are buried. Other times, it *is* because we need somebody to speak from the religious perspective. So sometimes they [the university] need the religious and spiritual life or the ethical kind of thing, and other times, they're like, 'this is a bad look, we need somebody of color, we need a black guy on this thing,' because it just looks bad. And I sometimes appreciate when people are honest about that. Like 'I would never call you a token, but we need representation because the cameras are coming.'

PRESENT IN THE PROTEST

Because of the unique relationship that CARSA form with constituents of the university while also being employed by the university, CARSA can be present *in* the protest with students. If higher education institutions fully comprehend the role of CARSA and the gravitational calibration that they have towards justice, and they desire for their students to pursue wellness, then there are times when attacks on personhood, barricades and blocks well-being, and thus, must be protested. Moreover, on the journey towards well-being, having a curator be present is educational and instructional.

Bilal:

I can share with you just one of those stories of a painful situation that happened on campus within the first 90 days of my working there. There was an incident in one of the dorms where a black female residential leader, on her door, outside, somebody put in black marker “all Black Niggers must die. And ...on her door in the dorm. And the way that the administration handled it was like, ‘we're not going to repeat these words or we're not going to say them’. And so, they were just kind of downplaying it. ‘There's nothing really threatening.’

So, this happened during homecoming and a lot of the Black Alumni were back on campus at the time of this announcement. So, we're all in this little tight room in the Multicultural Center. We're all coming where the announcements were going to be given, and they were downplaying it.

And when they said ‘oh but there's nothing life threatening, there's nothing bad about it,’ and the young lady, to whom the racial epithet was put on the door, was sitting right there, and when they said that, she started to sob and weep. And the whole room, stopped and was like ‘why is my sister crying like this if it's nothing?’ And she said, ‘it is something!’ And then the two Deans that were there got up and went in the back room and they talked about it. Then they came out and said, ‘okay we'll tell you what it says.’ And when they said those words, it took the air out of the room and everybody joined her in the pain and grief and sorrow; and as an administrator, as a chaplain, Black American Muslim chaplain, I was hearing it for the first time myself. They didn't even give me the courtesy of letting me know so I can kind of start to do my own grief work and processing of this attack; but I was hearing it for the first time *with* everybody else and with tears falling down *my* face.

Then they were like ‘the president needs to be out here.’ Someone called the President, ‘can you come out?’ He's like, ‘No, I'm not coming out. Let's have a meeting in the morning.’

Okay, [because he didn't come out] we're going to his house, because the President has a big house right in the middle of the whole campus. Okay that's fine if he doesn't want to (come out), we will go to him. So, they're calling [him] on the phone. And so, we have

marched into lines and everybody's calling people 'come on out,' and the line is big, getting deeper and bigger. I said, 'Listen, let's march past this house, and let's go to the police station (which was a few blocks away) and insist the [hate crime, vandalism] report is done. Let's not wait for him to do that. Let's go do that ourselves.' So, I lead the march to the police station where we occupied the police station. The two black student leaders came to me because they heard what I said and they were like, so what do we do, I said, 'Listen, we all occupy the station, you two Black women go up and demand we're not leaving until a report is done.' So, they went up... and *then* the President is calling us like can we meet. 'Oh, now you want to meet.'

Yeah, and now it's urgent. And so, then he [the President] comes out. So, I get a call, 'the President wants to meet you the next morning.' I'm thinking, 'I'm done; I haven't been on the job 90 days. I'm exposed now. They done found out I'm an organizer, I'm done.'

So, I go into the President's office that next morning and all of the senior administration is in there. I just grab a chair. I go sit in the back of the room and they are talking about strategy and what they are doing next. He goes around the room and ask everybody. And I'm staying quiet; and the President is like, 'Bilal, the reason why I have you here is because I know you really know what to do. You heard what everybody else is saying, but I know you really know what to do. So, what say you, what should we do?'

And I said, 'oh, since you asked –

I wouldn't listen to anything—anything these people are saying around this table. Y'all should take your pens and paper and go sit in front of the stage and just shut your mouths and listen to these children, listen to their pain. Listen to the hurt, nod your heads, wipe your eyes, bow your heads, and listen so that they can get this out in a productive way, and know that you are listening to them. If y'all do anything other than that or get the urge or the spirit to speak out, anyone other than the President, you better shut them down immediately. Follow that or else this place is going to blow up. That's my opinion.'

And then he said, 'Well, that's why I have you here. That's why I'm blessed and happy that we have you at this time.' He said, 'we are doing what he said, y'all go get your pens, get your pads, we gonna go across the street and listen. We're going to do exactly what he said.'

And so, from that point on... wait... to start off the students were very hot. They're upset—crying—and some of them were cussing and then I spoke. I said 'listen, I understand the anger, I'm angry, I understand the pain and hurt. I'm hurt. But let's remember to do this in love. Let's remember to do this in love. We cannot let hate conquer our hearts, we got to do this in love and with respect. Let's speak truth to power. They're all here to listen.' I turned to them (the administration) and said, "you are here to listen, right?" And they all nodded. So I said, 'they are here to listen so let's do this in love and respect.' And then I just walked out.

So, the President comes running after me, I'm like crossing the street and he comes running after me. 'Bilal, Bilal,' and he just reached out to hug me. It's like – 'thank you. Thank you for helping us in this moment.' I was like, 'sure.' And from that day, I felt like I had a purpose. I felt like maybe I'm meant to be here; this is my destiny to help this town (university) recover or redeem itself or work on it.

Elder CARSA, Floyd Thompkins recalls being present *in* the protest at Princeton.

... We kind of jump right on into the protests on campus with South Africa. All of us got the pictures of us doing this, the sit ins... we [students and chaplains] may have scared the bejesus out of them [the administration]. They [the administration] may have actually began that way [wanting the chaplain present] but then when they saw it, they didn't want it. They were like 'Wow, no.'

I actually really comported myself about the thing. I said 'Okay, I'm black so everybody that's oppressed is mine. Give me everybody. And Sue Ann is like, "Oh I need the gay," so, 'okay you got the gay people, everybody else I got.' And then Fred was like the white guy that had whatever. So, we did that very intentionally. And so, I ended up just doing the protesting and whatever, saying, I'm the pastor. In fact, I got in the newspaper, the alumni still think that I did this...[sidebar] ... so they decided, some students, that they were going to go take over the president's office and do occupation. But they didn't want a lot of stuff [their demands], they wanted good stuff by the way....

So, the protests happen, suddenly they were taking over the office... so I went in the building with them. And I was really pastorally telling them, 'don't tear nothing up because it'll mess up your [academic] stuff. So Sue Ann and I talked over the thing. But everybody said to the Chaplain "the deans are over there protesting." I'm like, 'No, I'm doing pastoral care. Don't you understand that's these protesters are students.' It was funny. I got written up in the campus newspaper, all the alumni were like, 'you should be fired' and all that. And of course, it was never an issue [with the administration] because the black faculty came—Toni and dem—and they were like, "you're not going to fire him!" They were like "no that's what a pastor is. That's why we hired him to be here." And that was that.

INTERVENTION AND STUDENT AGENCY

In pursuit of well-being, the sub-theme of Black CARSA professionals intervening for student agency emerged. Gazeti reflected that,

... My expectation is to be present with students who are trying to navigate these different racialized incidents and we've had a number. Just last year here in the city, we had a KKK rally. So, having to navigate things like that, which means being present with students, listening to what their needs are, opening them to understand things that they may not see in the moment and actually encouraging them to be well. Encouraging them to take care of themselves and to do whatever is necessary for them. And that kind of comes with my connection to the [ethic] Center. The Center does call on me when we have these types of situations. So, we have an emergency response plan that The Center has put in place. And normally, when we have any incident to take place, I receive a notification and we go ahead and initiate our response plan. What I normally do around racialized incidents or any incidents that are directly impacting our students is I set up a meditation room and allow students the opportunity to go in and just sit and reflect and have conversation if needed. But that conversation does not take place in the meditation room. So, I get leaned on to show up in those situations.

University wide or within my department, it gets tricky. These are normally the moments where I can come out of hiding. You know, these are the times, if there is any type of visual on campus, I'm going to be present at that and probably asked to help preside. The (chaplains) department, they try to do well and not place all of the diversity based or racialized things on my lap, but then they *still* place it on my lap. They say, 'we're not going to say that we're placing it on your lap but if you want to help out with this thing...'. Or, 'Please help us navigate this thing, please feel free to do so because we really need you. I don't want you to expect to *have* to respond to it but if you could . . .'" And so that's what it turns into.

William Gibson remembers hearing places that needed intervention and being invited into the students' lives to allow for intervention when necessary.

William Gibson: one of the struggles I had was when students would come to me and say, "Dean Gibson, I'm leaving for a semester." And I remember one instance, I said, 'Oh, you're studying abroad, where are you going?' And the student said, 'No, the Dean has told me I must leave for academic reasons.' [Expressive pause] This blew my mind. I'm thinking 'this student is brilliant—something is not right, what's going on?' Again, being my mother's son, I began to do an inquiry about what was going on. I got in touch with the dean of the college office and I wanted to know how do you work this process as to where you ask students to leave and why? Long story short, I was able to finagle an internship in the dean of the college office with a particular focus on students of color and what was happening for them in a general kind of way in terms of academic progress. I'm very grateful for the experience. I learned more about the university there than I would have learned alone in the office of Religious Life and Dean of the Chapel. So, both my supervisor—the dean of religious life and of the chapel—and the dean of the college, allowed me to have this experience so that I was able to learn this. That it really had nothing to do with the intellectual prowess of these amazing students, it had to do mostly with the failure of those at the university who should have been communicating clearly how does the academic administrative process work. For example, if I'm taking astrophysics, and you're my professor and you say that I can turn in this problem set late, but the late date gotten from the faculty member runs up against the "Dean Date", even though I have the approval of the faculty member, I'm going to be penalized because I didn't know that the faculty didn't have the full authority. So, there were things like that, that we were able to work through, and I learned so much in that regard.

And then some students were very straightforward: 'I am so glad to see a Black man here at Princeton University. It means a lot to us Dean Gibson.'

African American men in particular, but also Latinos, black women, it was a difference that made a difference that my embodiment of that of an African American man, no doubt. And then Rodney King happened about a few years in. And a year later the verdicts were basically that the jury decided those cops had done no wrong.

I remember being in meetings with black students at Princeton, and they said, our reputation among other black students in the Ivy League is that Black students at Princeton are basically not engaged politically. If we don't do anything this time, shame on us. They were having a meeting at the Third World Center, again—they invited me in; I didn't invite myself, they invited me to be with them and they began to organize.

And so, issues around academic experience for students of color, as well as the century-long challenges related to race, became part of my work. I went there to do what you might narrowly describe as Chaplain work; Dean of religious life work. And one of my sisters reminded me that: “William, you took your whole self to Princeton, you come from a family where our mother and father were both involved in the civil rights movement in the South. God sent you to Princeton for such a time as this.”

And out of that experience, I grew, and I learned so much and I must tell you, very quickly I did not go to Princeton with a view that I would have a career in higher ed.

Institutions have secrets. Deep scandalous secrets. Because of the history of CARSA professionals being clergy persons and considering the history of Black clergy being the only access that the descendants of enslaved Africans could access for mental/emotional and spiritual well-being, Black CARSA spaces can easily become confessional, therapeutic, and spiritual grounds. Some of the participants reported curating well-being by being a space where secrets and bodies could figuratively be buried. Dunia captured this when they reflected:

... this position is outside of the academic matrix of the university. It's appealing to something else, something greater. And I think when done right, (this position) doesn't rely on pretense or assumed rightness or correctness or ideals, in that sense. So, you can come looking, feeling, being—all torn up and it's okay. You can come bearing your soul and know that you're going to be embraced. The other thing, when we talk about whiteness and blackness as these ideas, the other thing about blackness is about embrace and so I do think it's important for students to have another place on campus that they can go to. And even if they are apprehensive of whether or not they will be embraced because maybe they weren't raised in the church or raised religious or spiritual in some kind of way, I'm so thankful that whatever apprehension that they had, completely melts away once they actually begin to experience the warmth of this office. The warmth of this space for them. And I do think that, again, going back to the prophetic and the kind of truth-telling, being that person to just name what everyone is thinking or everyone is feeling in that moment, I think that's important. And I think, oftentimes, administrators at our colleges and universities have to tell a certain narrative. And I think our office gets to be exempt from that. I think our office, with the right kind of leadership, is aware of the narratives. And, also aware of the counter narratives; aware of the undersides of that narrative and unafraid to speak to it. Unafraid to speak to, to quote Isaiah, “the way that justice has fallen [collapsed] in our streets.” And I think that's really important.

To this day, I haven't met a black student who was like, “No, no, no, don't, don't talk about the truth, don't talk about the reality of it. I haven't met a black student who said that to me. I've met Black students who have nodded, who have thanked me who have appreciated a space where we can speak frankly and speak truthfully about the realities... and then be able to have that space connected to spirituality, and the type of spirituality

that we're talking about in that space is a spirituality that's coming out of a very kind of deconstructive space of black theology where we know that as black Christians, we exist in an antagonistic relationship with the status quo and that is being part of what it means to be a black Christian—to have this antagonistic relationship with the status quo is to always be ready to subvert and invert power structures and to connect that kind of action to the upside down kingdom. Yeah, I think there's a wealth of resources and a wealth of possibilities within the offices of religious and spiritual life with someone being Black in that role and understanding the breadth.

THEME VI: HEALING IDENTITIES

American author Alice Walker states that “those who love us never leave us alone with our grief. At the moment they show us the wound, they reveal they have the medicine.”¹⁶⁵ Poetically, she concludes that “we plant...we hoe...we harvest.... life, inexhaustible, goes on. And we do too. Carrying our wounds and our medicines as we go.”¹⁶⁶ While many of the “wounds” need professional psychological assistance to heal, unfortunately, due to racism and how it purports medical definitions and manifestations of psychological maladies, many DEA have “wounds” that are both externally inflicted and internally inflicted. As Howard Thurman—the first Black CARSA professional at a PWI describes the then present evils of segregation, the ideas still apply in settings that are historically white and still healing from the effects of a segregated society:

The real evil of segregation is the imposition of self-rejection! It settles upon the individual a status which announces to all and sundry that he [sic] is of limited worth as a human being. It rings him [sic] round with a circle of shame and humiliation. It binds his children with a climate of no-accountness as a part of their earliest experience of the self. Thus, it renders them cripples, often for the length and breadth of their days. And from this there is no forgiveness, only atonement. And only god can judge of what that atonement consists. What does it mean to grow up with a cheap self-estimate? There is a sentence I copied many years ago, the source of which I have forgotten: ‘We were despised so long at last we despised ourselves.’¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Zora Neale Hurston, *Barracoon: The Story of the Last “Black Cargo,”* 1st edition (New York: HarperCollins, 2018), ix.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Howard Thurman, *The Luminous Darkness: A Personal Interpretation of the Anatomy of Segregation and the Ground of Hope* (Richmond, IN: Friends United, 1989), 26.

Healing the self and healing the identities of others is the final major theme. In this section are the accounts, according to Black CARSA professionals, of those who refuse to be “the bones that are buried,” inclusive of the Black CARSA professionals themselves. In the pursuit of wellness while occupying a Black body, Black CARSA aid in healing the wounds of others once they are revealed. When the researcher asked Dunia, “When you heard the title of this project, that it was spiritual well-being for the descendants of enslaved Africans, did you feel like I was cutting off our black population or pieces of the Black voice by only focusing on the descendants of enslaved Africans versus all black students?” Dunia replied,

I think that's really important. For me, as someone who went to a predominantly white institution for undergrad and graduate school, and who went on my own racial identity awareness journey, I do think it is important to make that distinction. I will say for myself, I was raised to think of myself as Nigerian American. My parents did not raise me to think of myself as “Black” (meaning: African American). That's not something that we talked about, that wasn't language that we used in the house. And so, it wasn't until college that I really began to think about my identity as a Black woman as opposed to ... [hesitancy] ... I will confess I have some issues with our cancel culture. I have issues with this sense that people can't be on a journey right. People can't grow people can't learn [picking back up] ... and so, as a student, I did not understand the black women, the descendants of slave black women. I didn't understand why they were angry. I didn't understand their experience at all. And to be honest, it had to be spelled out for me. It really did have to be spelled out for me. But then when I actually got it, there was a pain. I don't know where it started. I don't know the origin point of the pain, but I began to feel it in my gut. I began to feel it in my heart, in my chest. It just kind of radiated throughout my entire body, and that's just something that I didn't have beforehand. In part, because my mother came to the States when she was 30, and she had a very different experience. My mom grew up in a predominantly black country that had its own issues with Whiteness and approximated whiteness, but didn't have the presence of white people. So, while the cultural power, the quite literal imperial power of white people was present, you don't have their bodies there. So, my mom didn't have stories to tell me of her experience in college, about being a racialized body; that was completely outside of her experience. And so, when I went to college and all of a sudden was living in close proximity and trying to create common experiences and common language with the other black students, it became clear that there was a difference in our experiences. And again, it took me a long time to really learn and appreciate the difference. I think that is the reason why I always go back to theology, because it was womanist theology that really kind of cemented that for me. It was the stories of Jarena Lee and Maria Stewart and Julia Foote and Old Elizabeth. It was the writings of these black women in the 19th and 20th century. It was their stories, their experiences, and then the ways in which womanist theologians then use their stories to rewrite stories about salvation about our concepts of

sin, of personhood, of somebodyiness. Anyway, so that was huge for me. So, I think that it is important to make that distinction. And I do think the place that it comes together is this understanding of blackness. And especially blackness in America because you know I don't speak with the Nigerian accent. So, if I'm just meeting people, I'm just Dee from Ohio. That's all they know about me in that moment and I'm still living in this world in a black body.

On healing Identities, Dunia continues:

There's an artist that I really love; her name is Some and she has this song, 'Am I Black Enough for you?' And there's a line in that song that says, 'green cards won't save me.' And I do think that is a painful reality. But I think also a reality that connects us in our experience that regardless of my ethnic background, in America, I'm black and I get treated that way. And so especially as someone who does Black studies and who learns the history, learns the theory about it, I really begin to see this deep need for speaking to the Black experience that transcends whether you are a descendant of slaves or not, but I do think it is important to highlight the differences. The differences in socialization, the differences in our family stories, the stories that we grew up hearing.

... I have a friend who said, 'I am black, a descendant of enslaved Africans; descendant of slaves, and I am also a descendant of a people who were freed from slavery.' And I thought that was really beautiful holding those two identities together. The pain and the heaviness of one with the future hope of the other. And I think that's really important for any conversation about well-being. I think you have to find that balance between what I was calling that pain that I started to feel in my body, in my chest in my heart, as well as the joy, as well as the history of escape, of dance, of being on the run from dehumanizing practices and somehow finding joy and voice and expression in that process. So, I think that's important. And I really want to see more conversations that bring together those different experiences.

Similar to Dunia's story, Chura recalls being present with a student who was raised to consider themselves "beyond" blackness. Chura recalled a situation where,

I had a Nigerian student who was born here, but he's Nigerian and he holds onto his Nigerian culture. I think something happened recently where he was pulled over. And that's when he realized, "man I'm black, right? They don't care that I'm African or Nigerian, they just see me as black." He had compartmentalized. I think some of my African students, and maybe even Caribbean students, are starting to see things this way. Even though they've been raised, like, they're not 'black'. But society sees them as black. Therefore, they will experience the same issues and discrimination.

HEALING OURSELVES

Asali: Coming in having done most of my doctoral work, having all of this information around race and gender, but also having done a lot of justice work and organizing work in addition to my spiritual leadership work, I underestimated what it would mean to provide spiritual care or pastoral care to white individuals. I did not anticipate having multiple critical incidents of race while providing pastoral care to a white colleague or to a white student in a position where I had to discern, very quickly, do I press this—because in

some cases they are in such deep pain around this stuff that they are in. They have no idea, like they don't even have the capacity to hold a push back or refrain. So, it was in the moment, having to, in some cases, swallow or put on hold or elevate the need to be present with someone, even when that person was hurting me, creating or perpetuating hurt and harm in a space. And then when that is coupled with how that's happening across the board, because I'm also the first black person to serve in this position, and I am the only confidential source for faculty and staff, that means black and brown faculty and staff on the campus have never had a confidential source... And I am one of three for students.... So, what that means is that I'm bombarded. And it's not to say that the people who held this position before me weren't great, but because of the dynamics of race, as we know, there's just some things black folk ain't gone come share or brown folk ain't gone come share. I'm holding stories that have been held for decades, while also having my experiences and also seeing the need and the call to advocate in ways that does not deny confidentiality, and moving in that nuance. Which is not something I could have anticipated because I'd never experienced it in professional ministerial position before.

And so, it's this ebb and flow, it's this moving back and forth. It is how we heal while we're constantly being hurt. Well we heal by having constant practices that counter the hurt; constant healing practices and that means constant interaction with our God and our Creator. That means constant interaction with the people who give us life. That means constant interaction with the life-giving things that remind us of who we are and that our value is secure and will not shift. So, it is Howard Thurman who said we can't just be the mystic, we also have to be the prophet. We've got to move between both. We've got to come up into the mysticism of spirituality, the high places where we spend time with God, where we restore, where we feed our souls. And there, we are reminded of who we are. And once we are full, we must then come back to be people on the ground to do the work of walking with God to redeem creation. And when we stay here too long, we get jaded. When we stay here too long, we are blinded. There has to be a back and forth and you cannot do that. That is the process for me of healing and spiritual well-being.

Embe: As I much as this pandemic has caused so much pain and trauma and loss, I am very grateful for this moment of pause, so I can become healthy. And, if I can be spiritual for a moment [insert laughter], this whole ideology of people pleasing, what does it mean to be pleased with and what does it mean for someone to be pleased with me. But also, what does it mean for me to belong? I think that this role has challenged me. I thought it was going to challenge me professionally, and it has. But mainly it has really forced me not to give a care of how people view me. And that, I think, that's a work in progress. It doesn't matter if I'm Barack Obama or someone who might be anybody, they're going to think the same thing and it's their thoughts and their perspective of me, or of us, that can no longer be the measurement of worth.

Fisi: ... Yeah, so there are about ten of us [faculty and staff], I would say, and we've formed a very close knit group. We have our own resource group. And we have a lunch meeting and things and it's very, very close knit. People have different types of spiritualities, like there's always some notion given to the spirit, whether it be the ancestors or God or Jesus or whomever. It's some aspect of spirituality. But we usually have some sort of a prayer at these meetings.

I think they need community so part of what I do is I build the community for them. And what does that mean, what does that look like—maybe having a safe space. I would have

to say quite honestly that some of it is the kinship going on because you know for these students, the faculty and staff here have become like an extended family. So, I think for them it's important that they have those spaces and we do a lot of advocacy. And I think they need to have a sense of who they are because the system is set up to make them doubt themselves from day one. It's so sad seeing that. And so, you have to take off your mask, because you are also navigating this terrain.

On the healing process, Floyd Thompkins offered that

... a lot of black folks who come to those campuses, this the first time they've found their people. There is a lot of hurt both externally from racism and internally from our own people. One of the things I wanted to give people permission to do, is to not blow past that. These four years—even though you think you are struggling—it really isn't. Somebody else is paying the bills. And you're doing what you can do, with your left hand—which is write papers and think academically. So, the real work of these years is to actually heal. Because I don't want you to bring that hurt to somebody else when you have power.

And lastly, William Gipson spoke to the unearthing process that healing can encompass.

On healing he advised that CARSA should,

... know enough about the university and how it works to tell the story of being Black in a historically White setting. But I want to add something else to that... if you know where the bodies are buried some of those bodies need to be resurrected. The untold stories of the people who work in the dining halls and who clean the buildings, unearth it. It's buried because it doesn't represent the kind of public profile the University wants. Unbury it. Resurrect the thing. And heal it. The fact that so many of these universities built their wealth on the black bodies of our ancestors, resurrect that story.

Go where the bodies are buried and resurrect them and the full story. Know that you're holding the cloak and you have the power to raise the dead. That's your role as the college or university chaplain.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

“In today’s America, we tend to think of healing as something binary: either we’re broken or we’re healed from that brokenness. But that’s not how healing operates, and it’s almost never how human growth works. More often, healing and growth take place on a continuum, with innumerable points between utter brokenness and total health.”
- Resmaa Menakem¹⁶⁸

I will conclude by discussing the intersections where the themes that emerged in chapter five collide with the historical contexts that were briefed in previous chapters. I will then present the limitations that I encountered performing this study and possible implications for further study. And lastly, I will concede the final words to the CARSA participants, in their own words, articulating what they want the field of higher education chaplaincy, spiritual and religious life, to know.¹⁶⁹

INTENTIONAL INSTITUTIONAL HIRING

The presented essential themes and the subsequent thematic statements both intersect at various points with the historical narrative of chaplaincy and spiritual and religious life in higher education and integrational relationships in American history. The main intersection areas include intentional institutional hiring, performative Blackness, healing and incurring racial trauma, and Black CARSA professionals being a historical conductor towards well-being.

In 2005, all the Ivy League institutions had Black descendants of enslaved Africans within their spiritual and religious life offices. Of the five elder CARSA listed in this project, three of them acknowledge that their hire was based upon the University’s decision

¹⁶⁸ Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery, 2017), 12

¹⁶⁹ See Appendix G for an extended version of the responses to the prompt: “What do you want the field of higher education chaplaincy, spiritual and religious life to know?”.

to provide students with a resource person who was a DEA and trained CARSA professional. One of the elder CARSA did not specify whether his hire was an intentional move by the University to diversify the administrative role of university chaplain, and yet, considering the magnitude of a Black person occupying William Sloane Coffins' pulpit, it is not farfetched speculation that this was an indirect subject.

Two divergent themes emerged from current CARSA – (1) the desire to hire a DEA in the role of CARSA because the role is designed or historically held by a Black person, with attention towards offering care for Black bodies as an unprinted governance, and (2) being hired for a role as a general CARSA without consideration of how race would influence the position. In the first scenario, current CARSA reported feeling “overwhelmed” by the duties placed upon them by the administration. In the second scenario, current and former CARSA persons Asali, and Khalid Griggs, reported encountering psyche (sunsum) bewilderment towards people's reaction of their racial embodiment.

Summarily, it appears that institutions that are intentional about their DEA students' well-being believe the data that says representation matters and supports the Black CARSA professional in those roles so that they too can experience well-being. From the narratives, it can also be extracted that a lack of intentionality towards DEA students' well-being results in injury to the well-being of DEA staff.

PERFORMATIVE BLACKNESS: THE BLACK SPOTLIGHT

Extracted from all the Black CARSA professionals were echoes of the inability to move freely in a historically white space. There is consistent maneuvering of whiteness that means a contortion of Blackness. Either participants felt that they could not bring their

whole selves into the PWI setting—a means of protecting their own well-being, or they intentionally tried to present their Black selves in an effort to create space for other DEA to access well-being. All the Black CARSA professionals believed that their presence matters. They feel their presence matters because it opens the imagination of possibilities for students to see themselves in similar professional roles. They also feel their presence invokes a level of reassurance that someone is advocating for them and/or is present to intervene for them. In some cases, their presence is restorative to the larger university community and a source of pride.

WOUNDED HEALERS (RACIAL TRAUMA)

All Black CARSA held sentiments of gratitude towards doing the difficult reparative work of healing the traumas of racism, either directly or indirectly, for all people – regardless of race or racialized identity. The traumas of racism are not limited to DEA and Black people. Rather, the dehumanizing and devaluation of identities that white supremacy enacts upon minoritized groups is pervasively damaging to all people. Both former and current CARSA articulated the struggle to be well in a predominately white setting. Some articulated more work than others. There is a corollary of racialized injury that aligns with institutional intention related to hiring and CARSA visibility. However, this is not evident from the narratives because participant context is needed to see the connection. What is evident from the narratives is the shock, and dare I imply injury, that Black CARSA who were hired without the intentionality of race incurred from walking with and being conduits of care for non-DEA persons.

HISTORICAL CONDUCTORS TOWARDS WELL-BEING

In chapter two's sub-section, "the genius of the negro church," data from the 1930 socio-religious study on Black religious phenomenon revealed that historically the Negro church (1) offered a place of reprieve, (2) provided a social center, (3) encouraged education, (4) nurtured business, (5) lacked respect of personage, (6) erased racial barriers, and (7) produced Black clergy – the freest and most influential person in the DEA community. In chapter two, the connection was made between how these findings from the 1930s study correlated with Peggy Swarbrick's eight dimensions of well-being. In summation of how CARSA professionals are conduits towards well-being for DEA and Black students, regardless of CARSA professionals' religious tradition, the embodiment of the prophetic nature of being Black clergy and still being one of the most influential persons in the Black community, means that Black CARSA are and will remain the connection and conduit of well-being as they curate spiritual and religious life to the entire university, because their presence is a protest of persistence and a recalibration of the university's moral compass – a benefit for everyone.

LIMITATIONS

There were fifteen participants in this study. Two of the invited participants who declined the invitation could have provided a perspective that may have shifted this study's themes. Initially, this project wanted to spread itself across multiple independent higher education institutions to capture the current student experience quantitatively and qualitatively. Alas, due to the unprecedented experiences of isolation and deaths due to COVID19, this study suffered.

Most institutions of higher education entered shut-down in the early spring of 2020. Lockdown orders created unprecedented obstacles to both the IRB process, assessment process, research process, and basically - everything. And then, the dual pandemic against Black bodies by state-sanctioned and protected law enforcement, and the national protest that accompanied. All participants in this project were affected by both pandemics. Either by the psyche trauma of witnessing the brutality against Black bodies, or the trauma of trying to survive a pandemic. Multiple interviews had to be rescheduled due to combatting COVID-19 or caring for family members battling COVID-19. The environments for interviewing were less than ideal as the interviews hinged on the mercy of internet connectivity. There were also environmental interruptions during several interviews by family members, as all interviews were conducted in participants' homes while their families were present.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Additional studies that explore DEA experiences who participated in predominately white campus ministries would expand the base of knowledge about the experience. A study that juxtaposes undergraduate DEA experience who participate in CARSA-curated programming and DEA who do not report participating in CARSA-curated programming or accessing CARSA but still report pursuing spiritual well-being would provide a base of knowledge for practitioners in the field. Future studies could also be expanded to include white identifying CARSA who have curated well-being for DEA and the methods they employed beyond identity politics. While this would help the field of chaplaincy and religious and spiritual life, it would need to be nuanced with an assessment report by DEA to measure effectiveness.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

This section includes condensed responses grouped into one statement. The first-person pronoun “I” represents the personal projections of CARSA participants. A separated identified and de-identified version of responses is available in appendix G. The conclusion of this project is the collective voices of Black CARSA, to higher education administrations and the field of chaplaincy and spiritual and religious life.

Black CARSA wish that the field of higher education chaplaincy and spiritual and religious life knew about the broader landscape of American spirituality.

I wish they knew and were conscious of the fact that in some ways, all of us have been steeped in white Christianity. And that there needs to be an intention to decolonize white dominant thought and pattern from the ways in which we live out our spirituality. I wish that they knew that there is a religious and spiritual cannon within Blackness, that is located outside of the prescriptive religious and spiritual texts. I think what is beneficial to know is every place you go; spirituality is going to be present. I wish our colleagues knew more of our history, and that ministering to us is different—and should be different. First thing I would say is, like, we need you [white colleagues].

A lot of the work that we do is triage.

We’re doing a lot of repair work when the other departments have caused harm. Really, it’s not one size fits all. We have to be able to discern these differences. We have to be able to address the entire communities that we serve. I wish the field knew or could understand more fully the invaluable contribution that persons of the African diaspora contribute to the life of students and the life and breadth of the

university because we bring something that is uniquely different just because of who we are. And even when we can't bring our full selves, we bring the legacy of faith and fortitude of every person that has deposited something in us from our families, from our faith communities, (and) from how our culture shapes us. I wish that the field knew that this is hard work. This is soul work. We need advocates and co-conspirators. We are not just students, faculty, staff, we are human beings – not just quotas.

Blackness is not monolithic.

There is a difference between mainland Africans, West Indians, Africans in America, and domestic African Americans; not all Black people are the same. I think that's important because there's a level of trauma, you know, trans-generational trauma that has never really been addressed with Black people. We come at it from a holistic point of view. It's not like something we do on certain days, we do this every day since we woke up Black. I wish they knew they're not paying us enough. Because what they truly need to compensate us for is our confidentiality.

I wish they knew that there is something in Black people that is stronger than death.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Request for Participation Email

APPENDIX B: Electronic Consent Form for Participation in Research Study

APPENDIX C: Scheduling and Preparing for Zoom Interviews Email Instructions

APPENDIX D: Sample Interview Questions

APPENDIX E: Description of Role (University Titles)

APPENDIX F: Exploratory Prompt: “What is Spiritual Well-being for descendants of enslaved Africans at predominately white institutions of higher education, and what do Black souls need to thrive in historically white institutions?”

APPENDIX G: Exploratory Prompt: “What do you wish the field of Higher Education Chaplaincy, Spiritual and Religious Life knew?”

APPENDIX A
REQUEST FOR PARTICPATION EMAIL

Subject line: “Research Participation Request”

Dear _____,

I am K. Monet Rice-Jalloh, Associate University Chaplain at Wake Forest University.

I am contacting you because I would like for you to participate in my research project exploring “Spiritual Well-Being for Descendants of Enslaved Africans at Predominately White Institutions of Higher Education.”

I am doing a qualitative phenomenological study interviewing 10-15 Black persons who work in Spiritual and Religious Life affairs. If you choose to participate, the interview will take place during a 50-60 min session via zoom. Because there are so few of us, it will be impossible to remove identifiers from the data – therefore, I’ve decided to lean completely into this factor and, perhaps, after my dissertation is complete, turning our audio visual interview into a mini-documentary for later use at the national gathering of Black Chaplains and Religious & Spiritual Life Professionals conference in 2021.

If you confirm your interest in participating, next we will schedule your zoom interview. Once this is scheduled, you will receive an electronic link that contains the consent form for you to electronically sign. Once you consent, you will be directed towards questions aimed to capture your biographical data.

Please let me know if you're interested in participating. If you have questions, you are welcome to contact me, the principle investigator, either via phone at 205-233-0364, or by responding to this email.

This study has been approved by the Duke University IRB department.

I look forward to hearing back from you soon,

K. Monet

Rev. K. Monet Rice-Jalloh

Associate University Chaplain
Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life
Reynolda Hall \ Winston-Salem, NC 27103
p [336.758.4843](tel:336.758.4843) \ f [336.758.3193](tel:336.758.3193)
ricekm@wfu.edu \ chaplain.wfu.edu
SHE | HER | HERS

APPENDIX B
ELECTRONIC CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL
Doctor of Ministry – Research Project
Informed Consent for Research Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project:

“No More Gallery Seats: Exploring Spiritual Well-Being for Descendants of Enslaved Africans at Predominately White Institutions of Higher Education”

Principal Investigator: K. Monet Rice-Jalloh, B.A., M.Div.

Office Phone: (336) 758-4843 e-mail: ricekm@wfu.edu

Mobile Phone: (205) 233-0364 Duke email: kellee.rice@duke.edu

Background: The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of your experience facilitating spiritual well-being at a predominately white institution of higher education from a hyper-visible Black body. The research desires to hear about your whole experience, but more especially, your experience ministering either to Black bodies that are also descendants of enslaved Africans, or as a body that is descended from enslaved Africans. Among many questions, the principle question this project seeks to answer is what is spiritual well-being for descendants of enslaved Africans at predominately white institutions of higher education?

The information provided will be used towards completing my doctoral thesis. Because each institution is unique, it is impossible to fully remove identifiers of either you or the institution in which you serve or previously served. Therefore, consenting to participate in this study is consenting to be identified in this study. Because of restrictions in place due

to COVID-19, the interview will take place electronically via zoom. The session will be recorded; therefore, you are also consenting to release your audio/visual interview. An upside of this constraint is that your interview has the propensity of being later formed into a mini-documentary capturing decades of experiences. Because your responses are identifiable, the principle researcher will offer you an opportunity to review your contribution before any audio/visual recording is made publishable.

If you have any further questions about the data use of this study, please do not hesitate to contact: K. Monet Rice-Jalloh, Associate University Chaplain, Wake Forest University, ricekm@wfu.edu, 336/758-4843.

Method: You will be given an opportunity to submit your consent to move forward being interviewed. Once you consent, you will be progressed to the next step of capturing your biographical data. The interview (which will be scheduled between you and the principle investigator) will take approximately 50-60 mins to complete. You will be sent an electronic invitation with a zoom link for your interview session. Because we are both storytellers, I recommend allotting 75 mins just in case we get caught up in a frenzy of memories.

Your consent is completely voluntary. I do not anticipate any participation risks to your person or psyche. However, you may become uncomfortable answering some of the questions related to racialized experiences. If you wish to withdraw from the study, simply indicate this during the interview and we will immediately stop the session.

Benefits: While there are no guaranteed benefits, it is possible that the field of Chaplaincy and Religious and Spiritual Life affairs will be better informed of the lived experiences of Black professionals. Plus, other Black professionals in our field and interested in our field may be able to use the data to help progress their work.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Duke University Institutional Review Board (IRB 2020-0536). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, irb@duke.edu.

You should print this consent or save it to your device for future reference. If you do not wish to participate, please close this window now.

DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL
Doctor of Ministry – Research Project
Informed Consent for Research Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project:

“No More Gallery Seats: Exploring Spiritual Well-Being for Descendants of Enslaved Africans at Predominately White Institutions of Higher Education”

Principal Investigator: K. Monet Rice-Jalloh, B.A., M.Div.

Office Phone: (336) 758-4843 e-mail: ricekm@wfu.edu

Mobile Phone: (205) 233-0364 Duke email: kellee.rice@duke.edu

By clicking the link below I hereby give my consent to participate in the research study entitled, “No More Gallery Seats: Exploring Spiritual Well-Being for Descendants of Enslaved Africans at Predominately White Institutions of Higher Education,” details of which have been provided to me above, including anticipated benefits and risks.

I fully understand that I may withdraw from this research project at any time without prejudice or effect. I also understand that I am free to ask questions of clarity around questions asked and how data will be used.

Finally, I understand that information given by me during this research project will be identifiable.

By clicking below, I indicate that I am willing to participate in this research project

Yes, I consent

PERMISSION TO USE (PHOTOGRAPH, FILM)

NOTE:

- Your image will be made public.
- Your image will not be returned to you.
- You will receive no payment for the use of your image.
- I will not sell it for other uses.

Subject: “No More Gallery Seats: Exploring Spiritual Well-Being for Descendants of Enslaved Africans at Predominately White Institutions of Higher Education”

I grant K. Monet Rice-Jalloh permission and the right to take audio/visual recordings of me in connection with her qualitative phenomenological study for her doctoral project. I authorize, K. Monet Rice-Jalloh to copyright, use and publish the audio/visual in print and/or electronically. I agree that the above identified persons may use such (photographs, film, and audio recordings of me) with or without my name and for any lawful purpose including teaching and further research.

I have read and agreed to the above:

Printed name _____

Address _____

By clicking below, I indicate that I am willing to participate in this research project

Yes, I consent

APPENDIX C
SCHEDULING AND PREPARING FOR ZOOM INTERVIEWS EMAIL
INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for your interest in my research project exploring Spiritual Well-Being for Descendants of Enslaved Africans at Predominately White Institutions of Higher Education. There are 2 next steps:

Step 1:

- 1) Review the consent forms and sample questions attached in this email labeled "consent & sample questions."
- 2) Schedule your interview **HERE** or by following this URL: <https://rice-jalloh.appointlet.com>
- 3) Electronically sign the consent form and recording release, and fill out your demographic information by following this link.

Step 2

5) ** Because interviews are taking place via Zoom, quality is contingent upon the setting, the internet, and lighting possibilities. Soil hued skin requires angled natural lighting or a boost. (Overhead lighting is the devil). If the area where you'll be providing your interview doesn't receive a strong steady signal from your wifi connection, perhaps a booster will help.

Does your internet need a boost?

Does your skin need an extra sun-kiss?

Are you familiar with video conferencing?

If no, to the latter please view this link. If you believe your internet needs a boost and your presence extra lighting, follow these next steps immediately after submitting your consent forms.

First, reply to this email with - "I need _____." (internet boost, light boost (w/tripod), or both). I will respond to your email.

Second, (a) follow this link or this link for the internet booster (pick only one), and this (b) link for the light booster (apply the coupon) and this (c) link for the tripod, as needed. Add them to your cart and purchase them using the electronic gift card I provide. Please complete this step expeditiously, as you will need time for your equipment to arrive and be set-up before the interview. I hope you have amazon prime, otherwise, shipping cost is not included.

After you've completed these steps we are set and ready to go!

My excitement for this project is palpable. Nonetheless, I want to acknowledge the vulnerability you are opening yourself to by agreeing to speak on the record about your perceptions and experiences. Considering this, I want to implement a "safe" phrase - just in case I misread a social cue, press a question that you would like to move beyond, or discern that we have *sho'nuff got to talking*. The safe phrase is "let me take a sip of water." Also viable - "I'm a little thirsty," or "let's pause for a beverage break." Please remember to keep water close by.

I look forward to your interview!

K. Monet

Rev. K. Monet Rice-Jalloh
Associate University Chaplain

Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life
Reynolda Hall \ Winston-Salem, NC 27103
p [336.758.4843](tel:336.758.4843) \ f [336.758.3193](tel:336.758.3193)
ricekm@wfu.edu \ chaplain.wfu.edu

SHE | HER | HERS

"You don't make progress by standing on the sidelines, whimpering and complaining. You make progress by implementing ideas."

- Shirley Chisholm

Schedule your interview by [clicking here.](#)
Sign your consent forms by [clicking here.](#)

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (IN NO RESPECTIVE ORDER)

(1) Tell me about your position? What is your job description? What is the bulk of the work that you perform?

(1b) *if the person has vacated the position* – Tell me what your position was and how would you best describe it?

(2) Was your position created or was it previously occupied?

(3) What is spiritual well-being for descendants of enslaved Africans at predominately white institutions of higher education,

(3b) what does it look like?

(3c) what elements are needed?

(4) What do Black souls need to thrive in historically White spaces?

(5) Why does spiritual well-being matter?

(6) Does having a professional in the office of religious and spiritual life that looks like and/or is a part of the DEA community, matter for the welling of Black bodies?

(7) How did/does being in a hyper-visible body affect how you perform your duties?

(8) How did/does being a DEA affect how you care for non-Black bodies?

(8b) *where applicable* –Does being Black, but not DEA affect how you care for non-Black bodies?

(9) With the changing landscape of religiosity and spirituality, will/does spirituality still have as much meaning today amongst DEA as it did when you were present/began this work?

(10) What do you want the field of Chaplaincy, Religious and Spiritual affairs in higher education to know?

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CARSA ROLES (UNIVERSITY TITLES)

University Chaplain

Campus Minister for _____

Director of Religious and Spiritual Life

Associate University Chaplain

Assistant Vice-President in the Office of Equity and Inclusion

Director of _____

University Chaplain and _____

Associate University Chaplain

Director of _____

APPENDIX F

Exploratory Prompt: “What is Spiritual Well-being for descendants of enslaved Africans at predominately white institutions of higher education, and what do Black souls need to thrive in historically white institutions?”¹⁷⁰

Asali: Spiritual well-being is coming to oneself fully, at our core, so it’s almost coming out of that place that Howard Thurman speaks of—that island in the center of you that is guarded by an angel with a two-edged sword. That part of you that can never be changed. The essence of you that is most like the creator or whatever language that you use, the part of you that is Eternal that is infinite, like how the spark, the life, that very part of who you are is lived, is expounded upon, is free, is unleashed, so that we can actually live into who we are. It is about connecting. What we do to stay well shifts. We need unique community to undergird us; we need strong foundational practices that include practices that help. You will hear this word a lot from me— “decolonize;” even our spirituality and our belief systems. That which grounds us, that helps us to lean into the very things that our forebearers did that we laughed about but now we know can save our lives.

Bilal: Our spirituality is... action oriented in restorative practices. Community response; tarrying; marching; protesting; town halls; block parties; celebrations. A continuation of prayerful standing. Going through with our physical body, embodiment of worship in different ways. They [students] need to see Black men and women in positions—empowered. They need to hear our voices and see us walking; being our full selves in spaces. It is spiritually uplifting to them. It gives them joy. It gives them a piece of home.

¹⁷⁰ Responses are separated by paragraph, condensed, and deidentified.

Chura: Reconciling past trauma and harm. Finding your true voice and authenticity in a space that was not intended for you, all while being connected to the divine. Gen Z wants to have belonging. They don't want security to treat them as outsiders; but, as part of the community. And so, what is it like having effective spaces and programming and all of that to make the people feel like they belong for the next four to five years.

Dunia: I'm talking about a sense of self. And that sense of self has so many directions of connectivity, so sense of self with God's sense of self is worth. Sense of self with others, sense of self with Earth. It's the question of what is normative, but it's also the question of what has been internalized; the norms of whiteness have been so internalized that we no longer have access to black joy. I think they [students] need each other. I think they [students] need strong relationships. Yeah, and they [students] need a sense of community.

Embe: I think spiritual well-being is tangible, but also intangible. I think that it is this type of wholeness that can be reached, but also a wholeness that has to be pursued; like constantly pursued. Whenever I think of spiritual well-being, I think of soul care and soul work; like, your soul is authentically itself. It is exploring and it's uncovering and for those of us who believe in a higher power, (it is) harmony and unity and peace and almost this oneness; not only with self, but with community, and with God. You can't be well without community or a sense of belonging. Community; a sense of self; a sense of awareness; a sense of understanding their history (blackness); to identify and share wounds and struggles and celebrations and victories.

Fisi: Spiritual Well-being has a lot to do with emotional well-being. I see it as holistic wellness. Okay, so ... spiritual well-being is more than just about the spirit, but (it

is also) the body, and the emotion, and the mind—particularly for Black people—who are really good at being spiritual, but not necessarily at being whole people. And so, our conversations are often truncated. You know we have a lot of clichés around how we’re doing—being blessed and highly favored, and such and such and such—even when we’re not doing well. For some of my students, spiritual well-being is putting on the spiritual mask of ‘I’m blessed,’ you know, or that everything is okay when they’re really not doing well. So I am finding that a lot of my students, particularly the black students, don’t often know how to articulate how they’re doing if they’re religious people because they’re so conditioned to responding in certain ways. And so, I have to get them to talk and speak regular language, and let them know that they can just be themselves.... So part of what I do is build community for them and help them to define what that means and what that looks like. More than having a safe space—it’s about brave space, where you’re your fullself. I would have to say quite honestly that some of it is fictive kinship. You know for these students, the faculty and staff become like an extended family. We go beyond the classroom. We get into all of that. We get into their personal spaces as well. I think that it’s important that they have those spaces and people. We do a lot of advocacy for them as well. I think they need to have a sense of who they are because the system is set up to cause them to doubt themselves from day one. It’s so sad seeing that. And so, we are conductors to the terrain where you can take off your mask.

Gazeti: Spiritual well-being is being able to center down. To listen to oneself. To listen to one’s surroundings. A connection to both God and spirit and ancestors. Whenever all of those things kind of align, when they’re all in conversation with one another, and you’re somewhere in that conversation. It is also figuring out how to navigate Whiteness.

They need spaces where they can be free. We need support, and not just in word. Back it with concrete, measurable, quantifiable things that will help us to move forward in the ways that align with the University's mission.

Hadithi: The phrase we use often is inner life. Personal and religious practices like prayer and communion, or lighting candles or meditation or yoga or mountain climbing or the spiritual aspects of dance or swimming. There's a range in there, but to me, when I think of spiritual wellness, I think of my relationship to those activities; the effects of those activities on me, and frankly how I'm doing here. It's intentionally amorphous or foggy. I think that if it's a little too clear then it's not spiritual. I think that question for the young black people might be different from older black people. I think it's from the full range of survival to thriving, to joy, to grieving, to being in community, to understanding that our lives matter, and not just trying to stay alive. An expression of joy in the face of being dehumanized and hated. There's a profundity in that. And so, you know, when you go to a black step show on our campuses, and you see just the joy. Like some Saturday night party and you see us getting it in or us laughing on the benches on campus; that to me is just as spiritual and just as essential as (is) the church service that we're going to pull together for Sunday morning, and you know, think cosmically of our worship of the. Us laughing together.

Ijumaa: I think with the kind of African sensibility and cosmology understanding, it's very much connected to the spiritual and material. It's much more holistic so it's physical, It's emotional, it's intellectual, it would include how we do spiritual practices—you know, prayer and other forms of meditation—but it includes maybe physical activity, whatever that might be. That might include reading books or music, the arts; That's what I

mean by holistic and happy and it should be holistic, in many ways, being in the community with the people... a community deeply connected to a communal sense of suffering.

Jua: Spiritual well-being is an affirmation of self and the demand to be treated with dignity and respect, that is exemplified through treating one's neighbor with dignity and respect. It is a connectedness to the Divine that sees the Divine deep within and demands that no one blasphemes the spirit; The spirit within you. When wounded it seeks out healing. When healed, it mends the wounded. It is both an ideal and a destination. I know when I am well, and I know when I am not. I believe spirituality and expanding. I think we're in an evolution of spirit, because more people are trekking the path to wellness.

FT: To start, spiritual well-being is not this 'one-thing.' That's a very colonized way of talking about a thing. ... a lot of Black folks who come to those campuses, (are) for the first time finding their people; you knowm it's like, whew! So, there is a lot of hurt both externally from racism and internally from our own people. And you're doing what you can do with your left hand, which is write papers. So, the real work of these years is actually to heal because I don't want you to bring that into somebody else when you have power. The second thing is reconnecting with a new sense of spirituality. Spirituality based on your own community and own religion. Spirituality and well-being are not anti-intellectual or uninformed; but powerful. We have everything we need. We just have to be permissive (to ourselves) to be ourselves.

DBK: These institutions are an opportunity, or a time of exploration related to what it means to the sacred one that is in us, the sacred that's about us. I think spiritual well-being is about meaning making for persons of color. It is about tapping into the holy mystery. It is about surrendering to that which is greater and larger than oneself. I think it's

also drawn deeply from the wellspring of home; community reminds us of home, and it provides the safe place for us to draw deeply from. For persons of the African diaspora on predominantly white campuses it's a place to find the rich reality of culture and community.

WG: Making connections; Checking in with yourself and others; naming things that have impacted yourself; taking your spiritual and emotional pulse. They need ways of humming through experiences; grounding practices to keep one's composure and strength.

KG: The spiritual well-being of any student, but specifically about Muslims, would have to be a very accepting and welcoming kind of environment that students would not have to feel that they are so unique in their faith traditions; in their cultural practices as Muslims (that they're) some kind of zoo oddity. But, they see them. And not like going to the zoo and looking at some three headed orangutan or something. But that there would be a kind of acceptance. If a student, Muslim or otherwise—but we're talking about the Muslim students—if Muslim students don't feel a welcoming environment, then what I experienced was that they are forever on the defensive, especially when they're African American. This has been an ongoing phenomenon. On the spiritual well-being for observant Muslims, there are a number of obstacles. I think this removes hope. I mean just the idea of something that many of us will take for granted as basic as diet. What do you eat? The accessibility of food that has been prepared in a way that the religion requires. There is this query about the legitimacy of the teachings, and the practices of those of us who come from the African American community. And part of this comes from two different reasons. One is the historical presence of the Nation of Islam in this country. A number of immigrant Muslims upon coming into the United States know nothing about the Elijah Muhammad type teachings of the Nation of Islam. So, I think when they come to

this country, or are the children of immigrants, they believe that anyone coming forward saying that they are Muslim, and they're African American, must be Nation of Islam. And so, when they discover these teachings from The Nation under the old Nation of Islam. Also, we need a critical mass. And I don't mean a third of the campus population of staff and faculty and students... but there is a sense that we're always swimming upstream against this larger current of Islamophobia. But in order to really get that dose of blackness that they feel that makes them feel good and eat the kind of stuff that they've grown up eating and they like, and this kind of thing. It's not that they are repelling something about someone else's culture, but everybody loves their own people.

FS: ...Mind, Body, and Spirit; and so you have to attend to all those dimensions, which is a reflection of the eight Dimensions of Wellness. You are God's child and you are created equal. When that resonates, then liberation comes through psychological and spiritual awakening and dealing with your wounds. Healing; Black pride; affirmation of self; community; support; encouragement. For our wellness we have to be very careful of what we wrap ourselves with. After everything that we've been through, we aren't dead yet because there's something in us stronger than death.

APPENDIX G

Exploratory Prompt: “What Do You Wish the Field of Higher Education Chaplaincy, Spiritual And Religious Life Knew?”¹⁷¹

Asali: I wish they knew about the broader landscape of American spirituality. I wish they knew and were conscious of the fact that in some ways, all of us have been steeped in white Christianity. And that there needs to be an intention to decolonize white dominant thought and pattern from the ways in which we live out our spirituality.

Dunia: I wish they knew people like Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, James Baldwin. I wish that they knew that there is a religious and spiritual cannon within Blackness, that is located outside of the prescriptive religious and spiritual texts. I wish they knew the importance of being well read in the cannon. Drawing on that cannon, relying on that cannon to tell us the truth about Black Lives black- social life in America.

Bilal: I think what is beneficial to know is every place you go, spirituality is going to be present. But, it requires you to be present- to have presence in order to discover it, discern it, and that’s beneficial to know. Your presence is spiritual, a resource and reservoir to faculty, staff, and students. God is working despite it all. And that’s what’s necessary to know no matter what the circumstances are where you are, how bad and vitriol it is, God is still operating—despite it all—and we need to sit with that.

DKB: I wish the field knew or could understand more fully the invaluable contribution that persons of the African diaspora contribute to the life of students and the life and breadth of the university because we bring something that is uniquely different just

¹⁷¹ Responses are condensed and randomly placed on the page. Responses are kept intact, separated by paragraphs, center typed for poetic and prayerful appeal, and de-identified. Artistically, choosing this method of presentation creates a singular voice of appeal. Not every participant’s response is captured here because it was captured in the larger project.

because of who we are. And even when we can't bring our full selves, we bring the legacy of faith and fortitude of every person that has deposited something in us from our families, from our faith communities, (and) from how our culture shapes us.

Embe: I wish they knew that this is not for the weak at heart. This is not for those who want a title. I wish that the field knew that this is hard work. This is soul work. This is life work. I think that we understand that. But when it comes to descendants of enslaved Africans, I wish that they understood that there's another layer to it. We need advocates and co-conspirators.

Ijumaa: We are not just students, faculty, staff, we are human beings- not just objects.

Gazeti: I wish they knew that Black folk, people of color have been doing this for a long time- before people you know ever thought about or knew what it means to be spiritual. I'm frustrated. I wish that colleges and universities trusted Black folks and people of color to do this work.

FS: What I want people to know is that there are good parts at the worst parts of the experiences of Black people in America. There is something in Black people that is stronger than death. And we've expressed it in jazz, gospel, art, and dance. Spirituality matters. Figure out the resources to attend to people- mind, body, and spirit- structurally and programmatically.

Hadithi: I think I wish our colleagues knew more of our history, and that ministering to us is different- and should be different. First thing I would say is, like, we need you. We need more of us representation wise and I think we need a better runway for us to get here (university chaplaincy). I think I also want them to know that there is a humongous harvest,

to use Christian language on this one, and that we really need you. We, as in our, black students in the field. But also, like all young people need to see black professionals in our field. Amongst the most visible people on our campuses, it's so important for all these students to sort of see black religious leaders. It's a deeply rewarding field.

Chura: I don't think that we are appreciated (chaplains). I will want to tell them just as you're putting money into other areas, such as other offices, Multicultural Affairs and different centers regarding identities, religion and or spirituality is an identity. And sad, just as much money is needed to do programming and cultivate one's spiritual faith, as in figuring out one's racial identity or sexual identity. Also, I think it's not enough to just know religion, religious work, or do church. You must know how to navigate student affairs and universities. A lot of the work that we do is triage. We're doing a lot of repair work when the other departments have caused harm. You need to know how to navigate the educational landscape, just as well as you know how to exegete a text. Find a mentor that is in these positions and reach out. And they don't necessarily have to be the same race.

KG: That in addressing the spiritual needs of African Americans in particular and African American Muslims that we are not monolithic and our perspectives about the world, our practice of the faith that we profess that we are not a monolithic group. It's not like all black Muslims believe this and or practice like this; or that all Blacks are Christians and practice like this. I think that there has to be discernment between the differences as we fall on the broader umbrella. There are many different approaches and ideas and pathways, and we also are going in the same direction. But, you know, some of us have some different pathways and are trying to get to the same direction. So, I think the spiritual care and the

Chaplains—spiritual caregivers and those who identify as chaplains—really need a keen sensitivity to these differences that we come to the table with. Really, it's not one size fits all. I think this goes back to our educational book preparedness. We have to be able to discern these differences. We have to be able to address the entire communities that we serve.

Fisi: There *is* a difference between mainland Africans, West Indians, Africans in America, and Domestic African Americans; not all Black people are the same. I think that's important because there's a level of trauma, you know, transgenerational trauma that has never really been addressed with Black people. And I think we have to stop there, which is why I think the world's turned upside down right now with Black Lives Matter protests, because we have not been addressing it. We've been trying to take these people to another level. I feel like you really can't be spiritual and not be healed. You can't get to that spirit because the soul is so wounded, and the physical body is such a barrier that you can't really be spiritual. I mean, deal with all those things. So, I feel like, you know, that's why more black people need to be in religious and spiritual life. We come at it from a holistic point of view. It's not like something we do on certain days, we do this every day, since we woke up Black.

Jua: I wish they knew they're not paying us enough. We are the retention, the belonging, the intervention, the draw and the keep. We are the protest and the conflict dispersion. We are the instigators and the mitigators. They're not paying us enough for the emotional and political balancing act that we do. Because what they truly need to compensate us for is our confidentiality—because if these walls or we ever choose to talk for real—for real—my God.

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