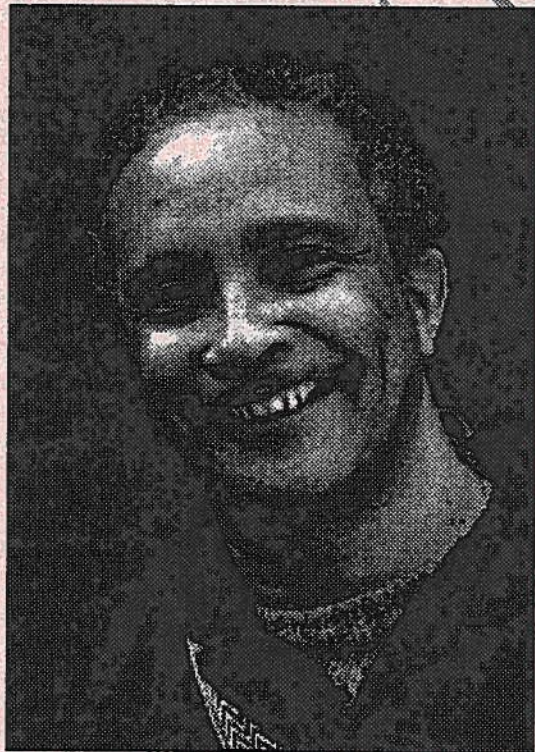


❧ The 1999 Distinguished Faculty Lecture ❧

# *I*nvisible Forces that Determine Human Existence: The Middle Passage



## Archie Smith

James and Clarice Foster Professor of  
Pastoral Psychology and Counseling at  
Pacific School of Religion, discusses how  
the forgotten past affects training,  
teaching, ministry and pastoral care.  
Mary Donovan Turner, Respondent

Wednesday, November 17, 7:00 PM  
Chapel, Pacific School of Religion  
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**Invisible Forces Determining Human Existence:** slide #1  
**The Middle Passage**

by  
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**I**

slide #2  
Have you ever felt that you were being moved by forces far beyond your control? My task this evening is to show the connection between an historical event such as the Middle Passage and contemporary pastoral care.

My thesis, simply put is this: ***The Middle Passage was an horrific event that unfolded over a 400 year period. The effects are still with us—invisible, yet helping to determine human existence.*** What challenges might this historical event pose for scholarship, teaching, ministry, training and the pastoral care of souls? And what are the consequences for pastoral care, pastoral theology and theory when an historical event on the magnitude of the Middle Passage is absent from theory and everyday awareness? What role can historical consciousness play in the constitution of the human subject; and what does it mean to live without historical consciousness? In short, if human existence is historical existence, then what is pastoral care's subject? slide #3

First, I will talk about pastoral care and suggest the role of scholarship. Second, I will talk about the relevance of historical consciousness in general; third, I will elaborate specifically on the damaging effects of the Middle Passage as historical event; fourth, I will present three vignettes illustrating these damaging effects. Finally, I will briefly discuss how pastoral care as an historically situated and aware discipline can address problems such as those illustrated in the vignettes.

There are many traditions and definitions of pastoral care in Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity. In this light, the broad history of pastoral care is largely unwritten, unclaimed and unknown. What may be said is that any definition of pastoral care has at its core a way of understanding historical existence, our relatedness to the higher Self, the Divine, and corresponding activity that seeks the well being of others. In the last century, a Christian emphasis in pastoral care fell upon visiting the sick or imprisoned, relieving the anxiety of anxious souls, nurturing a right relationship with God and addressing the spiritual needs of individuals. This emphasis can be seen in John Wesley's pastoral activities. He emphasized feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting or helping the sick or imprisoned, instructing, reproofing, and exhorting. (McNeill, 279) The underlying assertion for Christians was that we are created in the image of God and that our true destiny is in meeting God. Our souls are restless until we find our rest in God, to paraphrase a Saint of an earlier day. Pastoral care activity was preparation for the meeting with God.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century these affirmations were not so widely shared. The winds of secularism and technology offered the symbols of science as alternative understandings of both human distress and care and set the stage for the particular problems and possibilities of pastoral care in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

slide #5

The single most important influence of the twentieth century on pastoral care has been the emergence and prominence of the psychological sciences. In the 1950s and 60s the movement of pastoral care was greatly influenced by American psychologists and psychiatrists such as Harry Stack Sullivan, Karen Horney, Carl Rogers and Rollo May, to mention only a few. It was H. Richard Niebuhr who, in 1955, described this influence as the most important movement in theological education. The rise of psychology accompanied a diminished emphasis upon normative theological understandings of the self and human life. In short, contemporary pastoral care as a twentieth century movement in the United States has emerged primarily under the tutelage of modern psychology. It has also "attempted to refine ministry by drawing upon the findings of modern medicine, psychotherapy, and the behavioral sciences."<sup>3</sup> In recent times, however, there have been attempts by pastoral care theologians to reclaim the discipline's

theological roots as it considers such perennial concerns as illness, death, family conflict, depression, divorce and a host of complex moral and ethical questions. Today, most of the major theological seminaries across the United States have appointed full-time faculty in pastoral care, and a substantial body of research literature has appeared. Still, the contributions by women to pastoral care and from Buddhism, Islamic traditions, Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans has yet to emerge as something more than mere footnotes for the discipline. These suppressed traditions with their distinctive histories have yet to make their impact upon the discipline of pastoral care. Perhaps that is a challenge for the twenty-first century.

It has been my task at Pacific School of Religion (PSR) and within the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) to interpret the discipline of pastoral care. I share this task with Sharon G. Thornton, Rosemary Chinnici, Lewis Rambo, Ben Silva-Netto, Gary Pence, Elizabeth Liebert, Sandra Brown, Peggy Alter, Karlyn Ward, Ruth Ann Clarke and others. But what are we doing here? I believe that our task, as teachers and scholars, is a critical one. I believe that we here at the GTU are called to a crucial task as researchers, practitioners, teachers, and scholars who come from all over the world, representing different disciplines, many different traditions and orientations. In the words of a historian of American religion, Eldon G. Ernst, "The GTU represents the perseverance of several world religions in California (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Judaism, and Buddhism) plus a reaching out to new religious movements. Not all world religions in California are represented (Mormons, Muslims and Hindus, for example), but there may be room for more."<sup>4</sup> We live and work in one of the most diverse places on earth. Our task in this place is to develop historical consciousness in ourselves and others. Our task is to develop the important capacity to find value in difference, to see further and to make new connections between ourselves and our historical and emerging religious environment, between our spiritual and personal lives and the social worlds we help to create. Our task, then, as scholars, teachers and preachers, is to ground our understanding of the present in the rich slide #6 experiences and germinal thought of our collective past.<sup>5</sup> The common objective is to use such an awareness to develop leaders for a more just and compassionate world. Cornel West & Henry Louis Gates, Jr., make reference to this common goal. They see an important role for African American scholarship. They argue

that American society has failed to protect the basic, ostensibly inalienable rights of its people—equal access to education, adequate housing, affordable medical care, and equal economic opportunity—equal access, indeed, to hope itself—and that the leadership of the African-American community has a special responsibility to attend to these rights, to analyze the peculiar compounding effect of race, gender, and class, and to design, promote, lobby, and agitate for bold and imaginative remedies to conditions of inequality and injustice—. <sup>6</sup>

These goals can be shared by all of us.

I make my contribution to the discipline of pastoral theology/pastoral care as author, teacher and as a practitioner. According to the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care*, pastoral care has generally been defined as a healing art and as therapeutic activity aimed at guiding and sustaining a congregation or individuals. A more narrow definition would define it as a relationship between a pastor and a person in need. Since the late 1970s, there has been an attempt on the part of pastoral care theologians to re-engage theological and ethical reflection and to rescue it from a more narrow focus on the individual's need, as important as that is.

Don Browning's book, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care*, is an example of a pastoral care re-engagement with theological ethics. What has been missing from mainstream pastoral care, with few exceptions, is a serious engagement of historical perspectives and the social sciences, especially the critical role of historical and social analysis. The emerging voices of feminist pastoral theologians are important and new exceptions. Pastoral care is a social practice, and as a social practice it conveys certain ideologies, dominant values and interests. And it must be evaluated as part of the evolving history, culture and ethos of the society that shapes it. Like American society, mainstream American pastoral care has only recently recognized the presence of other voices such as women, and traditions such as African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native-American. Perhaps the word 'recognized' is too strong.

slide #7

Again, the point of this lecture is to show a connection between a historical event such as the Middle Passage and contemporary pastoral care. I hope to offer a challenge to an entrenched paradigm that still controls definitions of pastoral

care and pastoral theology. That paradigm suggests that the lone individual and the problems she or he presents can be adequately understood by identifying the underlying pathology which presumably resides in the individual and can be adequately analyzed apart from culture, historical perspectives and social analysis. In such a perspective, the truncated individual becomes pastoral care's subject.

True, there is growing evidence to suggest that some pastoral care givers have moved away from an individualistic model of care to one that emphasizes the *relationship between* people. A Lilly funded project called, *The Religion, Culture and Family Project* located at the University of Chicago recently published their research. Based on a national survey of 1,035 marital and family therapists (including a roughly even mix of psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and pastoral counselors), the article is the first empirical study of the ethics of what therapists actually believe and practice. They found that the majority of therapists interviewed have moved away from viewing individual needs and rights as the central focus of moral life and toward valuing the quality of persons' relations to one another.<sup>7</sup> Even here, there is a strong tendency to view family relations narrowly, and frequently to the exclusion of social and cultural analysis and historical influences.

My charge is this: my discipline of pastoral care, with few exceptions, has ignored the important role of American history and has helped to further an impoverished understanding of the human person and the social history that shapes us.

This leads me to more important questions:

1. How do we learn to make connections between historical events and contemporary pastoral care in order to give more adequate, richer, better accounts of our world?
2. How do we learn to live in it well and in critical-historical, reflexive relation to our own as well as other's practices of domination?
3. How do we learn to acknowledge the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions?<sup>8</sup>

What role can historical consciousness play in the constitution of the human subject? If human existence is historical existence, then what is pastoral care's focus? Is it **social worlds**? Social worlds may be seen to be the physical slide #8



environment that make up the work place, neighborhood or home. The physical environment represents the organized visible structures that we can observe. They constrain our behavior or direct our interactions in one way or another. Certain interactions may represent the history of social relations in a particular society. Certain relations between the members of society are purposefully arranged and may result in the material benefits of some, but not others. But there is another dimension to social worlds, which I call "invisible forces." "Invisible forces" operate outside of our awareness. They are the unseen, and often unrecognized dynamic forces that operate indirectly behind the backs of individuals and institutions. They represent the complex, inner dimensions of the visible world. The term invisible forces is intended to make room for the operation of non-rational, unrecognized, immaterial forces in the life-world that influence, even help to determine human outcomes. This is to say that not everything that happens in our world emerges from awareness and cannot be observed, contained, or controlled by reason or by self-regulating systems.

At the heart of this presentation is an historical event, the Middle Passage and its continuing invisible effects. The Middle Passage as an "invisible force" moves<sup>5</sup> beyond our control. Such invisible forces and continuing effects are carried in social patterns, the minute details and routine of everyday life. They become much like second nature. In this sense, we do not always know all that we are doing; and much of what we do is unquestioned, embedded in tradition and convention.

The term, *habitus*, comes closest to what I intend to express about the operation of the invisible powers and damaging effects. *Habitus* refers to the conventional ways of doing things that mediates between individuals, the structures of everyday life and the wider culture. Pierre Bourdieu refers to *habitus* as a system of durable and transposable dispositions.<sup>9</sup> It serves, in varying degrees, as a culturally encoded and largely unquestioned way of being in the world that enables individuals to cooperate and cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations.<sup>10</sup> In short, *habitus* is a product of history and historical existence. It becomes a kind of second nature and a matter of routine. It produces and is produced by interpersonal power arrangements and collective practices that conform to the schemes engendered by history. It functions as the unquestioned and taken-for-granted way of being, seeing and acting in the world.

Suman Fernando, a British Psychiatrist, originally from Sri Lanka, provides an illustration. He argued that psychiatry evolved as an ethnocentric body of knowledge. Since psychiatry developed in a Western culture with a strong ideology of racism, it was hardly surprising that racism has seeped into or, more correctly been actively absorbed into the theory and practice of the discipline and become integrated into its institutional practices.<sup>11</sup> Over time, institutionalized practices, as mentioned above, are internalized and contribute to uncontrollable levels of stress that affect individuals, families and communities. Consequently people turn on each other to vent their anger or rage and hate, despair, helplessness and hopelessness. African American men, women and children may be caught up in damaging cycles of violent behaviors and victimization and consequently are becoming an endangered species.<sup>12</sup> *Habitus* is the name for this routine, unquestioned and taken for granted way of being in the world. It underlies our world view, attitudes, beliefs and values, which, however subtle, are embodied in our policies, stock of knowledge, decisions and practices. Given this, a cogent analysis of social worlds ought to be a part of pastoral care's focus.

slide #9

On July 3, 1999, a monument was lowered to the floor of the Atlantic Ocean from the Regina Chaterina, a 1915-built Tall ship. This act of lowering a monument to the floor of the Atlantic was the symbolic water burial of the Middle Passage. It commemorated the estimated millions of African people who died and were thrown overboard while being transported as human cargo in chains from West Africa to the Americas. Someone said, "the floor of the Atlantic is sown with the bones of my people! ...if the Atlantic Ocean were to dry up today, there would be a trail of human bones stretching from Africa to the Americas."

The Middle Passage, sometimes referred to as 'the crossing of the waters,' was the name given to that part of the Atlantic slave trade that brought the brutally captured and inhumanly treated Africans from West Africa to North America, South America, and the Caribbean. It was called a triangular trade system because "the ships embarked from European ports, stopped in Africa to gather captives, after which they set out for the New World to deliver their human cargo, and then returned to the port of origin."<sup>13</sup> It lasted for nearly four centuries. slide #10

Histoian John Henrik Clarke wrote, "... millions of African men, women, and children were savagely torn from their homeland, herded into ships, and dispersed all over the so-called New



World."<sup>14</sup> It is estimated that only about a third of the thirty to sixty million Africans captured actually survived the water crossing.<sup>15</sup>

African American historian Lerone Bennett, Jr., describes the horrific conditions:

They were packed like books on shelves into holds, which in some instances were no higher than eighteen inches. "They had not so much room," one captain said, "as a man in his coffin, either in length or breadth. It was impossible for them to turn or shift with any degree of ease." Here, for the six to ten weeks of the voyage, the slaves lived like animals. Under the best conditions, the trip was intolerable. When epidemics of dysentery or smallpox swept the ships, the trip was beyond endurance.<sup>16</sup>

The pain and legacy of inhuman treatment from this long and cruel experience are still with us today. "The pain of the present sometimes seems overwhelming, but the reasons for it are rooted in the past."<sup>17</sup>

#### **Historical Consciousness:**

"Historical consciousness" is a way to question the world we have taken for granted. It means a thirst to know and learn the lessons of the past through the conditions and intellectual and normative traditions that guide (or fail to guide) our society today. Historical consciousness ought also to be pastoral care's subject. The practice of pastoral care or the care of souls is frequently organized by the immediate crisis or difficulty at hand. When informed by traditions of psychotherapy, pastoral care givers strive to bring change in the inner world of the sufferer and a consequent adaptation to the world outside. Interventions are normally made to reduce stress, attain insight into the difficulty at hand, relieve or adjust the present suffering, and enable sufferers to move forward with their lives. This is an important emphasis.

But, it may not be apparent how an historical event, such as the Middle Passage, can be relevant for the present. Indeed, there is a line of argument that would suggest that the past has very little to offer our present enlightened and technologically advanced society. It may be further argued that the 'forgotten'

past does not influence present day transactions. Ours is a society that eschews the past and proceeds on a need to forget.

For example, on 5 November 1996, the voters of California passed a proposition (209) ending "Affirmative Action." By so doing Californians stated, in effect, that preferential treatment on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin was no longer needed to correct the wrongs of the past that stem from our country's legacy of racism, slavery, gender and class discrimination. True, this is a controversial and complex issue with tightly woven arguments on all sides. It is not my intent to engage the arguments, but to raise the question: What in our history would inform us that discrimination and oppression no longer threaten American democracy?

Is it the case that Americans appear to learn little from the lessons of history? Russell Jacoby thought so. He argued that social amnesia appears to be an ingrained feature of modern western society.<sup>18</sup>

Within psychology new theories and therapies replace old ones at an accelerating rate. In a dynamic society, Freud is too old to be a fashion, too new to be a classic. The phenomenon of the newer replacing the new is not confined to psychology; it is true in all realms of thought. The new not only surpasses the old, but also displaces and dislodges it. The ability as well as the desire to remember atrophies.<sup>19</sup>

We soon forget or willfully repress the things we once knew. Social amnesia, rather than historical memory appears to be our way.

slide #12

The word *pentimento* comes from the world of art. *Pentimento* is the phenomenon of an earlier painting showing through a layer or layers of paint on a canvas.<sup>20</sup> I use the term *pentimento* metaphorically to suggest that the past "bleeds through" after it has been forgotten, willfully repressed, or covered over by the present. This suggests that there is always a relationship between a present and its past—whether recognized or not.

Historical consciousness is a vital resource for American pastoral care. We have to engage it if we are to understand ourselves better and help shape a society worthy of human dwelling. The past has shaped the present and lives on in the present in ways yet to be discovered. By understanding the past we internalize or incorporate it into our everyday awareness and



enable ourselves to use that understanding to our advantage.<sup>21</sup> Internalization is the selective process of mapping on to consciousness elements of experience that serve as a person's intersubjective frame of reference. Internalization is one way the past bleeds through events and relations and into our inner world. And not everything that is internalized comes into awareness.

The past that bleeds through present day events, and historical memory can become a source that influences the way we understand (or misunderstand) right relations with God, our ancestors, one another, nature and ourselves. Historical consciousness and awareness of an historical event, such as the Middle Passage, can also serve as a liberating agent rather than as mystification or a weight that burdens and impedes forward movement. Historical consciousness can enable us to comprehend what from the past is bleeding through and how it is being absorbed in the present. Such comprehension may help to form, reform and transform understandings of the present contexts in which we live, move and have our being. What then, ought to be pastoral care's focus?

Historical consciousness further suggests that time is a whole—past, present and anticipated future. Therefore, it is deceptive to think that we live only in the fleeting present. The past is always touching the present. Hence, the meaning of lived experience is always complex and ambiguous. The past represents ways of knowing that emerge from struggle and can inform us today. The complex and ambiguous present is the result of the experiences, thinking and struggles of our ancestors who were born and raised in civilizations and circumstances different from our own. Their struggles birthed the conditions under which our consciousness develops. From them we may gain wisdom from patterns of living that extend an otherwise limited perspective on the present. John Lukas observed:

For history the remembered past is not quite the same as history being memory. All living beings have a kind of unconscious memory; but the remembering of the past is something uniquely human, because it is conscious as well as unconscious, because it involves cognition together with recognition, because it involves thinking, and because human thinking always involves some kind of construction. I am interested in the evolution of this construction.<sup>22</sup>

This "construction" that evolves has roots in African, Asian and European cultures, colonialism and the conventions of white supremacy that helped to justify the traffic in black cargo and continues to be a conscious and unconscious feature of Western society—with damaging effects.

### **Damaging effects of the Middle Passage**

In the light of that historical event, the Middle Passage, there are certain invisible, transhistorical invariants that are still with us today. They are no longer associated with the sixteenth century slave trade. I shall refer to certain transhistorical invariants as "damaging effects." They are among the invisible forces that move us.

I defined damaging effects as the legacy of institutionalized practices and beliefs about black inferiority and white superiority, inequities around race, gender and class, exploitive and oppressive conditions that still are determining human existence. They are those visible and invisible forces that destroy the bond between people and their communities, promote injustices, or aid physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual violence. In their turn interpersonal relationships, patterns and trends can be carriers of damaging effects. People as well as systems themselves—the institutions and structures that weave society into an intricate fabric of power relations—can be carriers of damaging effects.<sup>23</sup>

An example of damaging effects was seen in the inhuman treatment of black slaves on the one hand, and the moral reasoning of the colonists that undergirded their vision for a new society, on the other hand. The Colonist, moving toward revolution, called for freedom and justice, and pledged to seek liberty or death. The essence of their revolution was summoned up in the Declaration of Independence. It affirmed the equality of all people before God, the consent of the governed to be governed, and the inherent right to rebel against sustained oppression. And here were their enslaved Africans, who were denied freedom and put to death for rebelling. Damaged was the reflexive capacity to recognize contradiction and the many ways we deceive ourselves. Damaged was the moral foundation for freedom; damaged was a vision for a new society that respects cultural difference; damaged was an enlightened sense of democracy.

These damaging effects have been institutionalized and have a long history.<sup>24</sup> The social historian, Ronald Takaki observed:



In the English mind, the color black was freighted with an array of negative images, 'deeply stained with dirt,' 'foul,' 'dark or deadly' in purpose, 'malignant,' 'sinister,' 'wicked.' The color white, on the other hand, signified purity, innocence, and goodness.<sup>25</sup>

This symbolism also worked against certain ethnic groups, such as the Irish. Some came to America as white indentured servants. They shared a common social space of class exploitation with blacks. According to Noel Ignatiev, "In the early years Irish were frequently referred to as 'niggers turned inside out...'"<sup>26</sup> But unlike Africans, they were not being conditioned for life-long servitude with the permanent status of property. Economic, cultural, social and symbolic power are among the transhistorical invariants that can be traced back to the slave trade. They underlie the motive force in social life that move us along-that is to say, "the pursuit of distinction, profit, power, wealth" and psychic, if not spiritual well-being.<sup>27</sup>

The long history of institutionalized oppression includes the deliberate development of Jim Crow laws in all states from the end of the 1860s and the struggle against lynching. This long history was responded to by the development of Black schools and colleges from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They were necessary to counteract the increasing exclusion of Black children and other non-white children from good public education. Brown vs. the Board of Education capped a long struggle to develop a legal case against separate but equal schools. slide #13

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were nineteenth century women who pioneered the women's rights movement in a time when they, like Black Americans, were excluded from full humanity. They knew the damaging effects of oppression and fought with women of color to transform it. Still, they were not completely free from the damaging effects of the Middle Passage. Racist and anti-immigrant forces were present in the movement. Their achievements have been largely forgotten. But their efforts have been picked up by present day feminist writers who continue to bring the awareness that gender, race and class oppression are tied together. One such work is *Saved From Silence* by Mary Donovan Turner and Mary Lin Hudson. slide #14

The struggle to transform damaging effects of the Middle Passage included W.E.B. DuBois, the Harlem Renaissance people, and other Black intellectuals in the early twentieth Century.

Damaging effects of the Middle Passage are not limited to the past. They continue to bleed through after they have been forgotten and covered over by the present. The mid-twentieth century Civil Rights movement took on the challenge of transforming the damaging effects of the Middle Passage. It built upon the steady, but piecemeal gains of the 1940s and 1950s, the work of the NAACP, and the 1954 Supreme Court Decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka (KS)*. It began when a quiet, but defiant black woman, Rosa Parks, refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger on December 1, 1955. It resulted in a successful bus boycott, the eventual dismantling of the Jim Crow laws in Southern states, the registration of black voters in the deep South, the Civil Rights Act of 1957—the first Civil Rights legislation to be passed since 1875, and the 1964 Civil Rights Law. *This long struggle against damaging effects of the Middle Passage unleashed forces of transformation that contributed to an ethos of resistance that made Rosa Parks' action thinkable.* This struggle, with some victories, did not happen without tragedy and great loss of life. The effects of the Middle Passage continued to bleed through! For example, we remember the bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham where four Black girls were killed. Taylor Branch captured the scene with these words:

...on September 15 [the blast froze] the sanctuary clock at 10:22. A concussion of flying bricks and glass destroyed a bathroom inside the staircase wall, where four adolescent girls were preparing to lead the annual Youth Day worship service at eleven, wearing white for the special occasion. Seconds later, a dazed man emerged clutching a dress shoe from the foot of his eleven-year-old granddaughter, one of four mangled corpses in the rubble. His sobbing hysteria spread around the world before night-fall. The Communist oracle *Izvestia* of Moscow raised a common cry with the Vatican newspaper in Rome, which bemoaned a 'massacre of the innocents.'<sup>28</sup>

The damaging effects of the middle passage were bleeding through? We remember the assassination of Medgar Evers, Viola Liuzzo from Detroit, Rev. James Reeb, the three Civil Rights Workers, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner. We remember the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. And there were many more. As a result of the mid-twentieth century civil rights struggle, some attitudes and stereotypes



began to change and African Americans began to be accepted in places where they had never been or were never allowed, such as in universities and seminaries as students, staff or faculty. As a result of efforts by professor Eldon G. Ernst, the Pacific School of Religion hired its first full time African American faculty member in 1975.

We have come a long way. And we have come a long way at the GTU and within our diverse schools. Each school contains a special richness and our GTUness holds us together. We have come a long way. But we still have a very long way to go.

The legacy of the Middle Passage with damaging effects continues to bleed through. The Harvard sociologist, William Julius Wilson, gives us a glimpse of how the damaging effects of the Middle Passage continue to bleed through the social organization of everyday life in impoverished black communities. Wilson did not use the term "damaging effects." Instead he used the term "social dislocation" to describe the cycles of deprivation that characterized urban ghetto neighborhoods since the mid 1960s. Social dislocation is a term that identifies significant changes in the social organization of inner-city communities and one of the most serious domestic problems in the United States today. Social dislocation may be characterized by low aspirations, poor education, family instability, illegitimacy, unemployment, crime, drug addiction, and alcoholism, frequent illness and early death.<sup>29</sup> In this way, Wilson identifies the lingering effects of the Middle Passage.

In recent years a General Social Survey was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago.<sup>30</sup> They have been doing public opinion research on matters of race since 1940. They were interested in gauging racial stereotypes of blacks, whites, Hispanics, and Asians. African Americans were compared with other racial groups in terms of work ethic, preference for welfare, and degree of intelligence. According to Wilson,

These relative judgements reveal that "blacks are rated as less intelligent, more violence prone, lazier, less patriotic, and more likely to prefer living off welfare than whites. Not only are whites rated more favorably than blacks, but on four of the five traits examined [with patriotism the exception] ...many whites rated the majority of blacks as possessing negative qualities and

the majority of whites as possessing positive qualities;<sup>31</sup>

The damaging effects of the Middle Passage continue to bleed through!

The Middle Passage suggests important lessons for pastoral care givers, ministers and mental health workers. First, anger, and its more intense form, rage, and the hate rage begets, the kind that can only come from calculated cruelty and violation, needs to be acknowledged and appropriate channels of expression found. Black psychiatrists Grier and Cobbs argued that white Americans do not want to hear it, and black Americans are likely to turn it in upon themselves.<sup>32</sup> Anger, when distinguished from hate, can also be an indispensable force for change. It can be channeled toward "analysis, protest, survival, and justice." Womanist theologian Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan argued that "Anger concerns justice because we can use anger to destroy self and others by choosing evil, or we can use anger to empower ourselves and others by choosing good. Anger as transformed energy can bring growth and healing- the use of anger for good."<sup>33</sup> Further, professionals, theologians and health care practitioners must recognize that the damaging effects, which have their origin in objective historical and social conditions, are systemic, personal and need to be viewed developmentally, as well as socially and historically. The sense of betrayal, loss of trust and freedom are profound, rooted in collective memory and give rise to a deep yearning for lasting freedom and self determination. The experience of being devalued is acutely felt and gives rise to a search for a valued self, collective pride and affirmation. In sum, inhuman treatment is an undeniable feature of human experience. It is a paradigmatic part of black experience in white society, and can give rise to despair, hopelessness, violence or to the quest for love, justice and power in healing relationships.

It is not surprising then, that I would place the damaging effects of the Middle Passage on the agenda of my GTU colleagues, and especially on the agenda of pastoral care theologians and the students who study with us. True, "damaging effects" come from other historical events, institutionalized practices and unequal power relations, and therefore cannot be viewed as coming only from the Middle Passage. The Middle Passage itself was part of a larger sequence of events that forever separated some Africans from their homeland. It is marked by the betrayal of Africans by



Africans, their capture by white slavers, horrific conditions in the over crowded barracks where the slaves were kept before their crossing of the Atlantic, the horrific conditions on the slave ships, and their status as chattel slaves as they entered the new world. With a belief in a relational God and Divine Providence, pastoral care theologians may be challenged to make the connections between damaging effects of long term historical trauma, such as the Middle Passage, and issues of internalized oppression, hopelessness and rage, political impotence and lowered self-esteem, injustice, social dislocation and structural oppression. Would not this be a legitimate, and perhaps a distinctive, focus for American pastoral care in the GTU?

### ***Vignettes of Damaging Effects***

Below, and in three vignettes, I continue the claim that the pain of the present has roots in the legacy and damaging effects of the Middle Passage. If we can recognize the relevance of this claim, then it may serve as a context for identifying what can be distinctive about American pastoral care in the twenty-first century in general and African American pastoral care in particular. As we shall see, what is distinctive or typical about African American pastoral care is a belief in Divine Providence, a personal God who cares and is the ultimate relationship and ground of purpose, meaning and hope, especially in the face of radical evil and suffering, injustice, life and death problems. The person healing is one who works for justice and becomes a living witness to this Divine presence. From this perspective, God is ever moving toward us with a surging fullness... seeking to fill the little creeks and bays of our lives with unlimited resources.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Vignette #1:**

slide #15

Recently, I was asked by an attorney to write a declaration that might be part of a last minute appeal to the state Supreme Court to stay the execution of an African American man, Manuel Pina Babbitt. The attorney was looking for some one with expertise on the effects of racism on African Americans and thought that perhaps I could help. According to news reports, the defendant's original court proceedings were marred by racial bias and judicial misconduct. The original defense attorney was said to have used racial slurs when preparing for trial and did not

want African Americans on the jury because "the average nigger" was "unreliable and could not understand a death penalty case..."<sup>36</sup>

According to the May 3 edition of the *San Francisco Examiner*, the defendant requested that his attorney include blacks and Hispanics in the jury pool. The news item continued: "The lawyer told him that those jurors were not of the caliber necessary to understand the evidence." Babbitt himself was told by his lawyer that he was "too ignorant and incoherent to take the stand and tell the jury [his] story". Later in the report, "the lawyer consistently used derogatory racial terms, didn't trust blacks and had three to four double vodkas or other drinks during lunch at the trial."<sup>37</sup>

David Kaczynski, the brother of Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, "noted that his brother, who is white, pleaded guilty to three murders and got a bargained sentence of life without parole." Kaczynski "questioned whether Babbitt, who is black, got impartial justice from the all-white jury that sentenced him to death."<sup>38</sup> Paula Allen-Meares and Sondra Burman observed, "Because the justice system places a higher value on white men than on African American men, the latter have had disproportionately higher incarceration and death penalty rates. Investigations of crimes against African Americans are given low priority. Crimes against white people are more stringently punished."<sup>39</sup>

Granted, this was a complex case. The defendant was convicted of murder and spent years (1982-1999) on death row. The defendant never denied the charges. He did not doubt that he had committed the murder of a 78 year old white defenseless woman, but had no memory of it. I include this story because it illustrates the murderous rage and devaluation of personhood that is a part of the legacy and damaging effects of the Middle Passage. It destroys black and white and by extension everyone. It illustrates the cumulative and continuing significance of race for many African Americans who are disenfranchised, and sometimes turn against themselves and others in a cycle of violent behavior and victimization.

According to news reports, the defendant suffered from mental illness as a child, suffered shell-shock as a Marine at Khe Sanh in one of the bloodiest encounters of the Vietnam war. It lasted 77 days. After the war he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, a typical diagnosis for African Americans suffering a mental disorder.<sup>41</sup> He also suffered post-traumatic stress as a Vietnam veteran, repeatedly ran into trouble with the

law, became homeless, lost his wife and children, spent time in prison and a mental hospital.<sup>42</sup>

The appeal for a new trial only delayed his execution for half an hour while the United States Supreme Court considered his final appeal. Babbitt had fasted for two days and forewent his last meal. He asked that it be given to a homeless person. He said to his attorney, "God has different ways of calling us home and this is the way he's chosen for me." <sup>43</sup> Manual Pina Babbitt was executed on May 4 at 12:31 am. I did not know him personally. I only knew of his situation through the media. But I felt a profound sense of sadness when he was executed. The past bled through and played itself out in the present, and like so many others, his life was filled with frustration, pain and trauma. Years of betrayal and loss of trust turned to despair and low self-esteem. These turned into anger and became forces of uncontrollable rage, destruction and homicide. His life was devalued and "the devaluation of African Americans and their culture can result in psychological scarring, violence and victimization."<sup>44</sup> In turn he learned to devalue and destroy the lives of others. Rage begat revenge and tragedy.

The Governor was right to argue that difficult personal circumstances cannot justify the cruel beating and killing of a defenseless law abiding citizen. Nothing can justify such action. But was the Governor justified in sanctioning the execution of Manual Pina Babbitt—a life for a life? Was the governor affected by the Middle Passage? I assume so, in as much as he is a product of American institutions and society. He has been shaped by the dominant economic, political, social and ideological forces that help determine life in American society. Californians remember that in 1978 a white councilman, Dan White, assassinated San Francisco's Mayor, George Mascone, and Councilman, Harvey Milk. Dan White got 4 years in prison for his double murder. Journalist Jay Severin noted: "... the majority of convicted murderers are not executed even when their crimes are hideous, snuffing out the lives of children and innocent family members. Indeed, "life sentences regularly feature relatively short prison terms, parole, release and, not infrequently, another murder." Again, the Unabomber, who is white, was convicted of three murders and got life without parole, while Manual Babbitt, who is black got the death penalty for one murder. Whether acknowledged or not the Governor's decision was consistent with a long tradition of discriminatory practices and oppressive conditions that have roots in the Middle Passage. Grier and Cobbs observed, A contempt



and hatred of black people is so thoroughly a part of the American personality that a profound convulsion of society may be required to help a dark child over his fear of the dark." <sup>46</sup> Was the past bleeding through?

### ***Vignette #2:***

The legacy and damaging effects of the Middle Passage can still be felt in certain institutionalized practices that affect the family life of African Americans. This legacy can be recognized in the words of Marian Wright Edelman, "A Black child still lacks a fair chance to live, learn, thrive, and contribute in America."<sup>47</sup> Edelman continues, "A Black child's father is 70 percent more likely than a white child's father to be unemployed, and when Black fathers find work, they bring home \$70 a week less than white fathers. When both parents work, they earn only half what a white father earns."<sup>48</sup>

Recently, I was involved in helping a young African American father in his early twenties to gain the adoption of two children through the court. I shall refer to him as John. The ages of the children were two and five. The young mother of the children had suddenly taken ill and went into a coma. She died shortly after being rushed to the hospital. The deceased mother and the father were not married. John was the biological father of only one of the two boys. He wanted to adopt both of them because they had formed a bond, and he wanted to keep his family together. This young father also had been involved with trafficking in drugs and had been in trouble with the law. He was now trying to settle down, turn his life around and become a responsible parent.

Upon the death of his partner, John moved one hundred and fifty miles to a different city. The family of his deceased partner wanted to take the children. But John did not want this, in part, because of their own involvement with the drug culture that John was trying to leave behind. He moved, taking his two boys with him. He went to live with his mother, whom I shall call Martha. Martha is a very devoted and practicing religious woman. She made it clear that if the boys were to live with her, that they had to observe certain religious principles such as prayer at meal times, church attendance, observation of the Sabbath, and treating one another with respect. She offered to help raise the boys and requested that John, her son, get a job and return to school. Both of these things he did.

The family of the deceased's mother [which was also black] did not want John to have custody of the boys and went to court to block his adoption. The white attorneys and case workers who supported the family of the deceased's mother showed little regard for Martha's religious values. They told her that she was too religious. They asked if she could not miss going to church sometimes in order to accommodate the boys' weekly weekend scheduled visitation to their mother's family some hundred and fifty miles away. John, and his mother, Martha rely upon public transportation. So, traveling is always a challenge. Martha believed that the attorneys (including her own) and case workers devalued her religious beliefs and worked to undermine her attempts to provide nurture and consistent moral and family values for the children who had come to live with her.

John, his two boys and Martha entered into family therapy with me shortly after the death of the boys' mother. The goal was to establish a secure base in therapy so that the boys could express their feelings through play and the adults could talk about the recent loss of John's partner and how they might cooperate in establishing a new and nurturing home environment.

This was new territory for everyone. John L. McAdoo observed that the social science literature that explores the constructive role of the young Black father in the socialization of his children is almost nonexistent. "... the Black father is usually seen as an invisible man who is not active in and has no power, control, or interest in the socialization of his children."<sup>49</sup> These goals for therapy were enhanced by the fact that Martha's religious values help to provide a moral framework, a safe and nurturing environment at home where the children are loved, clothed, fed and have consistent adult supervision. When I began my work with John's family, the children were eager to participate in the therapy sessions. They were content, easily moved back and forth between the adults, and would play together, sometimes independently. But when the visitations began, there was an observed change in the behavior of the children and alarm on the part of the adults, John, and his mother, Martha. The children were less eager to explore and appeared anxious and clingy. Martha reported that the younger child had night terrors and would wake up with loud cries. The older boy would wet his pants. Neither child had been doing these things before the visits began. The adults expressed concern about what the courts were doing and the disruptions that were created by the children being moved back and forth from one home to another.

Because of her own experience with family court over the years, Martha had come to believe that the secular court system does not value or even try to understand black culture, and works to destroy black families under the guise of helping them. She felt that the new direction John was moving in and the stable home life she was trying to provide was being undermined. The effectiveness of the Black father in his role as a provider is viewed as dependent on his ability to aid in supporting his family and to share the provider role... thus legitimizing his authority within the family and allowing him to serve as a model of responsible behavior to his children.<sup>50</sup>

Martha expressed concern that if her son John were not successful in keeping his family, then he might experience this loss as failure, become discouraged, revengeful and act it out in destructive ways.

### **Vignette # 3:**

slide #16

Jonestown is an event that most have forgotten about. Tomorrow will mark the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Jonestown mass suicide/murders. It began as an agricultural project established by a San Francisco based church, called the Peoples Temple. In the late 1970s they moved some of their operations to the remote jungles of northwest Guyana. Their goal was to establish an ideal religious community. A utopia. But on November 18, 1978, one of the most bizarre episodes in American religious history took place. On that day a U.S. Congressman and four others were assassinated at the Port Kaituma airstrip, followed by the mass suicide/murder of over 900 people. More recent reports suggest 864 (September 1999). Newsweek referred to the Jonestown Commune as "a cult." The white press constructed them pejoratively as kooks, losers, dysfunctional, poor and disturbed individuals who mindlessly followed a mad man to their death. The folk who joined the Peoples Temple were from many walks of life and ranged widely in their motives, life-styles, and values orientation. Over seventy percent were Black, twenty-three percent were white, six percent were Native American, Latino, Asian and Mexican American. Many were women, children and senior citizens.<sup>51</sup> They were young and old, from wealthy as well as poor backgrounds, the well-educated and the illiterate, widowed and married, single parents as well as husbands and wives, the religiously committed as well as those who were indifferent to religion.<sup>52</sup> Barbara and John Moore lost two daughters and a grandchild at Jonestown. Barbara



Moore said that the followers were incredibly idealistic and creative people. She reminded us that the Peoples Temple had been conceived during the Kennedy/Vietnam era of concern for people of every race and condition. The members of Peoples Temple were committed to caring for all kinds of people.<sup>53</sup> (Alternative Considerations/ Website)

No one knows the full truth of what exactly happened. But one may surmise that even in this utopian commune, the members' vision was not broad or critical enough to perceive the barriers of class, sex, age, and race within the social structure of the organization itself. The past bled through. The top echelon and key decision-makers were white, educated, professionals, calling the shots which determined and sealed the fate of the over 70 percent black membership, mostly women, many elderly, who had given up everything to follow Jones. According to Jeannie Mills' account, "There were attorneys, college professors, a man who had graduated with honors from MIT, social workers, nurses, businessmen, and lots of other professional people on that council."<sup>54</sup>(p. 14) Whether intended or not, the movement itself perpetuated an established relational pattern of superior-inferior power relationships in the Peoples Temple. It was a pattern that has been characteristic of race relations in the West since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The leadership was primarily white and educated, with a few token blacks. The followers were the masses of predominantly black and minority group members. The vulnerable position of blacks and women in the Peoples Temple reflected their position of vulnerability in the wider society. The ruling elite and their power to shape the social outlook functioned to perpetuate inequality within the group and to control the flow of communication. The past was bleeding through. The belief in freedom and equality that some assumed was there was a false consciousness. This belief misrepresented the true subordinate position of blacks within the group. Had there been the freedom and opportunity to reflect upon and critically analyze their situation, then critical questioning of the social process and an opportunity to radically change it may have been possible. The damaging effects of the Middle Passage bled through and found expression in the people themselves. They were the real victims of a system which they supported or rationalized and were powerless to change. The tragedy that came to be known as "Jonestown" had deep roots in the conventions of white supremacy.

The legacy of the Middle Passage points to the continuing and subtle effects of institutionalized racism as a form of unilateral power, resulting in subordinate social positions, frustration, hopelessness and uncontrollable rage, which in their turn become forces of destruction—violence, homicide, suicide. We saw evidence of this in the case of Manuel P. Babbitt, and the Peoples Temple Movement. How can such vicious cycles be broken and then transformed? The above vignettes suggest how.

In his book, *The Color of Faith*,<sup>55</sup> theologian Fumitaka slide #17 Matsuoka observes that it is hard to trust those who do not share your history of common struggle, and who are the heirs of those who have inflicted historical injuries. (p. 3) What we need, he argued, is a way of relating to each other about mutual relatibility, intelligibility and interdependence that goes beyond binary, adversarial and appositional discourse of human relations. What we are faced with today are attempts to redescribe the other so that they "fit the image and expectations of the dominant culture. Only then, can members of the dominant culture be 'sensitive' to questions of cruelty and humiliation" (p. 18). When the world is redescribed in terms of one's subjectivity, then those who are different can have no real existence. Silence deepens or a romanticized notion of unity exists. An unwillingness to deal with historical outsiders and the radically different is never recognized. There is today a new silence, neglect, misunderstanding, and concealment about matters of race and class. Such silence and neglect limits us to conversations with like minded people. Such a posture not only promotes historical injuries but hinders the search for a better America. (p. 12) The failure of communication leads to an erosion of relationships and to an increased inability to acknowledge historically developed patterns of violence. (p. 11) There is a strong tendency to adopt a posture of color and class blindness. In reality, this posture perpetuates dominant positions of power and injustice. Such a posture does not allow one to see. Rather, it contributes to not seeing, ignorance, further silence and lack of communication on issues that really make a difference. "In such a world there is not genuine relationship, but opposition, suspicion, and distrust." (p. 23)

The three vignettes above suggest that the legal, religious, educational and the family are among the contexts for Pastoral care interventions, especially for African American pastoral care.

### III

#### **African American Pastoral Care**

I have suggested that African American pastoral care is neglected in the main body of American pastoral care literature, and perhaps in the teaching of the discipline. Any view of pastoral care that would derive from the Middle Passage would recognize that none of us can escape or live outside of the power and patterns of history. Human existence is historical existence. And where we stand today, whether recognized or not, has its origin in the past.

People often have the sense of being moved by obscure forces within themselves which they are unable to define or explain. And without a historical consciousness, they may not be able to imagine how such forces may work toward the end of human betterment. As educators, it would be central to our task to develop a quality of mind that seeks to understand the intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social forces.

If it is true that each of us lives out a biography within some historical sequence and contribute, however minutely, to the shaping of society and the course of history, then it is important to have an imagination that is able to make connections between history and biography within society and culture.

In African American pastoral care one can discern a pattern of care that is rooted in a sense of shared suffering and that is similar to a biblical model of care, namely, that individual care is at its best when related to collective care. The collective experiences that gave rise to the Spirituals or sorrow songs, helped to combat demoralization and sustained protest movements and the struggles for freedom. They are a part of the roots of African American pastoral care. Hence, African American pastoral care did not emerge as an intellectual tradition, but as survival strategies that grew out of the care of one for another and in response to radical evil.

It was the act of transcending the present evil and entering into the accepting presence of the eternal that sustained African Americans then and now. African American pastoral care, therefore, must be understood as a relatedness grounded in that which is ultimate in history.

Ideally, a sense of caring arises and structures of justice multiply when love, trust and forgiveness are repeated experiences in community. Frequently, a sense of gratitude is a by-product of being in a caring relationship. Truly grateful



people tend to share their joy and such experiences can help counter the damaging effects of oppression, loneliness, despair and hopelessness.

One cannot speak about African American pastoral care without speaking about Black communities and the Black church, or Black churches. The Black Church is a part of the culture that is caught in cycles of violence and mediates the damaging effects of oppression. The Black church is also responsive to transcendent norms such as justice, agape and faithfulness. Hence, the Black church is both in the world as agent of hope and of the world as carrier of its values and norms. Ideally, it aims to organize its life according to relational principles, transcendent values, Gospel and theological norms that can help discern God's purposes for human dwelling and human transformation amidst the damaging effects of oppression. This should be the subject of African American pastoral care.

Divine activity (not only the training of the therapist) is recognized as the primary healing agent in African American pastoral care. God calls on a people in bondage, reaches through suffering, touches their pain, frees them from oppression, inspires hope and continues to work with them to transform radical evil.

Therefore, my perspective on pastoral care in America is shaped by my experience as an African American male and a member of the community. African American pastoral care's emphasis is systemic and relational in its approach. This requires us to think in terms of social power arrangements and their invisible, unrecognized effects. It requires us to observe interactions, notice sequence, patterns, context. We must understand the ways in which meaning is being constructed as we saw in the case of Manual Babbitt, John and Martha, and Jonestown. African American pastoral care remains vigilant to how the past bleeds through into the present. It is a perspective and practice that is informed by a historical consciousness and leads us to think about how events, behavior and emotion, the small details of story, are woven together and become part of a wider and unfolding narrative.

Underlying African American pastoral care is a daring belief that people can be changed and work to resist, if not transform, the damaging effects of systemic evil.

**Conclusion:**

slide #18

The damaging effects of the Middle Passage bleed through in the continued exploitation and oppression of African Americans. All Americans are affected in some way. Our task as teachers, preachers, practitioners and scholars is to help develop the capacity for historical consciousness and to make the connections between our historic past and the ever emerging present. Our aim is a more just and compassionate world. Marion Wright Edelman reflected upon those who mentored her toward a more just and compassionate world. She wrote:

Who knows what emboldened Mrs. [Rosa] Parks in 1955 not to move after riding segregated buses all her life? Was it her tired feet or her tired soul saying enough, or the seeds from the Highlander Folk School citizenship training she had attended some weeks before, or all of these? Perhaps sharing time and grievance with others from across the South and feeling part of a community of fellow strugglers unleashed long repressed emotions and courage.<sup>56</sup>

As teachers, ministers, teachers and ministers-to-be we are mentors. We are witness to an ever emerging power that works in and among us to transform damaging effects. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us."<sup>57</sup> This means that pastoral care givers are witnesses. A witness is not a passive observer with a silent voice, but a participant who works in hope and as a co-creator actively shaping (and being shaped by) their emerging diverse and rich environment. This means that one must ultimately trust in God; that God works through human efforts to bring good out of cruel suffering. We cannot guarantee the good through our own efforts alone. Good and evil live in constant struggle, whether hidden in ambiguity or revealed in stark clarity<sup>58</sup> (Eldon Ernst, Christmas letter, 1998). Whatever we do as individuals, family members or as a group is never, in itself, sufficient to guarantee the good indefinitely. What we can do is become aware of the history that has shaped us. Aware of our historical past, we can self-consciously work for the good, confess our limitations, stay alert to every new and emerging form of evil, and challenge our students and colleagues, family members, individuals and groups to develop their own practices and traditions of care, prayer and

work for spiritual discernment. Evil and suffering may not always be thwarted in the forces of history, but the hopes and struggles for progress toward the goals of redemption in individual, family and social life, the values of love, justice and peace, and the common good are effective when operative in human life.<sup>59</sup> The norms of love, power, and justice can go a long way in countering the damaging effects of oppression and helping people to live creatively amidst suffering in their present life and to conjure hope for the future. Paul Tillich helped us to see that love, power and justice are dynamic principles in moral life and that they are interrelated in the Divine Reality. They are the basis for the experience of genuine sorrow, which not only implies the desire for future amendment of life but also the desire to repair or minimize the injuries inflicted upon others. When power is abused, justice is thwarted and love fails to be realized. Love, power and justice can serve as norms for countering the damaging effects of oppression and enhance human agency that has its source in the being and agency of God. Such forces can counter the damaging effects of oppression.

American Church historian, Eldon Gilbert Ernst observed:

If it is true that love in practice is the greater power in personal life as well as in social environments, and that supreme love ultimately reigns victorious over the persistence of hate, injustice, greed, and violence with each new generation, then perhaps we can experience a kind of existential hope within the dialectic of historical realism and eschatological idealism. If so, then not in vain will the values of love, justice, peace and the common good direct our lives here and now. We, too, are part of history. Life can be better rather than worse at any time and place, and even we can unleash forces that help to overcome evil in the world. Still, valleys as well as mountain tops will remain in our lives and in history past, present, and future.<sup>60</sup>

Pastoral care in America that is informed by a historical consciousness and the Middle Passage can lead to this kind of prodigious hope. It can help form tributaries that join with other streams or traditions of pastoral care, which in their confluence, give inspiration and a kind of fluid and surpassing hope that might otherwise elude us.

slide #19



## Endnotes

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59 See, Archie Smith, Jr. "Reaching Back and Pushing Forward: A Perspective on African American Spirituality." *Theology Today* Vol. 56, No. 1 (April, 1999): 44-58.

60. The quotation is from a 1998 Christmas letter from American Church Historian, Eldon G. Ernst.



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**Invisible Forces Determining Human Existence:  
The Middle Passage**

**A Response by Mary Donovan Turner**  
Carl Patton Associate Professor of Preaching  
Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley California

On April 10, 1903, Archie Smith Sr. was born in Fayette, Mississippi. The year before he died in 1977, he was interviewed about his life, his work, his family - the struggles of being black in a world that did not see the beauty of color. He talks about his mother's grandparents, born slaves, perhaps brought to one of two slave ports in Richmond or Atlanta. He reminisces about his childhood—the insults, the cruelty, and the danger of living in the south. He talks about his years as a young adult. We follow him into the sharecropper's fields where he worked often for no wages, to the roads where he took out on foot to make his way to Illinois, and then to Texas, and finally to Seattle looking for a safe place, a haven, a place with a future. Only receiving an elementary education in the south, Archie Smith Sr., said, *I had a very poor chance of ever developing. But my desire was to be a minister, when I was baptized at the age of ten I desired to be a minister.* And then he said to the interviewer—*You see that picture up there on the shelf, over in the corner, that's Archie Jr. I desired to be a minister, but God got many ways of working things out. When this boy Archie Jr. came along he went to Garfield High School and then to college in Oregon, he graduated from that. And then to New York, Rochester and he graduated from that and then to Union Theological Seminary in New York and he graduated from that and now, he's a minister. See, God got many ways. I never had no opportunity like he had.*

Perhaps this evening is for Archie Smith, Sr. and for Beatrice Smith, Archie's mother, and for his family—part of our lecturer's spiritual legacy and heritage. His understanding of the world is formed and fashioned out of their faith. It is right to remember them this evening, their sacrifice and dedication because Professor Smith's lecture is, after all, about memory—it is about story, moments profound, but fragile, and so easily forgotten. The presence of his family reminds us that not only can the past bleed through to the present, we can also, when it strengthens us, “call it forth.”

Middle Passage. Invisible Forces. History. Systems. Evil. Oppression. Racism. How to respond to these words. We do have choices here. We could evaluate/analyze general schools of historical thought in an effort to discern in which of them Professor Smith most clearly stands. Or we could engage different schools of thought regarding pastoral care and determine how they do or do not take account of historical consciousness in their thinking. Or we could engage in personal testimony to the myriad ways in which our own personal, communal, institutional pasts “bleed through” to the present, thus confirming his thesis. But to do any of these, I think, is to miss the heartfelt intention of this speaker which is to engage us in thought about a particular historical incident, the slave trade from Africa to America, and to consider the ways that sanctioned oppression continues to be made manifest in our language, our attitudes, our scholarship, and most painfully I suspect our life here together. It must be for him a vulnerable endeavor—to stand in this community which prides itself on its acceptance of

diversity, to be the first person “of color” to give the Distinguished Faculty Lecture and then to speak of the vestiges of the American slave trade and the consequent traces, not just traces, the landscape scarring facets of racism that remain present with us.

Professor Smith is convinced of the power of metaphor; he uses metaphor in his teaching, clinical practice, and his writing. In one of his most recent volumes, *Navigating the Deep River*, the river torrents are those that threaten to sweep the oppressed down the mainstream of American living, just sweep them away. And at the same time, the water is the symbol of hope which can transform the desert and the wilderness into abundance. As he discusses the Middle Passage, waters symbolize loss of home, diaspora, a brutality so stark we still cannot find adequate words for its horror, and ultimately for millions, death. Water is an ocean of despair. How has the trail of bones lying on the floor of the Atlantic, how does this skeletoned past, bleed through?

Through his career, and beginning with the published *Relational Self*, Professor Smith has pushed the boundaries of conventional and traditional understandings of pastoral care. He challenges institutionalized, constrained, individualistic models. He has encouraged pastoral care providers to explore the systemic dimensions of the therapeutic task and to consider seriously broad strategies for transformation. And though it remains largely unexpressed here, there is latent the oft fully expressed biblical foundation to Professor Smith’s thought, a foundation that is deep and pervasive. In the *Relational Self*, for instance, Professor Smith begins his volume with a quote from one of the Isaiah’s, from the 58<sup>th</sup> chapter. The prophet talks about healing; Healing is of the community. Healing comes, the light breaks forth, when people work to free those who are oppressed, when they work to break the yoke. And then they are given a new name. They shall be called, Isaiah said, *the repairers of the breach, the restorers of the streets we live on*.

John Quincy Adams, as he prepared to sit as judge for the trial of those who traveled across the Atlantic on the Amistad brought here to be slaves wrote these words:

*The world, the flesh and all the devils in hell are arrayed against any man who now in this North American Union shall dare to join the standard of Almighty God to put down the African slave trade; and what can I upon the verge of my 74<sup>th</sup> birthday with a shaken hand, a darkening eye, a drowsy brain, and with my faculties dropping from me one by one as the teeth are dropping from my head—what can I do for the cause of God and man, for the progress of human emancipation, for the suppression of the African slave trade; yet my conscience presses me on; let me but die upon the breach.*

How do we prepare students at the GRADUATE THEOLOGY UNION to recognize the breach, the divisions of the world, how do we motivate and prepare them to throw themselves over the breach, across it, into it, to bring about healing and change? My own understanding of that which divides was fashioned as a child and young adult growing up in Jackson Mississippi. The sights and sounds of civil rights movement—the flames, the cries, the resistances—emblazoned in my mind. Amidst the questions, the stirrings, my own church was silent. The silence was deafening.



Why remember? Why maintain an historical consciousness? We must, Professor Smith tells us.

- ◆ It is a way to understand the pent up hopes, frustrations that can lead to violence.
- ◆ It is a way that we can make visible for ourselves the pervasive forces in our world that seek to dampen, stifle, and silence the voices of those we have considered “other.” Professor Smith claims to the possibility, sometimes strongly, sometimes tenuously, that those forces can be changed.
- ◆ It stimulates our imagination to think about a people who were devastated but not destroyed and to think about the power of the human spirit to transcend that which seeks to deny it, diminish it, demolish it.
- ◆ To remember is to be able to call forth the echoes of prophetic voices, who have called for freedom. I remember those voices.

The issues raised here are immense. They are ethical. Remembered past - whose past? Who is allowed to remember? Whose rememberings are documented for those who go after? And who interprets the remembered past? Surely Dr. Smith and I stand differently in relation to the remembered Middle Passage though we can both be saddened, grieved and challenged by it. Do not be deceived; the journey back to the remembered past can be treacherous, potentially explosive, even divisive. That is why we may be tempted to avoid it. But Professor Smith indicates that we must. For him, the journey is historical, it is psychological and sociological to be sure, but it is more. Ultimately it is spiritual. Part of his remembered past is a spirituality given form in sorrow songs and spirituals, in prophetic voices that sustained protest movements and struggles for freedom. This is a spirituality that renews, restores and comforts for sure. But it is more. It is a spirituality that emboldens, that fights injustice and that resists and seeks change. This spirituality is of the community; at its heart lies the premise that the well being of one is related to the well being of all. It is a spirituality given birth in a people brought to these shores, a stolen people, in chains and sold on the auction block. It grows out of suffering; a dogged fight simply to survive. It was and is a way to transcend, to affirm the self while facing cruel oppression. All of this African American pastoral care brings to the conversation.

At its best the black church is the source and foundation for this kind of spirituality; it holds the words and the lyrics that inspire. And yet, although a strong ecclesiology undergirds this author's work, he is not naive about the church's potentially destructive power. He is the champion of women who have been oppressed by the church, who have become spiritual refugees because they cannot find a way to find voice or live out their callings there. He knows full well the church has the power to concede, accommodate, embrace silence. It has the power to alienate and even abuse. He names the world's despair.

But despair is not the final word. The bottom line always, whether or not Dr. Smith is talking about Middle Passage, Jonestown, or the Civil Rights movement, the bottom line is always hope. This is no facile hope. It is not naive. It is not optimistic. It is a hope that is

deeply rooted in the painful realities of racial discrimination and the struggle to find voice in the world. The *invisible* force of the Middle Passage has often rendered him painfully *invisible* in the world. And this hope is rooted in a consciousness about the horrors and tragedies of the past. This kind of hope, for Professor Smith, must be of God. It is built upon an understanding of a God who calls on a people in bondage, reaches through suffering, frees them from oppression, inspires hope and continues to work to transform radical evil. It is very simple, really, It is a belief about God and kinship of all of God's people.

Manual Babbitt whose chance in the courtroom of receiving a fair and just verdict were rendered nearly impossible by the color of his skin. Martha whose strong belief in God and whose embrace of an African American spirituality gives her courage and hope, but is trivialized, discounted and ignored. A group of women and men who dreamed of a better world but who had to leave, had to leave us, to try to find a way to make a vision reality. These case studies are complicated, very complex, to be sure. Are they in the purview of the care giver? How can we understand the tragedy and the despair apart from understanding the threatening world in which they and those who have come before them live. And how can we understand the threatening world if we do not know its past?

I can't help but believe that there is lying latent here and in Professor Smith's more recent writing about African American spirituality—a description of the students we would like to educate and form—A student who

- ▶ is thirsty for knowledge and knows the past; who understands the importance of our traditions and sacred texts and yet looks at them with suspicious and critical eye;
- ▶ who asks questions;
- ▶ who avoids insular, myopic, singular interpretations;
- ▶ who names with a public voice the realities of the world we live in;
- ▶ who can form strategies for transformation that shatter oppressive structures and humanize them, to stem the rising tides of despair;
- ▶ who seeks opportunities to learn from the diversity that resides here;
- ▶ who understands systems, varied contexts and expressions of faith;
- ▶ who can stir the imagination, help the community reflect and be an active agent of God's justice in the world.

How can we train and educate a generation of students willing to wrest racist attitudes from invisibility if we do not model that here, right here for them—by exploring our language, our methods, our habitual institutional practices with a willingness to discover our own discriminatory and oppressive tendencies. In writing this lecture, did Professor Smith want us to

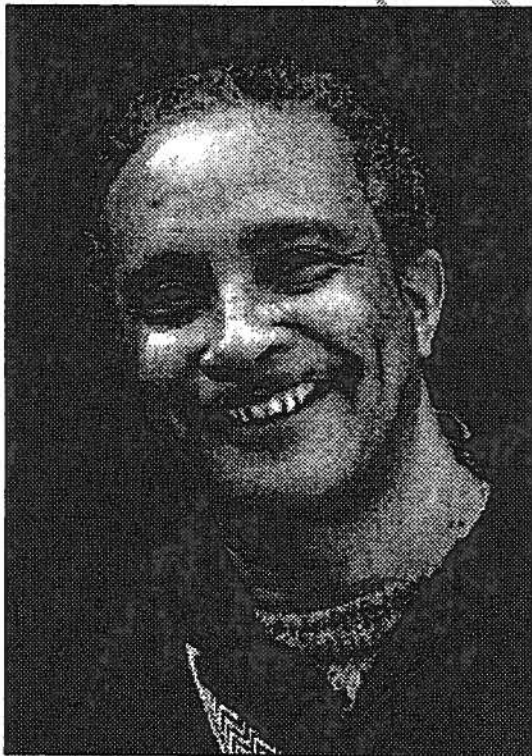
learn something? Yes. Feel something? I think so. Do something? Most certainly. Professor Smith doesn't write so that only the halls of the academy can be enlightened with wisdom; that would be a hollow victory. He writes for his students, his clients, his church, that they will ultimately be challenged. He writes for the common good, to make a difference. And so he asks, how can care providers be trained so that they are encouraged to help shatter and humanize oppressive social structures? Are our therapeutic practices far too limited for our multi-cultural contexts? Are we prone in our ministries, our teaching to underestimate the debilitating and continuing effects of racist attitude and practice? This is a call to every discipline, every field of inquiry represented here—to scour our language, our ideologies, dominant views, our methods—for racist tendencies. Are we aware of our own? We are called to awareness, perhaps to confession and change.

Invisible Forces. An unsettling lecture, and therein is its hope.



✠ The 1999 Distinguished Faculty Lecture ✠

**I**nvisible Forces that Determine  
Human Existence: The Middle Passage



**Archie Smith**

James and Clarice Foster Professor of  
Pastoral Psychology and Counseling at  
Pacific School of Religion, discusses how  
the forgotten past affects training,  
teaching, ministry and pastoral care.  
Mary Donovan Turner, Respondent

**Wednesday, November 17, 7:00 PM**  
Chapel, Pacific School of Religion  
1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley

For more information, call the Graduate  
Theological Union at (510) 649-2464

*Immediately following the lecture, please join us for a reception and Graduate Theological Union  
faculty publications fair at the GTU Bookstore, 2465 LeConte Avenue, Berkeley.*



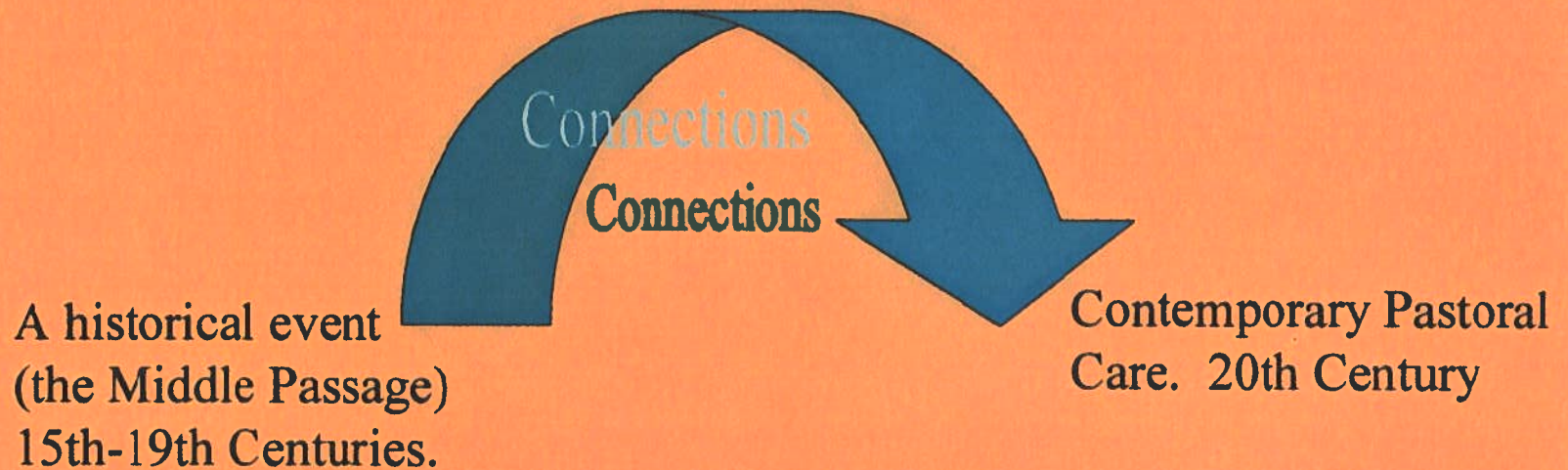


**INVISIBLE FORCES**

**DETERMINING HUMAN EXISTENCE:**

**THE MIDDLE PASSAGE.**

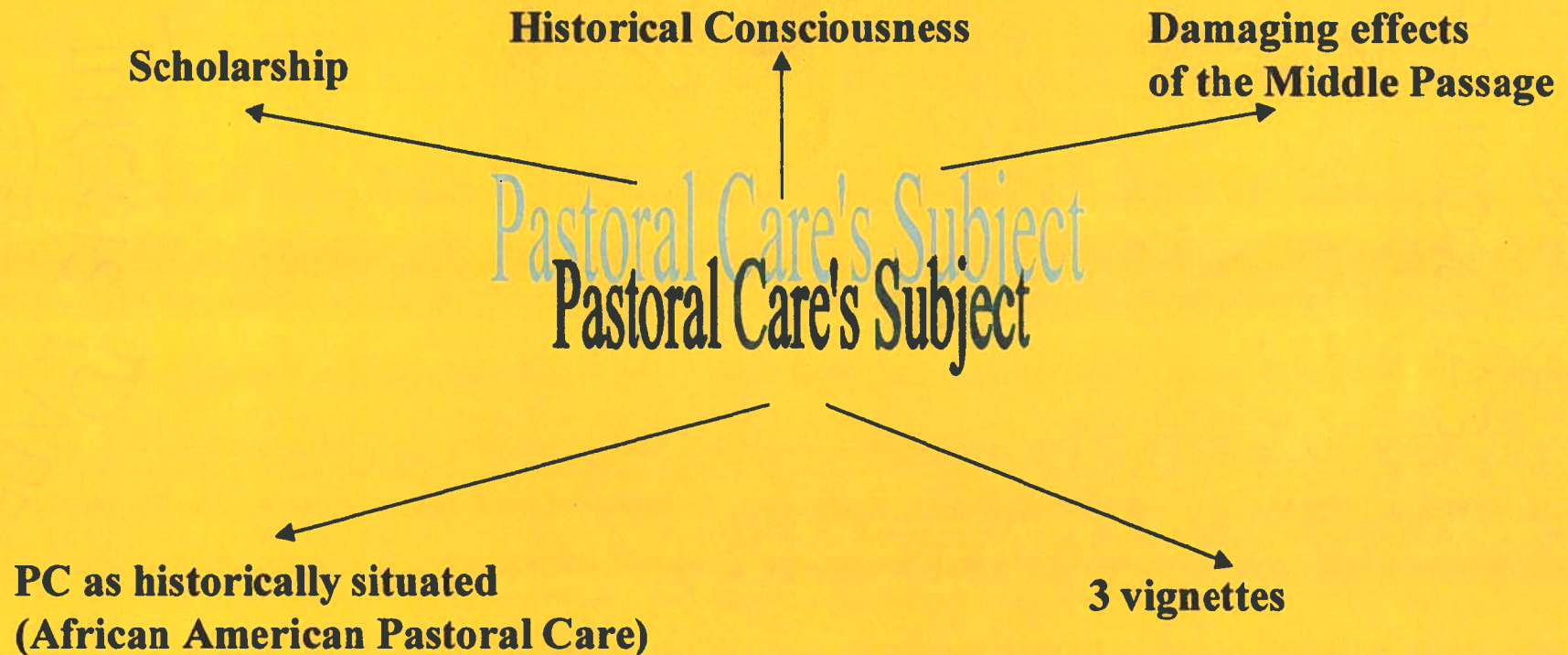
# ***My Task***



**Thesis: The Middle Passage was an horrific event that unfolded over a 400 year period. Its effects are still with us—invisible, yet helping to determine human existence.**



If human existence is historical existence,  
then what is pastoral care's subject?





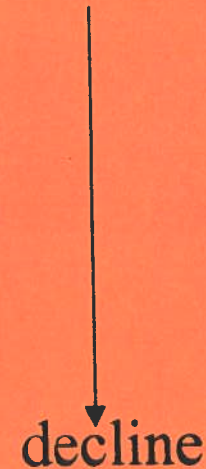


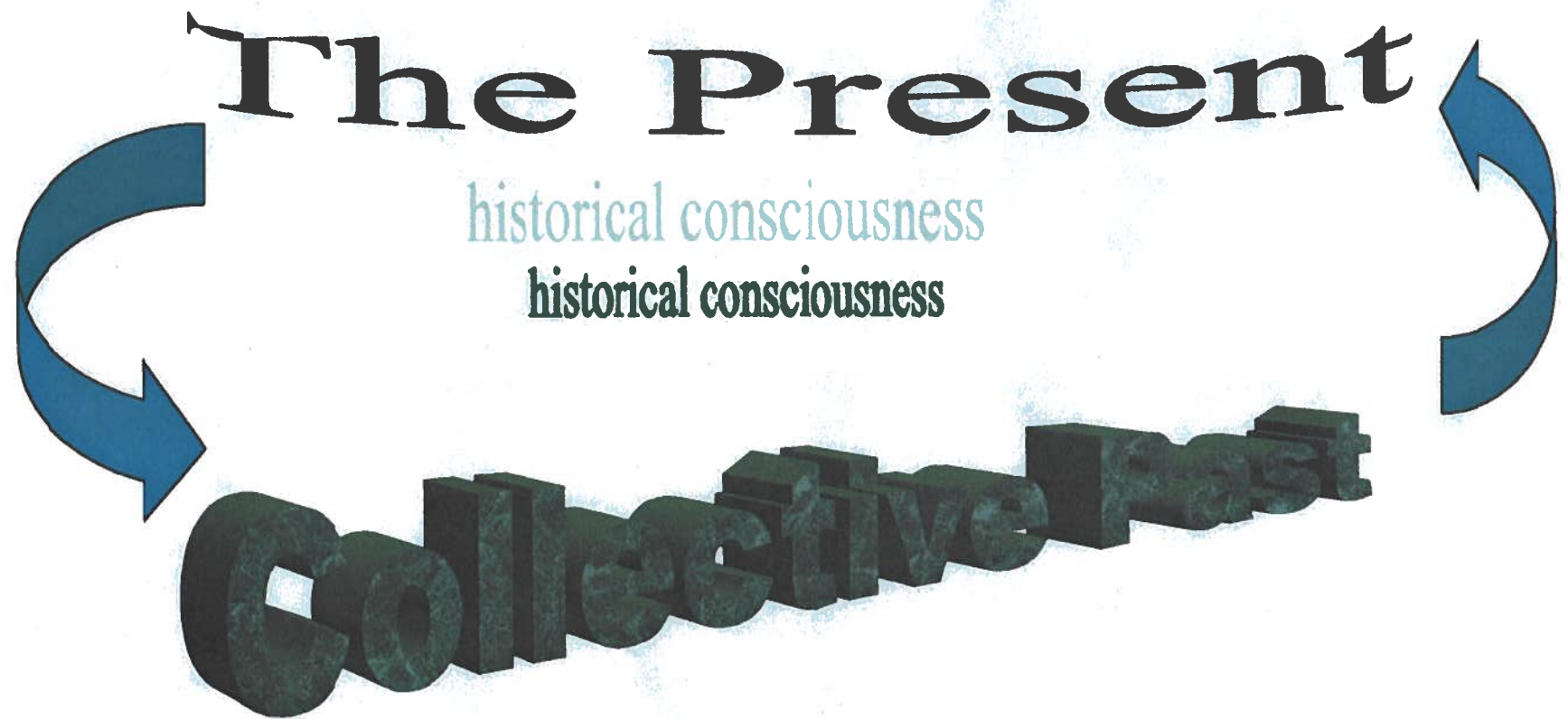
# **The single most important influence of the 20th Century on Pastoral Care: The Psychological Sciences.**

**Psychological Sciences**



**Normative Theological  
understandings of Self  
& Human life.**





**Historical Event  
(The Middle Passage)**

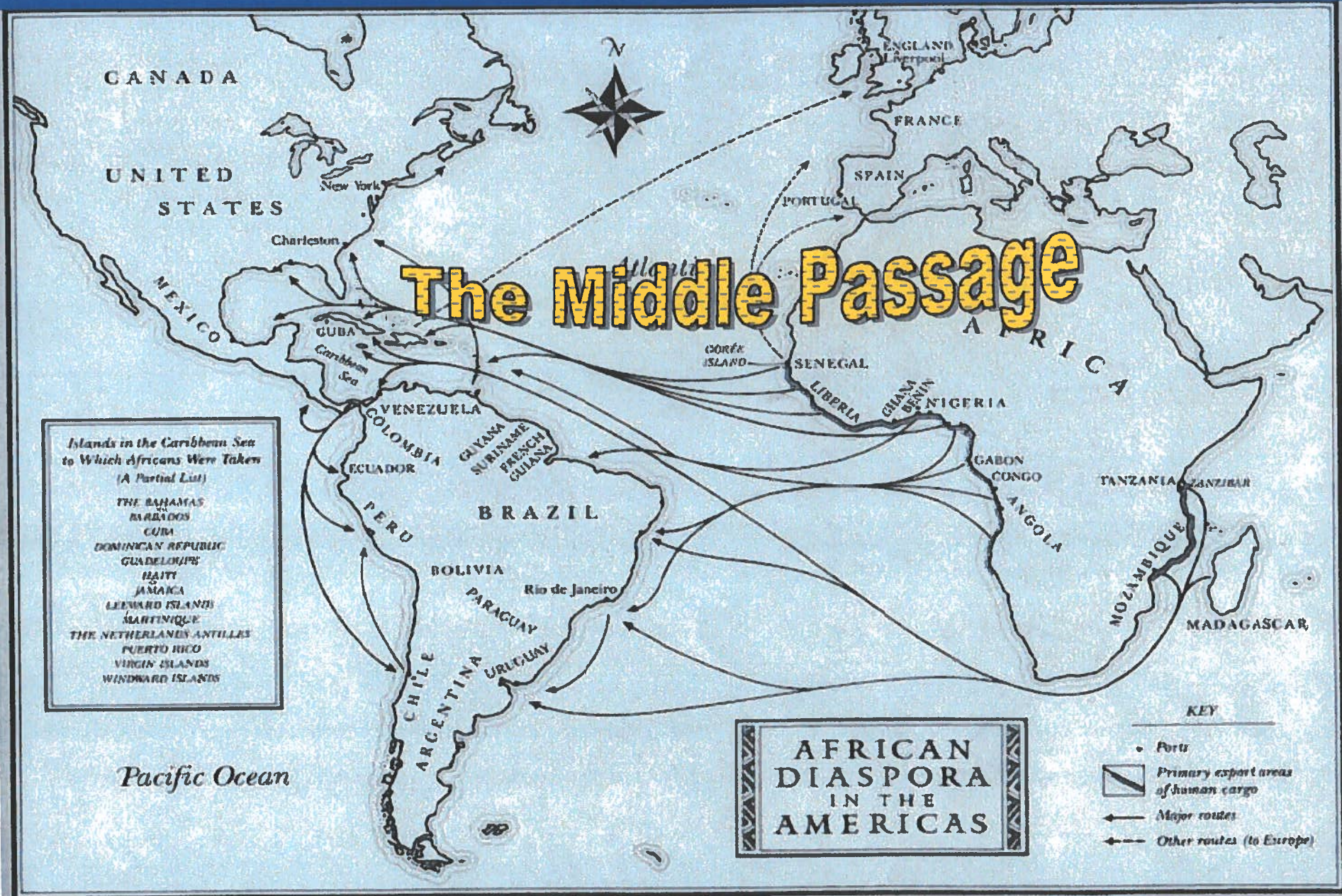
**Contemporary Pastoral Care**

Connections  
Connections





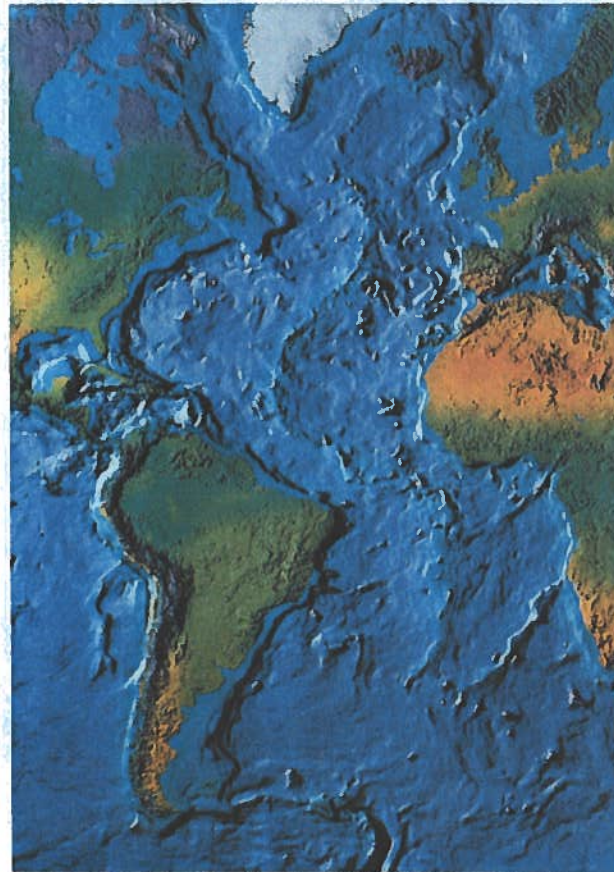






# The Middle Passage

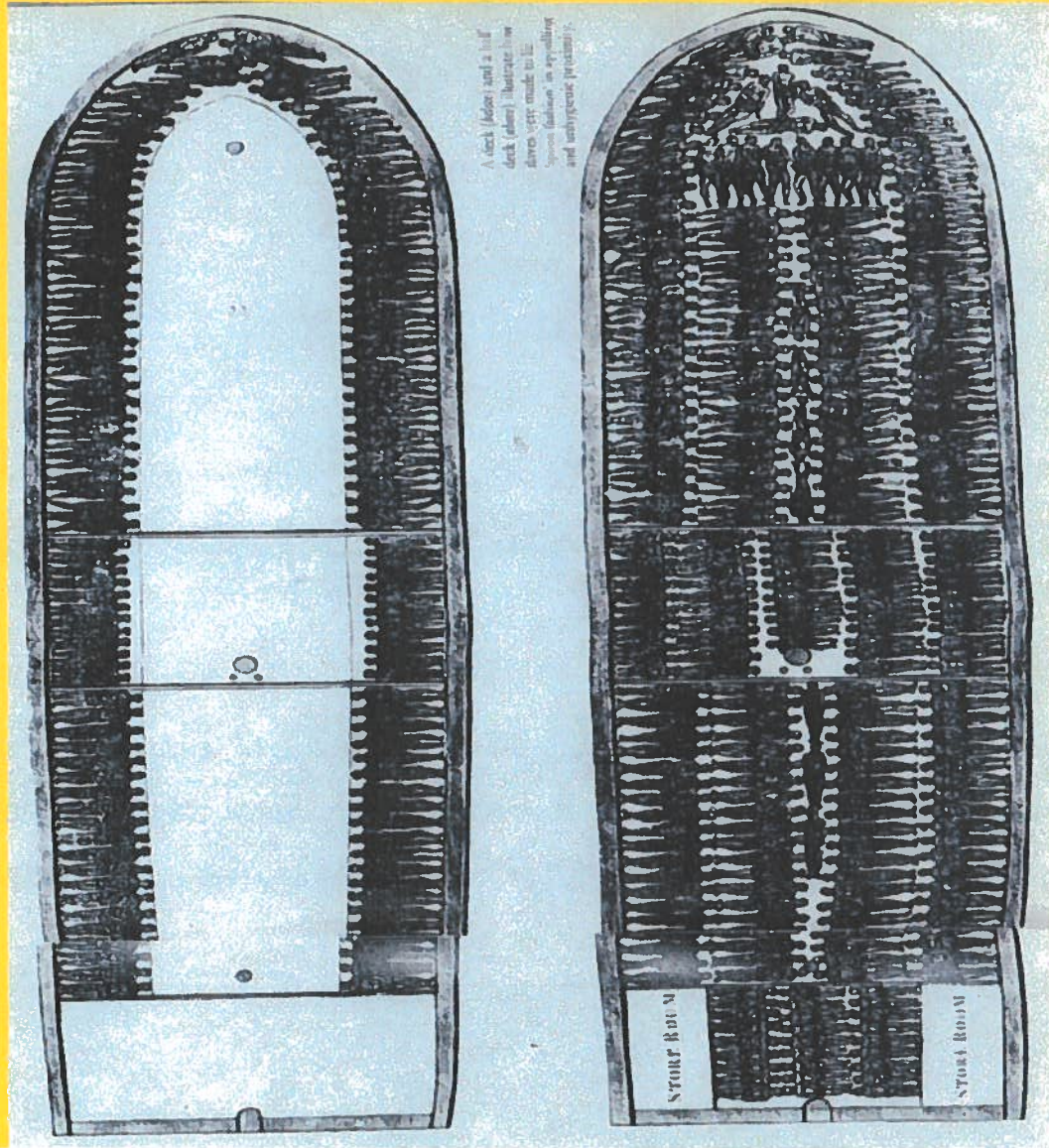
- United States
- Venezuela
- Brazil
- Ecuador
- Peru
- Chile



- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Cuba
- Dominican Republic
- Guadeloupe
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- Leeward Island
- Martinique
- The Netherlands Antilles
- Puerto Rico
- Virgin Islands
- Windward Islands

# A Slave Ship. Human Cargo. the Middle Passage.

- Top deck.
- Head room- a mere two feet six inches.



- Bottom deck.
- Slaves were made to lie 'spoon fashion.'



**Pentimento: the past bleeds through after it has been forgotten or willfully repressed or covered over by the present.**

- **Attempt to remember the past**



- **Art of one period superimposed over another**

- **Attempt to bury the past**



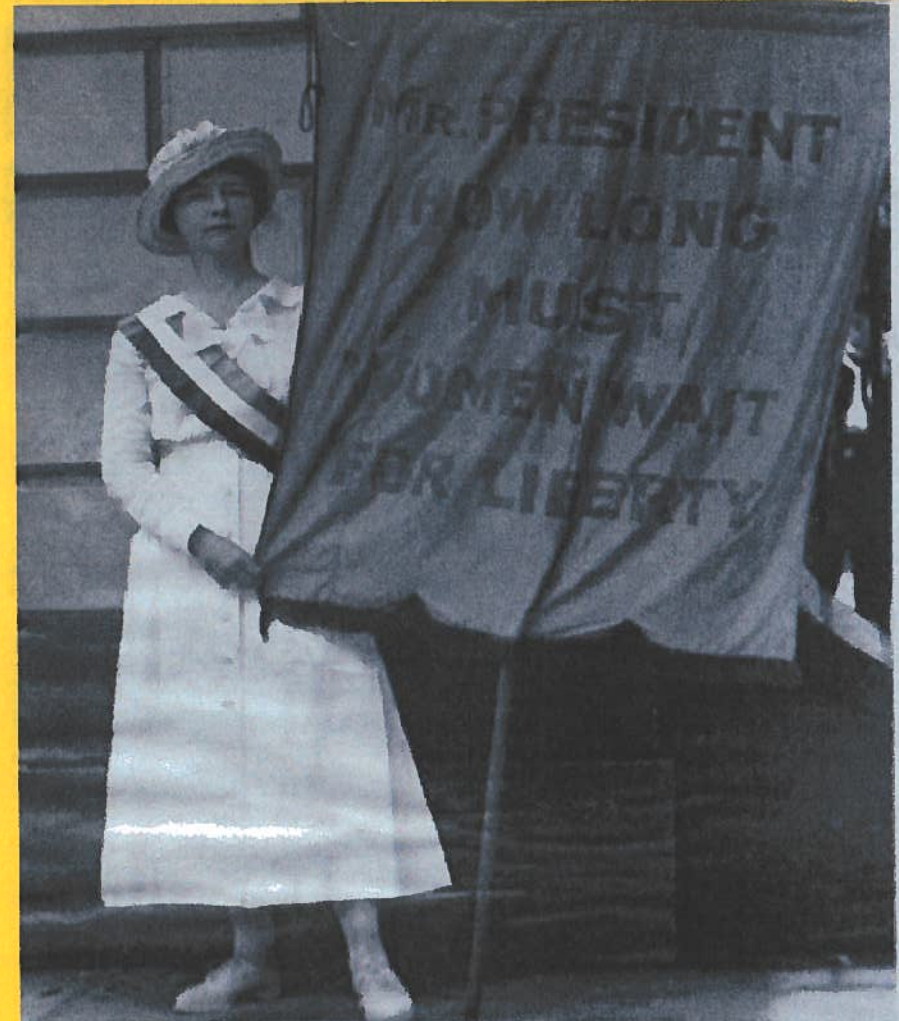
- **Wm. Blake, The Body of Abel found by Adam and Eve. 1826-7.**



# Damaging effects upon 19<sup>th</sup> C Women



COHES / UNDERWOOD



COHES / BETTMANN



# Saved *from* Silence

## Finding Women's Voice in Preaching

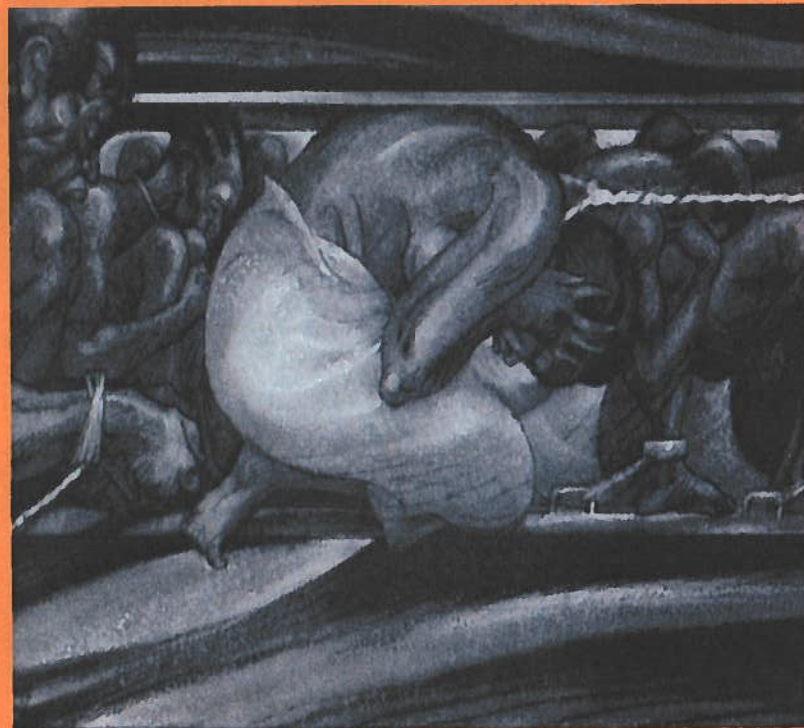
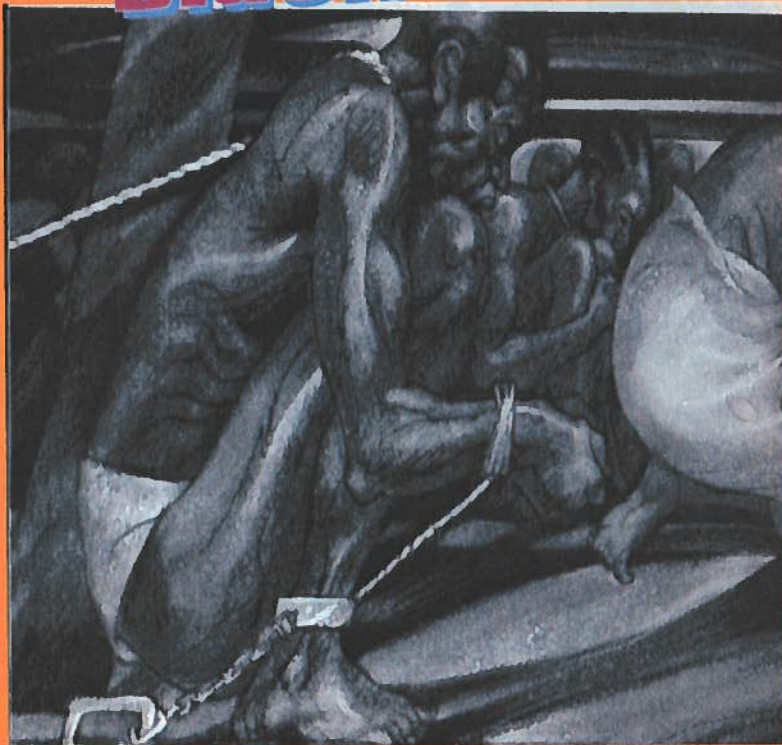
Mary Donovan Turner  
Mary Lin Hudson

- A Revisionist Theology of Preaching.

- Truth emerges from a plurality of perspectives and in conversation among diverse “voices”- African American, Asian American, European American, Hispanic American, Pacific Islanders- and human experiences are indeed revelatory.



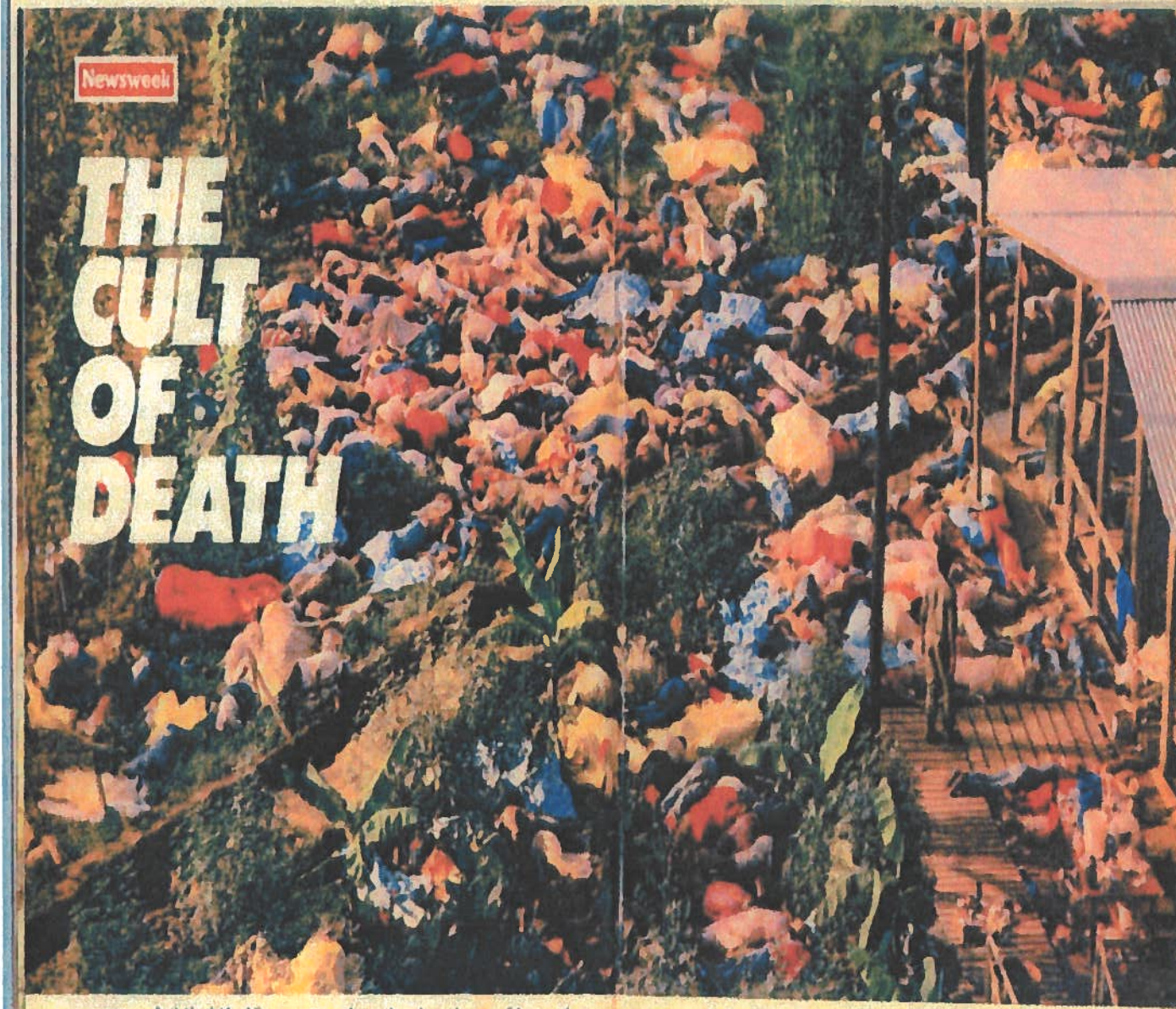
# **The Middle Passage: Black Cargo/White Ships**





# Jonestown, Guyana. 18 November 1978

918 people murdered



•638 Black,71%

•209 White,24%

•18 Mexican,2%

•15 Latino, 1%

•7 Indian

•3 Asian

•587 Female,66%

•331 male,34%

•247 Children, 27%



# The Color of Faith

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN A MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY

FUMIYAKA MATSUOKA

Some text  
here

- Our task as scholars, teachers and preachers, is to strive toward excellence; to ground our understanding of the present in the rich experiences and germinal thought of our collective past



- The common objective is to use such awareness and striving to develop leaders for a more just and compassionate world.





Thank  
You!