

Susanne Scholz, Valerie Bridgeman, Dorothea Erbele-Küster, Susan E. Haddox, Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, Angela N. Parker and Karri L. Whipple, Yael Shemesh, Davina C. Lopez

Cultivating Womanist, Feminist and Queer Relationships in this Neoliberal-Authoritarian Age.

A Panel Discussion at the SBL Annual Meeting 2019 in San Diego

Die folgenden Beiträge entstammen einer Diskussionsrunde, die während des jährlichen Kongresses der Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) im November 2019 stattfand. Von den ursprünglich zwölf vorgetragenen Beiträgen werden im Folgenden acht leicht veränderte Beiträge veröffentlicht, um den Gesprächsstand einer größeren Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Es geht um einen ersten Schritt der intellektuellen Zusammenarbeit unterschiedlich situierter feministischer, womanistischer und gender-queerer Bibelwissenschaftlerinnen in neoliberal-autoritären Zeiten. Die Wissenschaftlerinnen überlegen gemeinsam, was es heute bedeutet, die Bibel wissenschaftlich zu bearbeiten und trotz wichtiger Unterschiede und Differenzen gemeinsame Perspektiven des Widerstandes aufzubauen.

1. Susanne Scholz: Introduction

During two anniversary panels in honor of the feminist Bible scholar, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, taking place during the annual meeting of the SBL in Denver in November 2018, the honoree emphasized in her response to the panel speakers that progressive movements succeed only in this neoliberal-authoritarian age if progressive groups and organizations build strong coalitions among themselves. Her insight encouraged me to organize a panel based on this idea for the following year's annual meeting of the SBL. I decided to invite womanist, feminist, queer, and gender studies scholars in biblical studies to cultivate our respective relationships because time was of the essence and the neoliberal-authoritarian age would not end any time soon. In my view, the panel that I planned in December 2018 and January 2019

ought to be only the beginning of building intellectual and scholarly coalitions among progressive scholars. The following panel consists of biblical scholars whose research focuses on gender and sexuality in various intersectional dimensions.

Since the SBL sections “Feminist Hermeneutics of the Bible” and “Women in the Biblical World” were immediately willing to co-sponsor this panel session, panelists had to be invited. The task turned out to be relatively easy. Most invited colleagues responded to my emailed invitation without any delays, appreciating the idea to talk with each other in light of our dire socio-political, economic, and cultural-religious situations. In my email I had explained that the panel aimed to cultivate conversation, dialog, and even contestation. The goal was to collaborate while not to ignore our differences. I also explained that we might even discover that our differences strengthen our coalition building and our collaborative efforts to resist collectively neoliberal, authoritarian counterforces. We might also learn that our divergent voices help us to address productively past grievances and to build a just present and future in collaborative ways. Since the panel aimed to include a wide range of voices and perspectives, I asked the panelists to address three or four major issues that each panelist considers as central to their particular scholarly perspective in response to the overarching topic.

Very quickly, a panel of twelve speakers came into being. When the SBL Program Book appeared, the panel was advertised in this way:

Women in the Biblical World / Feminist Hermeneutics of the Bible

Joint Session With: Women in the Biblical World, Feminist Hermeneutics of the Bible

Theme: *Cultivating Womanist, Feminist, and Queer Relationships in this Neoliberal-Authoritarian Age*

Organized by Susanne Scholz, SMU Perkins School of Theology

Susanne Scholz, Southern Methodist University, Presiding

Valerie Bridgeman, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Panelist

Dorothea Erbele-Kuester, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Panelist

Susan Haddox, University of Mount Union, Panelist

Lynn Huber, Elon University, Panelist

Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, Shaw University Divinity School, Panelist

Angela Parker, Mercer University’s McAfee School of Theology, Panelist

Tina Pippin, Agnes Scott College, Panelist

Karri Whipple, New York University Liberal Studies, Panelist

Gay Byron, Howard University, Panelist

Yael Shemesh, Bar-Ilan University, Panelist

Davina Lopez, Eckerd College, Respondent

Fiona Black, Mount Allison University, Respondent

Eight panelists followed the call to revise and edit their contributions for publication. The remaining panelists were unable, for various reasons, to prepare their statements for publication. The following statements offer a glimpse into the various perspectives, insights, and positions that the womanist, feminist, and queer panelists articulated in November 2019. They reflected on the joys and pains of engaging with each other across our differences and disagreements. They reminded us to reach out to other colleagues whose research and teaching practices not only touch on gender and sexuality but also contest neoliberal-authoritarian power dynamics in the field, in educational institutions, and in places where the Bible is read today.

How, why, and for what purposes we read biblical texts and their interpretation histories are always important considerations, whether we read as womanist, feminist, queer, or whatever scholar of whatever biblical canon. That the neoliberal-authoritarian age forces many of us to the margins of public discourse is not entirely new or surprising. Yet the crucial question is how to confront the silencing effects of the right-wing agenda playing out in many places around the world. Schüssler Fiorenza's reminder that progressive scholars need to build coalitions across our differences and disagreements is thus crucial to consider. This panel wants to begin the coalition building; another panel, focused on pedagogy, is scheduled to take place in November 2021. The opportunities to keep conversing with each other are thus still abundant. The following statements encourage people to join the conversation and to find ways to engage in similar collaborative projects. Building intellectual communities in biblical studies and beyond seems more important than in a long time, as "sheltering in place" and "stay at home" policies are implemented in cities, states, and countries across the globe during the current coronavirus pandemic.

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feminist biblical hermeneutics, the epistemologies and sociologies of biblical interpretation, cultural and literary methodologies, biblical historiography and translation theories, interfaith and interreligious dialogue, as well as general issues related to women, gender, and sexuality studies in religion. Among her fourteen books and over sixty essays and journal articles are *The Bible as Political Artifact: On the Feminist Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress Press, 2017) and *Introducing the Women's Hebrew Bible: Feminism, Gender Justice, and the Study of the Old Testament* (second rev. and exp. edn; T&T Clark Bloomsbury, 2017), *Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect: Method (Volume 3)* (editor; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2016), and *La Violencia and the Hebrew Bible: Politics and Histories of Biblical Hermeneutics on the American Continent* (co-editor; SBL Press, 2016). She also is the editor of the book series *Feminist Studies and Sacred Texts* (Lexington Books).

2. Valerie Bridgeman: Womanist Tribe Rising and Coalition Building in the Guild

I readily answered “yes” when asked to reflect on the 2018 assertion from Dr. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza that – as the invitational e-mail read – “progressive movements will only succeed in the neoliberal-authoritarian age if various progressive groups and organizations build strong coalitions among themselves.” I mused that since I have been thinking about Womanist survival, intersectionality, the politics of the academy, and what it means to have power or not, I would be able to whip out something in short order. The request begins to seem unbearable, if not impossible, however, as the days passed. Given the ongoing rise of authoritarianism around the globe, the task for members of the academy to amplify our work and our voices seemed inconsequential. Who is listening to us besides us, I wondered? How do we get beyond our own territorialism? What is the real goal of our coalition building?

I revisited an essay I read first in the late 1980s to get to these questions. The Rev. Sandra Wilson wrote a brief essay, titled “‘Which Me Will Survive All These Liberations...’ on Being a Black Woman Episcopal Priest.” This essay appears in a collection of essays edited by Diana L. Eck and Devaki Jain, titled *Speaking of Faith: Global Perspectives on Women, Religion, and Social Change*.¹ The collection is divided into five sections, representing women’s voices from eighteen countries. No United States woman’s writing occurs until the third section titled “Changing Leadership Roles: Religious Institutions and Women’s Challenge,” the section in which Wilson’s essay appears. Wilson’s essay is the only

one in the book by an African American woman, though there are black women from Africa included. Wilson's essay seemed apropos for launching my reflection, even though her essay is not from an academic/biblical field. Her essay led me to reflect on the issue of tribalism versus affinity groups, trying to take into consideration the impact intersectionality and coalition building have on our scholarly commitments.

Tribalism or Affinity Groups?

At the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) 2016 meeting, an African American woman biblical scholar published a book arguing that Womanist biblical scholarship was, at best, inchoate in that current moment and, at worst, non-existent since its only qualifying "distinction" was that it was done by black women. I admit this characterization of her argument is simplistic. In subsequent articles and interviews, this scholar (I am deliberately relegating her name to the footnotes) made it clear that she was not a Womanist and that people "had better stop" referring to her as such.² I was asked to review her book, and decided not to do so, though in hindsight I should have if for no reason but to dismantle the argument that Womanist work is the only work that might be considered "essentialist" unlike any other hermeneutical lenses. Indeed, I would argue that Womanist biblical work is "particular," "contextual," and "political," as is all biblical interpretation, whether acknowledged as such or not. Further, another conversation with a white Feminist woman at the same guild gathering was disheartening because, she explained to me, that there was no need for Womanist scholarship. She explained to me that feminism had taken up questions that started Womanist scholarship, i.e., class and race in addition to gender, and that Womanist scholars only divided Feminist power in the guild. That conversation was disheartening to me because it assumed that there were no Black Feminists, that Womanists have no right to name ourselves, and that our work could be so readily dismissed and coopted.

At the same time, however, several essay collections and a couple of monographs by self-described Womanist biblical scholars were either already on the market or beginning to appear.³ What both the book I discussed above and the conversation I had pointed to for me was that Womanists' agency assertions to center experiences of marginalized black women often is considered "tribal" and divisive. Womanist scholarship often has been relegated to one or two essays in collections edited by white Feminists, and often in the back of the collection. After years of conversations with publishers, who are gatekeepers to our work,

only now are there collections of essays available that are written and edited by Womanist scholars, with more on the way.⁴ In 2018, Fortress Press began a Womanist series edited by New Testament scholars Mitzi Smith and Gay Byron. It took 30 years of arguing, publishing, and explaining ourselves in biblical scholarship, though Womanist ethicists and theologians have a longer record of publication.⁵

Now, at the very moment Womanist biblical scholars are finding power through publication and a footing - though still ghettoized and isolated - in the guild, we receive this call for coalition building. This call to coalition building can only be taken seriously, in my mind, when non-Womanist scholars agree that coalition building cannot flatten this power or subsume it. Coalitions must build power-sharing strategies that privileges those voices that have not before been privileged. I do not suggest a merely “flipping of the charts,” or reversal of fortune. I am suggesting that we must consider what changing the rules - even for an imagined liberation/freedom goal - means to those who have finally arrived at the goalpost, only to find the goalpost moved and the rules changed. This position is where I see Womanist biblical scholars in such a call.

In her essay, Rev. Wilson noted that hierarchy has been built into all institutions. So,

“[i]n any institution run by white males there is a need for coalition building among all on the lower rungs. We need to understand our interconnectedness and interrelatedness... and to understand that the movement forward of the black woman is *our* (emphasis hers) movement forward.”⁶

While Wilson speaks of church, I believe the same statement applies for the guild. The SBL is overwhelmingly white and male, and though women have ascended to hold office, a glance at the “traditional” sections unveil Wilson’s written truth. For Womanist scholars, dismantling hierarchy means that the circle cannot be a spiral where our work would be continually marginalized, and considered “less,” “exotic” or “peculiar.”

I am convinced that Womanist scholars need our affinity group more than ever, even as I believe we must build coalitions. We must resist the label that this group need is “tribalism” which, though not actually a pejorative term, has been used pejoratively in our current political climate. Womanist scholars need more conversations among ourselves, even while we talk with other liberationists. As an affinity group, Womanist biblical scholars have intersectionality areas among us we have yet to explore in depth, for example. We need even

more intra-womanist conversations to think together about what we want to offer to a larger collaborative thriving project. We also need to build internal strategies that help us resist white supremacist patriarchal tendencies in our guild/s to crown “the one,” or “the three.” This “choosing” usually leaves behind or outside very valuable insights from Womanist biblical scholars working with an array of methodologies, resources, and commitments.

This notion that we need our affinity groups became clear to me during the year after Michael Brown was murdered⁷ in Ferguson, Missouri. For a year, several black scholars from across guilds and disciplines found ourselves in conversations. In various settings, we sought to answer the call to be “a credit to our people,” an old adage black people coming up from the segregated United States south often used. I tried to address the impact of that year in an essay titled “Interpreting the Bible in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter: The Gideon Story and Scholarly Commitments,” published in *Second Wave Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*.⁸ In this essay, I did not privilege the text. Nor did I simply use the text as a pretext to say what I wanted to say in the first place. I chose it because the biblical text had been needling me for some time, and reading through Gideon’s predicament (i.e., “why is this trouble finding us”) provided a lens through which to read the current political, moral environment. And the current environment allowed me to see something in the Gideon story that I had overlooked when trying to see it merely through Eurocentric historical-critical methodologies. Reading through a Womanist lens and a #BlackLivesMatter methodology helped me interpret the story in a new way.

In the essay, I memorialized an event that occurred on the one-year anniversary weekend of Brown’s death, when several black scholars gathered in Ferguson to reflect on how Brown’s death and other extra-judicial killings of black people could, should, or would impact our scholarly work in the guild, in the church, and in society. In that essay, I reflected on another essay, written by Vincent Harding, titled “The Vocation of the Black Scholar and the Struggles of the Black Community,”⁹ published in 1974. Any conversation about coalition building has to account for the struggle for black scholars to be more than participants in the guild, but also active resources for black communities. For black scholars it means doing our work in a way that protects the interests of vulnerable black communities. Such scholarship can never be scholarship for scholarship’s sake, or even for tenure’s sake. Neither can it be scholarship that primarily serves dominant interests. If, as Wilson says, the movement forward is black women’s movement forward, does that require in coalition building that those who have more advantage, or who are white supremacist/patriarchal adjacent agree to

follow, rather than lead? Does it mean that in a circle of equals, those who have had the least power must wield the most as “power with,” elevating their voices and concerns above the din of competing commitments? Another way of asking these questions is “does all our survival depend on following survivalists?”

An Offering/Conclusion

When I began this reflection, I asked three questions: Who is listening to us besides us? How do we get beyond our own territorialism? What is the goal of our coalitions? I have reflected on these questions, though not explicitly, by lifting up the need for Womanist affinity groups. The call for affinity groups among Womanist scholars is not a call to close off from dialogic coalition building to which this panel calls us. Rather, affinity needs is a call to work together on our own intersectional work. We must continue to perceive how Womanists are not just United States-citizen black women and to delineate how not all black women scholars are womanists. We must explore how our variety of layered identities impact our work. We must interrogate what it means that we are also immigrants, differently bodily able, queer, working poor, activists, and more. As Wilson’s essay suggested, we cannot cordon off any section of us in order to be in conversations; we cannot compartmentalize our lives. There is no “work-life” balance to maintain; there is only the goal in which all thrive in every way thriving may be defined.

Womanists have to continue to be decidedly ideological in our work. We have to privilege the most vulnerable black populations, while also resisting what has been termed “the Oppression Olympics,”¹⁰ the game where we spend more energy on who is most oppressed than we spend on how to be free in this current world. Whatever Womanists decide about coalition building, we must do so without compromising our commitments to our communities of accountability, or better, without privileging the guild to the detriment of our communities or our health. We must not diminish our own scholarship, acquiescing to some form of coalition building that calls for an amalgamation of “liberations” that hides our concerns within larger concerns.

I am deeply aware that any affinity group could make these same arguments for themselves, and along the same schema, and perhaps that is the call for us all. How do we, as Rev. Wilson calls for, find a “sense of the commonalities of our struggles”?¹¹ What is our Venn diagram, those points of commonalities that also recognizes the gifts of our differences?

How do we amplify our voices in a way that is a symphony and not a cacophony, so that we are not the only ones listening to us? How do we honor the need for affinity conversations, while refusing to bunker down and not engage others in common cause? How do we agree upon common goals, while acknowledging that different affinity groups may need us only to affirm and support their goals in the spirit of “none of us is free until all of us are free”? These questions are what I bring to the conversation. I also bring my hope that we will find some way forward.

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3. Dorothea Erbele-Küster: Cultivating Relationships in the Face of the Other

The invitation to the panel by Susanne Scholz challenged me to take up a stance while looking for bonds with other women as responsibility implies the relational tie to others. It has been first of all an act of cultivating relationships. This hints to my main argument: We must recognize our own standpoint and social location while facing the other. This seems crucial in this neoliberal age which ignores differences under the guise of global consumerism and capitalism. My tripartite statement as European Old Testament scholar is informed by my exegetical work, my teaching in different languages and settings as well as my intercultural and interreligious encounters. It is the encounter on the panel which pushes me to disclose my links to neoliberal structures and to think last but not least about my European context; likewise, the encounter confronts me with my whiteness.

Gender Trouble and Justice as Intrinsic to the Biblical Tradition and the European Heritage

These days when clear-cut answers and homogenous positions become compelling it is

important to highlight the multivoiced Jewish-Christian tradition which though promotes justice. This is the underlining principle of a recent intergenerational ecumenical translation project within the German speaking research community I have been participating in: *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*.¹² It is the first inclusive German Bible translation. At the same time, it is highly committed to the Jewish rootedness of the scriptures and post-Auschwitz theology. The name of the Bible translation could be paraphrased as a Bible which promotes justice as the translation tried to foster justice as a relational concept: in terms of gender and social justice. *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* has stirred up the discourse and caused (gender) trouble. The panel stimulates me to commemorate this with others. This indebtedness to the Jewish-Christian dialogue of the translation project is due to the German and European background. I write this statement shortly after Jom Kippur, the day of reconciliation, which has been violated by a deadly attack in Halle/Germany (9th of October 2019). In his open statement the shooter intermingled antifeminism and antisemitism. Facing the new rise of Anti-Semitism and hate speech we need to decipher it and cultivate a counter-language and memory.

Rereading Shared and Contested Traditions on Trauma

The Sarah-Hagar tradition is a prominent example of a common heritage which give rise to contests and may provide us likewise with tools for cultivating bonds. My rereadings of the story go back and forth between facing the other while trying to find my own position. It is a hermeneutical and existential struggle which asks for a critique of oppression and harmful readings of the story. During my studies in the 1990ies we were empowered by Irmtraud Fischer's *Die Erzeltern Israels* as we discovered Sarah's role as matriarch over against Abraham, the patriarch.¹³ When I got to know the Mexican theologian Elsa Tamez and her interpretation of this story¹⁴ I had to realize how my reading was restricted by my European middle class context. Nevertheless, I have often sensed likewise the inclination to identify with Hagar, the Egyptian slave, the mother of Ismael. Years later when I presented the interpretation of Elsa Tamez in a Jewish-Christian study group, one of the Jewish colleagues felt offended and defended Sarah while stressing Hagar did wrong. Then in a Dutch-Indonesian Christian Muslim encounter, I myself ended up lifting the Jewish voice of Sarah. Hagar in this setting no longer belonged to my Christian tradition alone; the Muslim woman next to me identified with her. These struggles are crucial to the issue of the panel. Neoliberalism avoids taking up stances. This is dangerous as it does not face conflicts and

hence is not provided with hermeneutical and critical tools to react to violence and racism with a counter-discourse.

The authoritarian age implies that there is one single perspective or authority. However, this is not the case as the Sarah-Hagar tradition shows us. We have to cultivate joint readings of this story even if we contest in our readings. In my readings I try to build bridges between post-colonial hermeneutics and the Jewish-Christian encounters.¹⁵ A student of mine, Lena Moeller, gave the Hagar story a new twist in her master thesis while reading Hagar in the context of the European refugee crisis and modern slave trade in Africa. She combined impulses from divergent earlier readings, namely womanist perspectives such as Dolores Williams, Renita Weems and the literary critical voice of Irmtraud Fischer. This gives hope amidst the (neo)liberal fatigue. Still, the question is open about the way and the possibility to read as Sarah together with Hagar in the wilderness. It seems only viable if Sarah confesses! In a recent Trauma conference,¹⁶ which I have been co-organizing, we discussed the relation between victim and perpetrator. I argued that German speaking theologians while addressing the role of the perpetrator stress the issue of reconciliation. However, are we willing to confront the trauma, we as Europeans, have inflicted and are inflicting on others? Indeed, Sara has to confess and to abstain from going on privatizing water and drinking water bottled by capitalist global companies.¹⁷ It is time that she learns from the survival strategies of Hagar in the wilderness.

Cultivating Recognition of the Other and Turning Vulnerability into Strength

My concluding point deals with the recognition of the other, of ourselves, hence of our human vulnerability as expressed in the command to love the other as yourself in Leviticus 19. The recognition of oneself includes the recognition of the other. Love serves as a means for it. To love the other as yourself hints to the interdependency of the relation to ourselves to our relation to the other becomes obvious. Judith Butler describes this interconnectedness between the recognition of oneself and the other as follows:

When we recognize another, or when we ask for recognition for ourselves, we are not asking for an Other to see us as we are, as we already are, as we always been, as we were constituted prior to the encounter itself. Instead, in the asking, in the petition, we have already become something new, since we are constituted by virtue of address, a need and desire for the Other.¹⁸

I consider this ongoing process to recognize one another as a strong habitus of resistance to neoliberalism. We make us vulnerable in the process of recognition through the other. As a single subject vulnerability becomes weakness in an authoritarian age, however, if vulnerability is linked to the recognition of the other in compassion this may turn into our strength.

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4. Susan E. Haddox: A Sense of *Ha'Olam*

Time, and how we conceive of it, is important for how we nurture relationships in these neo-liberal authoritarian times. Qoheleth 3:11 offers some helpful perspective on the matter. It reads: “[God] has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, [God] has put a sense of *ha'olam* in their minds, but they cannot find out what God is doing from beginning to end.” The key term *ha'olam* in this passage is difficult to translate.¹⁹ *Olam* can refer to the distant past, the distant future, the age, or eternity. For the purposes of these comments, I am playing with the translation “the eternal present.” Qoheleth makes the point that although human beings have limited understanding, we have the sense of a larger picture. We have a concept of time that extends beyond our own existence backward and forward, but we have no control of what happens beyond us. What we see of the past and future serves to remind us of the transience of our efforts, but we still seek meaning. Using Qoheleth, I will raise three issues about time. The first is the way we construct and conceive of time. The second is who we include in that construction of time. The third is how these ideas of time might apply as we work toward just and equitable relationships. Each of these issues will needfully be skeletal in form, as the construction of time in this panel is short, but I hope they cultivate thought.

Although we all experience time, the way human cultures think about and perceive it varies considerably. In our neo-liberal culture, time is linear and, usually, urgent. Time is an arrow, we often think, that moves forward and not backward, and can easily be lost. We divide time into regularized segments: millennia, centuries, years, months, days, hours, minutes, seconds, milliseconds, nanoseconds...the divisions get smaller every year as we find ways to measure smaller and smaller segments. We talk about time slipping away, seconds ticking by. We often equate time with productivity and money. Time is money, we say. We “spend” time. We “waste” time. Time is a commodity in this neo-liberal age, just like everything else.

This, of course, is not the only way to construct time. The classes I teach on negotiating diversity repeatedly touch on the issue. In Anne Fadiman’s book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, now a classic for training in cross-cultural medicine, one of the many conflicts that the featured Hmong family faces with western medicine and culture is the idea of time.²⁰ Traditional Hmong village life oriented time to the rhythms of the natural and agricultural world, to cockcrow and pig-feeding time, to rice planting and harvesting, not to artificial divisions like hours and years. Time is ordered around events, not numbers. Similarly in Kent Nerburn’s *Neither Wolf Nor Dog*, Lakota elder Dan criticizes western historians for always wanting to confine time to numbered years and what was written, rather than living in a more mythic sense of time, in which the past and the present are not strictly separated.²¹ Dan notes that Christians make an exception for talking about Jesus, who is not relegated to the past. Thus, my first point is that as we cultivate relationships, we should think about how we are constructing time. Is time yet another commodity for which we compete, or does it reflect an organic reality or even mythic space in which we can recognize each other?

The second point is who counts in time. I recently heard a lecture by trans poet Cameron Awkward-Rich, who, in addition to writing poetry, is working on documenting the presence of trans persons in news accounts at the turn of the 20th century. He made the comment that not only have trans people been written out of the past, appearing only in the context of violence, either as victims of crime or in arrest records for gender transgression, but those who are recognized, even often today, are labeled as being ahead of their time. In this way, not only are trans people erased from the past, but also from the present, and are instead pushed into the future. On the same day as the lecture, I read an interview with David Treuer, author of *Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*, who wrote the book as a counter to Dee Brown’s famous *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, because he felt that the latter confined Native

American culture to the past, denying the validity of the peoples and cultures still existing.²² Both cases deny people's existence and value in the present. Qoheleth comes to the conclusion that the present is what matters – the past is already forgotten, the future is out of our control, so the present is the only time we can find meaning. Yet that present is not a narrow, agnostic period, but the eternal present, imbued with connection to the past and future. So the second point is – who do we include, or exclude, in our conception of the present?

The third point stems from the first two, applying those thoughts to our cultivation of relationships. In her web article, “White Women Doing White Supremacy in Nonprofit Culture,” Heather Laine Talley writes: “Women have inherited patriarchal, capitalist models of leadership. A focus on growing, expanding, or working towards an ambitious vision often trumps what is happening in the present moment.”²³ Similar to the way that Awkward-Rich described trans people as being pushed out of the present into some not-yet-realized inclusive future, Talley notes that neo-liberal attitudes toward time and work, pushing for progress and focusing on the future, further exclude those already marginalized in the present. Such a focus often undermines the cultivation of those very relationships that are necessary to bring a better future into existence. So, the third point is that relationships, especially productive feminist, womanist, and queer relationships, cannot be governed by neo-liberal concepts of time. Such concepts subjugate full personhood to an abstract idea of progress and product. They value doing over being and impede the hard and necessary work of recognizing individuals and negotiating difference.

In conclusion, having a sense of *ha'olam* as the eternal present – a moment outside of the urgent, commodified, linear, segmented neo-liberal age – can provide a space where we can see, hear, be present with, and respond to other people, especially across difference, to create a more just and inclusive present. We may, perhaps, read a little further in Qoheleth and cultivate those relationships by eating, drinking, and taking pleasure together in our common toil.

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5. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan: Ruminating on the Color Purple. Womanist Engagement in the Time of 46-1 in the Oval

The invitation to engage the topic “Cultivating Womanist, Feminist, and Queer Relationships in this Neoliberal-Authoritarian Age,” with an amazing plethora of distinguished scholars/activists/pedagogues, captured the attention of my poetic/musical self. In wondering about the meaning of the topic, I shifted between baroque counterpoint, symphonic aesthetics, jazz riffs, and hip-hop rap, to soulful R&B gospel readings, and blues lament of “clear and present dangers”; from global unrest and massive oppression, to the onslaught of intensified global environmental disruption, and more innocent black and brown bodies being persecuted by militarized police, and in between. The poet won out with alliteration as I anchor my thoughts amidst intrigue, interdisciplinarity, instigation, and improvisation. Engaging the ambiguity, breath, and depth of the topic, my remarks focus on listening to myself and others, and to raise questions, as we work for justice – pedagogues/professors/performers engaged in praxis, using a womanist lens.

Intrigue

A select few of us have opportunities to engage in ancient texts and apply modern twists. When facing new situations, one point of departure is intrigue – what is prominent? Where can I participate? Who speaks, and what power does the narrator have? How do we use these texts? Which texts remain hidden? In a world of global tension rife with white supremacist patriarchal misogyny, which affects everything from market economies to leadership in the academy and faith communities, how can women work together? Do we self-destruct from inside? Why do so many autoimmune diseases, cancers, and premature deaths occur in the academy? How do female scholars not scapegoat each other when it comes to accessing authority and having an “in” with the “good old boys”? Historically black studies problematized race; feminist studies dealt with sexism for middle-class white women. How can womanism lift the multivariate levels of oppression, including elitism, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and ageism, without being co-opted by other feminists, by each other? Even today, sometimes colleagues from different spaces do not get the depths of white supremacist patriarchal misogyny. Too often, female scholars embrace patriarchal misogynistic tendencies of their doctor fathers. Few white female scholars understand the

profoundly ingrained attributes of white privilege and how they benefit, as relates to Robin DiAngelo's notion of white fragility: the shame and guilt that arises because of seeing whiteness as normative. From a point of intrigue, how can students, other faculty, and the world not replicate the pathology of white privilege? How can our religious educational systems come to understand that mass incarceration, war on drugs, gentrification, etc., are advanced forms of lynching and denying life for black and brown bodies? How do white middle-class women scholars not ghettoize younger white female scholars and women of color scholars/activists/pedagogues?

Interdisciplinarity

The gifts of higher education provide us access to tools of creative thinking across disciplines, geographies, politics, and faith. Technology has escalated our capacities for collaboration and the use of a variety of media in our work. What difference does it make when we are using multiple voices as we wrestle with the ancient stories of women, and how we make our scholarship and teaching relevant today? How does personal piety, or lack thereof, our stories, fluid methodologies, and changing seasons of interest shape how we engage each other as professionals? How do we need to navigate the traditions and theories we embraced during doctoral studies as we move forward in creating our theories and methods? How do faith traditions and our demographics, including any unresolved personal and communal hurt and pain forge how we see, hear, think, and create?

Instigation

When it comes to shopping my middle name is bargain; when it comes to higher education, research, teaching, collaborating, and mentoring future leaders, my point of departure is instigation. What new techniques and types of collaborations can we embrace? Why do people teach the way they teach and do research? How do we engage tradition without smothering in the realities of dead white men? How do we reclaim those traditions that perhaps have never seen the light of day in the academy? How do we unpack the various myths about strong black women, the Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire imageries, that of black women as whores and prostitutes, and those of black men as studs - remnants from the days of enslavement to work together with respect? Thus, if we recognize that Jesus never spoke

English, had kinky hair, and may have hung out with sages from Africa and Asia in preparation for his ministry, how does that affect how we read and teach texts, and how does that affect how we embrace difference, injustice, and deal with our hidden fears of each other? Denial is not a river in Egypt.

Improvisation

Finally, improvisation allows for creativity and spontaneity, wherein we can explore old stories in new ways. We can see the irony and reversals, recognizing who was at the table, and who remains disrespected despite having the credentials, the publications, and academic street cred. Improvisation allows us to see all of our biases, our fear around particular types of embodiment, our jealousies, and the negation of others. Too frequently, we are in solidarity as long as it is popular and there is no conflict. The moment challenges arise, often, we will not stand up for justice, not if it costs us. Perhaps conversations like these can spark curiosity within us all that will allow true, organic change to occur. At the end of the day, we all bleed red; most of us have 23 pairs of chromosomes, and on some level want to love and be loved. What would such an academy of womanist, feminists, and queer scholar/practitioners who refuse to be oppressive, to be catty, and fear-based look like? That for almost three decades, Tina Pippin and I have engaged such liberationist energies, from co-editing a *Semeia* volume on biblical mothers and their children to mentoring a feminist/womanist biblical duo, at their invitation, states that love and integrity can come together in womanist/feminists realities.

Cheryl Kirk-Duggan moves at various intersections, from professor and poet to preacher, performer, and polyhistor. Dr. Kirk-Duggan is Professor of Religion, Shaw University Divinity School, Shaw University, Raleigh, NC, USA.

6. Angela N. Parker and Karri L. Whipple: The Challenges of Feminist-Womanist-Queer Relationality

Drs. Angela N. Parker and Karri L. Whipple chronicle their journey from womanist and feminist Ph.D. students to professors modeling a committed womanist (Parker) and queer white feminist (Whipple) dialogical relationship. The following is their dialogue sharing the

personal and scholarly benefits of their relationship as well as the numerous obstacles that have tried to thwart the partnership.

Developing Feminist-Womanist-Queer Relationality and Dialogue

Whipple: The story of how our relationship developed into six years of committed womanist-queer white feminist dialogue begins in our New Testament doctoral program. Our initial scholarly aims were not focused on womanist-feminist dialogue. Instead, crisis brought us together.

Parker: Conflict arose out of the 2012 Womanist Legends Conference that we both attended. As often happens in institutional settings, the intersection of institutional power and white feminism generates violence against black women. As women in the Union Theological Seminary (NYC) Ph.D. program, we experienced firsthand the toxicity of this intersection. We took leadership roles within the student body that led us to reflect on what social justice work meant in our institutional work. This experience then led us to transition the same principles and ideals into our scholarly work. Because of our roles in leadership, it became clear that we could not successfully complete our doctoral programs at that institution. Karri and I both transferred to other schools to our academic, personal, and financial detriment. This experience solidified our personal and academic relationship.

On an academic level, we sought out the other scholars who modeled the type of dialogical work that we desired to accomplish. We sought the counsel of Drs. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan and Tina Pippin. We engaged the work of Drs. Joanne Terrell and Traci West. We re-read the letters between Drs. Katie Cannon and Carter Heyward to engage the visions of the first generation of womanists and feminists. With the wisdom and guidance of these foremothers, we ventured into our intentional dialogues.

Whipple: These dialogues and our relationship would not have been possible without the mentorship of Drs. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan and Tina Pippin. After we both had left Union, we reached out to Drs. Kirk-Duggan and Pippin. We shared our story with them at a Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting and they lovingly placed us under their wings. They began to guide us not only in the process of womanist-feminist dialogue, but of true relationality.

Dr. Pippin warned us that the work we endeavored to do would be met with constant opposition. This opposition would not only come from institutions, but from other feminists

and womanists because our relationship would be viewed as a threat. While growing in awareness of external challenges, she also called on us to interrogate our own power and positionality in our relationship. A particularly poignant moment for me was when Dr. Pippin turned to me and said: “Remember you are always the oppressor.” Regardless of our different positions in life and the academy, my whiteness would always produce access to power and resources not regularly afforded to my womanist friend and colleague. Relationships require this level of awareness and honesty about race, power, and privilege to grow.

Parker: In essence, we realized how the willingness to put our bodies on the line for one another brought us into relationality. It forged levels of trust that brought us together personally and developed our proclivity to do womanist and feminist dialogue that the academy desperately needs to advance scholarship. Trust issues continue to be obstacles against developing white feminists, womanists, and queer conversations in the academy. This work is not possible if we are not vulnerable with one another, do not trust one another, and refuse to have honest and hard conversations about race, power, and gender/sexuality with one another.

The Process of Creating Dialogues

Whipple: From the beginning, our process was a fully relational endeavor. It was not merely an academic exercise in which each person writes certain sections of a paper and then they are spliced together. Instead, it embraced the need for embodied, contextualized scholarly creativity.

Parker: For the first four years of our process, I lived on the West Coast and felt the pressure to get my body back to the East Coast. Since sitting in a room together was physically difficult, we would start a Google doc that would serve as a dumping ground for our ideas even if much of what landed in the Google doc did not land in our final product. While often having the best intention for collaborative writing via Google docs, we realized that the best process was for us to be present physically with one another in the writing process. What we find is that co-writing in one document while sitting in a shared space, becomes essential in our writing process.

Whipple: This process of co-writing requires openness and vulnerability – along with a lot of laughter. It insists that I do not hijack Angela’s emotions with white women’s tears and Angela does not dominate using cis het perspectives. While this process is sacred and

generative, it is not one that is generally endorsed. In fact, at times, it is questioned or disrupted by the other communities we dialogue with in the academy.

Challenges to Dialogue and Relationality

Parker: One challenge to dialogue and relationality is the individualistic nature of the academy. Both womanists and white feminists can perpetuate the systems that uplift the need to fall neatly into lineages that wield access to power. These lineages tend to promote insular individualism that only supports the replication of the same old tired knowledge production. As scholars we tend to dialogue only with those who look and think as we do. If a scholar attempts to step outside of those marked conversational boundaries, there is suspicion and subtle disciplinary action to bring her back in line. For certain scholars who police the boundary lines, oftentimes junior academics are not perceived as “black” enough or “white” enough and thereby not performing their scholarship in “acceptable” ways.

Whipple: We also need to say a word about those in positions of institutional power. There is an issue of white male power that womanists and feminists of many origins have discussed at length. But the issue of white female abuses of power amongst those in leadership requires further attention. As white women move into more spaces of institutional authority, they tend to replicate white, patriarchal, cishet modes of wielding power and privilege. This leads to white women policing and exploiting black and brown women to bolster their own positionality and personal image. In essence, black and brown women have to be “safe” enough for inclusion in the power structures while remaining under the control of white women’s privilege and tears.

Parker: Acknowledging and working to disrupt these power structures influences our dialogical biblical interpretations. Our partnership is a reorientation of how interpretations are crafted. We have to move from the idea of the individual objective interpretation to a willingness to live in the tension of multiplicity in our interpretations.

Whipple: When we create interpretations, the aim is not to create one synthesized interpretation. Instead, we each maintain our own perspectives and bring them into conversation, allowing space for each to exist in their own right. This allows us to examine how our divergent interpretations can actually generate broader liberative possibilities within the text.

Parker: We do not seek a “kumbaya” moment. Instead, we hold our interpretations and see

them as the biblical texts – living. We remain accountable to ourselves and our communities as well as to one another. Our commitments force our dialogues out of the ivory towers and into a variety of communities.

Whipple: Our dialogues become sites of resistance, liberation, and creativity. They seek to disrupt boundaries of traditional white feminist dialogical practices, to generate awareness of racially-based power dynamics, and encourage us to listen to one another and the world around us. Our experience with this work has taught us about our own limitations and the need to bring others into conversation with us. Our hope is that others join the dialogue.

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Karri L. Whipple is Faculty Fellow of Global Works and Society at New York University Liberal Studies in New York, New York, USA. Her research focuses on queer feminist interpretation responding to violence, trauma, and the New Testament.

7. Yael Shemesh: Feminist Biblical Research: Different Ways – A Common Purpose

I welcome this initiative of unifying forces among various denominations in the feminist camp stemming from the understanding that we all share a common goal.

Since I am an Orthodox Jew, I was probably invited to this panel as a conservative voice, but I will reveal to you that in a certain sense I also represent a radical voice, as I am an eco-feminist who believes that there is a link between feminism and animal rights.

Let us begin on the conservative side. In my article “Directions in Jewish Feminist Bible Study” (*Currents in Biblical Research* 14,3 [2016], 372–406) I presented two opposing directions in feminist Bible research. The first direction, which I named “Militant Feminist Scholarship,” goes against the ancient text which is incompatible with modern ideas such as gender equality. The intention of scholars belonging to this school of thought is to undermine the authority of the Bible as a culturally-formative text. The other direction, which I termed “Mediating Feminist Scholarship,” seeks to build a bridge between the ancient text and

modernist feminist ideology by concentrating on the positive aspects of the Bible regarding women, perhaps in the hope that what one concentrates on will increase and proliferate. An exegete of this direction is Phyllis Trible (“Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” in Elizabeth Koltun, ed., *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, Schocken, 1976, pp. 217–240; eadem, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Fortress Press, 1978).

As for my personal stance toward the Bible, with all my appreciation of it as a culturally-formative text, and with all my admiration for the literary and ethical peaks which it achieves, I cannot deny that the Bible includes some passages that arouse my intense resistance, such as the imperative to destroy the seven nations; the imperative to kill men involved in same-sex relationships; animal exploitation for worship and personal purposes; and, of course, women's social and legal inferiority. Even though I am an Orthodox Jew, I am not willing to subordinate my worldview to anything and everything that is written in the Bible, and to say that evil is good and that darkness is light (see Isaiah 5:20).

Naturally, religious feminists who regard the Bible with respect, whether Jewish or Christian, will tend toward the mediating direction, although obviously there is no dichotomous division here. I too prefer to emphasize that the Bible is not misogynistic, that is, the Bible does not describe women as inferior to men morally or intellectually, although it is, of course, patriarchal and androcentric, and depicts women as socially and legally inferior.

For example, Trible and others emphasize that the image of Eve in Genesis is not necessarily a negative one, of a woman who has inflicted a terrible disaster on humanity, but rather her character has positive sides: a desire to know, curiosity in the positive sense, independence, and readiness to take risks. The sin results not only in the traumatic expulsion from the Garden of Eden but also in gaining independence, the discernment between good and evil, and possibly, according to certain opinions, also in sexual relations and the ability to procreate.

I wish to make it clear that I fully understand the rationale of the militant feminist research, and under different life circumstances I might have found my place among its ranks. But as a religious woman teaching Bible at Bar-Ilan University, which is a religious university, and as the Director of the “Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism,” it seems to me that not only for my mental health is it preferable for me to focus on the mediating direction, but that, by so doing, I have a better chance to change things for the better from within.

This is also exactly how I feel about my activism on behalf of animals, and so now I

will move to the more radical voice which I represent as well. I am a vegetarian since the age of 5, I realized then that meat and fish are animals who are killed. I became a vegan twenty-six years ago and have been active for animal rights for decades. In the struggle for animal rights I find the same opposing directions with regard to the Bible: there are those who blame the Hebrew Bible for the speciesism of Western culture and its terrible attitude toward animals. This is a legitimate claim, but as someone who conducts conversations with rabbis and religious Knesset members on issues related to the pain inflicted on animals in Israel (such as geese fattening which was done in the past but is prohibited now, the breeding conditions of laying hens, and the live transports of cattle and sheep from Australia) I am convinced that my contribution to this issue is more significant if I choose the opposite way of emphasizing compassion for animals in Judaism in general and in the Bible in particular. I emphasize the prohibition to hurt animals and the terrible suffering which is their lot in modern industries, suffering to an extent that our forefathers did not imagine. Of course, I also mention Judaism's plant-based diet originating in Genesis 1:29.

The reasons for my referral to the vegan agenda are:

1. As I have mentioned, I find similarities in terms of tactics between the vegan agenda and the feminist agenda when considering what should be emphasized: the negative or the positive references in the Bible on the issues at hand.
2. I believe that there is a correlation between feminism and veganism, and I also think that holistic feminism should strive for veganism.

In my view, the link between vegetarianism and feminist consciousness comes from a well-developed sense of justice and from one's uprising against discrimination and oppression. You may be upset by the implicit comparison between women and animals, but you should also remember that in the case of animals, the discrimination is, of course, much more severe, ending up in the wholesale murder of countless animals.

In my opinion, feminism should be part of a holistic worldview that does not ignore injustice toward any group of human beings or other sentient and sensitive beings. For example, since the dawn of the feminist movement there was a correlation between the struggle for women's rights and the struggle for the abolition of slavery. Elizabeth Cady Stanton represents this attitude. Many women in the feminist movement were also vegetarians (see Leah Leneman, "The awakened Instinct: Vegetarianism and the Women's Suffrage

Movement in Britain”, *Women’s History Review* 16,2 (1997), 271–287). I agree with Carol J. Adams’s eco-feminist theory as presented in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Bloomsbury Academic, 1990). It makes a strong connection between the meat-eating culture and the patriarchal exploitation of women and women’s bodies.

As a woman, I protest against exploiting the reproductive organs of laying hens and cows. From early childhood we are taught that the cow gives us milk. A lie! We rob her of her milk. First, we inseminate her artificially (isn't that rape?) to cause pregnancy which results in her producing milk. Immediately after birth, the cow’s offspring is stolen away from her while ignoring both the mother’s and the newborn’s painful mooing. All of this is done to gain control of her milk, which is intended for the calf and not for us. It seems to me that any ethical person, and particularly women of feminist consciousness, should rise up against such extreme exploitation of a mother’s body. I hope that my words will not be rejected just due to habit or due to profits that the human race has been making from this habit. May my words inspire thought and possibly bring about change.

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8. Davina C. Lopez: Cultivating Relationships. A Response

Thank you for organizing this conversation with this stellar group of colleagues, Susanne. I’ll keep this brief. As I read the contributions for this morning’s panel, I was moved and I am grateful. And as I think about this topic of cultivating relationships, I am struck by a current that runs throughout the panelists’ remarks: cultivating relationships through concern for the other. I am going to focus my response, then, on that issue. On the one hand, in our neoliberal authoritarian age, it might be possible to argue that, at least rhetorically, no one is “other” anymore. We live in a time when we can share anything we want with the world via social

media; where emergent biotechnologies can render our bodies more similar to each other and also to machines; where the fact of extreme weather brings us together; where we are encouraged to think of ourselves as one human family, beyond gender, beyond color, beyond labels; where the discourses of nationalism redescribe and reinscribe notions of bounded purity and universality. On the other hand, in our context virtually everyone is an individual, an-other of some sort, on the receiving end of divisive rhetoric and praxis, of using difference to form hierarchies, encouraged to turn away from all the others and focus on inward self-cultivation, encouraged to damage coalitions, encouraged to tease out and brand our differences so we can be more proficient and prosperous consumers of identity markers, so we can look and talk and act the part.

Aside from what our colleagues have raised here, I want to point out an important feature of neoliberal authoritarianism: the individualization and pathologization of injustice and oppression. I have been persuaded by Angela Davis's observations on this subtle discourse and how it plays out. Davis observes that neoliberal discourse highlights individual attitudes and acts of racism (for example) as the problem of those particular situations and those people's particular performances of identity and culture, rather than understanding racism as a complex of institutional and structural issues that might shape those situations in decisive ways.²⁴ So, in the United States at least, "racism," as a historically potent arena that denotes deeply rooted structural relations of power and privilege, is reconfigured as an individual identity issue (so, "racists"). Individuals are highlighted for their "garbage" attitudes and behaviors, for which they must "take responsibility." Meanwhile, how all of us people participate in the broader institutional dynamics that have authorized, normalized, and perpetuated such attitudes and behaviors go largely unaddressed, as if getting rid of individual racists will somehow end racism as a social structuring principle. Similarly, what used to be called "women's liberation" is now part of discourses about women's individual capacities; meanwhile, patriarchy and misogyny as pervasive structural issues are sidestepped. As the neoliberal age exists at the so-called "end of history," it has effectively mystified, if not obscured, the historical contingencies of identity formation, power relationships, and patterns of domination and oppression.

In the middle of all of this, I find myself thinking about some good old Marxist solidarity with a bit of twist. I am reminded of Karl Marx's buddy Friedrich Engels's prescient complaint about social Darwinism: that the struggle to compete for survival and social capital among humans was a terrible idea that would lead to a lack of flourishing

among people, animals, and the planet. I don't know about you. I have spent the last five days walking around what seems like a concentrated social Darwinist experiment around here at the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature meetings. I wonder what it would take to produce knowledge together without thinking about whose ideas will catch on more quickly, who will come up with the new fashionable method in biblical studies, who will get that book contract and/or lots and lots of mentions and retweets – while, as Tina Pippin has pointed out, the material conditions in which we conduct our labor are, to put it nicely, precarious – and so on and on.

In a Marxist framework, solidarity is a way to meet and support the stranger on the terms that the stranger sets. This sounds lovely and maybe a little quaint and is actually a little more complicated than it seems. As the base ethical obligation of workers' movements, solidarity necessitates support for all oppressed peoples and creatures on their terms. It differs from community in that it emphasizes the stranger and it differs from charity in that the terms are not determined or controlled by the giver. Solidarity is in direct contrast to competition between people. What is often downplayed or forgotten in discussions of solidarity in contemporary sloganeering is the idea that solidarity is not the end of caring for the other. It is, rather, only the beginning. Once solidarity is extended, it becomes a means to cultivate trust as best we can. In order for others to connect with each other and become radical subjects together, trust born of solidarity must serve as the foundation for resistant and probably subversive social bonds not based on or aligned with tradition, family, religion, nationality, and so on. And these different social bonds are totally necessary for doing society differently.

Thus, solidarity can lead to the active imagination about what a world truly predicated on open-eyed care for the other, a world that does not overindividualize and pit us in competition with each other, can look like. Along these lines I am taken with some ideas from the dusty old area of the history of religions, namely that there is no pure origin point for our present and therefore no way to return to a golden age or move forward through such a return; no way to forget the messy histories of structural oppression; no way to just buy a special drink, face mask, spandex girdle, or car that will fix us or return us to a more whole state. Maybe we have never been whole, maybe that is what we need to remember, maybe that solidarity out of brokenness is a starting point. In this way, I resonate with Antonio Gramsci's call to know one's self through compiling an inventory of the broken self-in-relation, though I share Julietta Singh's caution that this assemblage will not be enough even as it might give us

self-consciousness for the journey.²⁵

Finally, while neoliberalism is thought to be a new thing, it is worth remembering that it most certainly is not. I do not think it is an accident that the first use of neoliberalism was in the 1930s, as a way to reassert classical liberalism and combat the dangers of communist coalition-building at the time, particularly in the United States. This tells me that these solidarity relationships are not just a good idea, but a true threat. To this end, I also keep Emma Goldman's articulation of anarchy through solidarity in view. Let me quote:

“The general contention that Anarchists are opposed to organization, and hence stand for chaos, is absolutely groundless. True, we do not believe in the compulsory, arbitrary side of organization that would compel people of antagonistic tastes and interests into a body and hold them there by coercion. Organization as the result of natural blending of common interests, brought about through voluntary adhesion, Anarchists do not only not oppose, but believe in as the only possible basis of social life.... Indeed, only Anarchism makes non-authoritarian organization a reality, since it abolishes the existing antagonism between individuals and classes.”²⁶

May we all continue to extend to others, build trust, remember and honor brokenness, and do so anarchically or in non-authoritarian ways. I look forward to building on our time together with all of you.

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¹ Sandra Wilson, “‘Which Me Will Survive All These Liberations...’ on Being a Black Woman Episcopal Priest,” 130–137, in *Speaking of Faith: Global Perspectives on Women, Religion, and Social Change*, edited by Diana L. Eck and Devaki Jain (New Society Publishers, 1987).

² Around 24 minutes in, <https://podtail.com/podcast/onscript/nyasha-junior-an-introduction-to-womanist-biblical/>. Nyasha Junior notes that people identify her as a womanist because she wrote about it, but she is not. Nyasha Junior, *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation* (Westminster/John Knox, 2015). In the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in San Antonio (2016), she told the gathered scholars that she named the book “Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation” even though she does not address Womanist scholarship, and then only polemically, at page 96 of a 131-page book, “because I knew you all would buy it. It was a marketing tool.” The book’s back cover is affirmed by a black male scholar and a Womanist theologian, but no Womanist biblical scholar, of which there are several.

³ Mitzi Smith, ed., *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader* (Cascade Books, 2015) and several essays in a variety of collections, for example. Also, now Wilda Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Westminster/John Knox, 2017) and Mitzi Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation* (Cascade Books, 2018).

⁴ Fortress Press has a Womanist biblical series now that is edited by biblical scholars Gay Byron and Mitzi Smith.

⁵ For example, Emilie Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil (Black Religion/Womanist Thought/Social Justice)* (Palgrave/McMillan, 2007); Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Orbis Books, 1993); Katie Canon, Emilie Townes, and Angela Sim, *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader (Library of Theological Ethics)* (Westminster/John Knox, 2011), etc.

⁶ Wilson, “‘Which Me Will Survive,” 132.

⁷ I am aware that Darren Wilson was not convicted of murder, but non-conviction is not the same as “not guilty.”

⁸ Valerie Bridgeman, “Interpreting the Bible in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter: The Gideon Story and Scholarly Commitments,” 311–325, in *Second Wave Intertextuality and the Hebrew*

Bible, edited by Marianne Grohmann and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (SBL Press, 2019). A version of the essay was first presented in the Minoritized Criticism and Biblical Interpretation Section of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2017. I presented “‘A Long Ways from Home:’ Displacement, Lament, and Singing Protest in Psalm 137,” at the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament in Stellenbosch (2016), which was my earlier attempt to take seriously the conversations during that year. That essay was later published in a Festschrift for Dr. William “Bill” Bellinger in 2018 in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 44 (2017), 213–223.

⁹ Vincent Harding, “The Vocation of the Black Scholar and the Struggles of the Black Community,” in *Education and Black Struggle: Notes from the Colonized Word*, edited by the Institute of the Black World (Harvard Educational Review, 1974).

¹⁰ I was unable to determine where this term first appears, but Mary Pender Greene defines it as “The Oppression Olympics are an one-upmanship dynamic that can arise within debates amongst people who adhere to the ideological values of identity politics, intersectionality and social privilege” on her site, “Undoing Racism Resources,” <https://www.marypendergreene.com/bookshelf/oppression-olympics.php>. A Wikipedia article (not scholarly) notes the term appears in 1993 in an interview with Chicana feminist Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppression_Olympics.

¹¹ Wilson, “Which Me Will Survive,” 137.

¹² See <https://www.bibel-in-gerechter-sprache.de/> and http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/10_1/scholz.html.

¹³ Irmtraud Fischer, *Die Erzeltern Israels. Feministisch-theologische Studien zu Genesis 12-36*, BZAW 222 (De Gruyter, 1994).

¹⁴ Elza Tamez, “The Woman who Complicated the History of Salvation Threefold Oppression of Hagar,” in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women of the Third World*, edited by John S. Pobee and Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter (World Council of Churches/Geneva, 1986), 5–17.

¹⁵ Dorothea Erbele-Küster, “Towards a Poetical Ethics of Interreligious Reading in the Face of Sara and Hagar,” in *Muslim Christian Relations Observed. Comparative Studies from Indonesia and the Netherlands*, edited by Volker Küster and Robert Setio (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Leipzig, 2014), 281–297.

¹⁶ <http://www.ethikmainz.de/konferenz-alttestamentliche-exegese-im-lichte-der->

traumaforschung/.

¹⁷ I even belong to those privileged people who have access to clean water from the tube.

¹⁸ Judith Butler, “Violence, Mourning Politics,” in *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (De Gruyter, 2004), 19–49, 44.

¹⁹ Brian P. Gault, “A Reexamination of ‘Eternity’ in Ecclesiastes 3:11,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (2008), 39–57.

²⁰ Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997).

²¹ Kent Nerburn and Dan, *Neither Wolf nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder* (New World Library, 1994).

²² Lily Rothman, “*The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*. Author David Treuer on Why We Need to Change the Way Indian Stories Are Told,” *Time*, January 24, 2019,
<https://time.com/5511505/david-treuer-interview/>.

²³ Heather Laine Talley, “White Women Doing White Supremacy in Nonprofit Culture,” *Woke@Work*, Equity in the Center, October 2, 2019,
<https://www.wokeatwork.org/post/white-women-doing-white-supremacy-in-nonprofit-culture>.

²⁴ See Angela Y. Davis, “Recognizing Racism in the Era of Neoliberalism,” in *The Meaning of Freedom and Other Difficult Dialogues* (City Lights, 2009), 165–178.

²⁵ See Julietta Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You* (Punctum, 2018).

²⁶ Emma Goldman, *What I Believe* (New York World, 1908), 8.