

It's a  
**N**ew  
**D**ay

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A Lenten Journey  
with Sonia Sanchez



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THE KATIE GENEVA CANNON  
CENTER FOR WOMANIST LEADERSHIP

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# “We Gonna Do That”

## *A Virtual Gathering of the Lenten Guide in the Midst of COVID-19*

*As we face the realities of a global pandemic, I hear the echo of our beloved poet, teacher, author and activist, Dr. Sonia Sanchez, declaring these words from her poem, "It's A New Day" in her 1971 vinyl recording A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry:*

“WE GONNA DO THAT, WE GONNA COME TOGETHER AND BE TOGETHER AS ONE. BECAUSE IT BE ABOUT THAT, AT THIS TIME, AT THIS PLACE...”

As Christian Education evolves into Faith Formation, we come and be with God as an intergenerational -savory gumbo of possibilities, each generational ingredient bringing its unique flavor to the table. As many churches remain shuttered or limited in group interaction as a sanctuary or worship space, we are reminded by Jesus in Matthew 18:20 that "where two or three gather in his name, he will be there."

For many congregations who are now ZOOMing for bible study and worship services, this new virtual reality has become the norm. As our faith grows, we have seen ourselves muting and un-muting ourselves with either ease or "Oops I forgot to un-mute myself." Even though the Lenten Guide's lessons involve a teacher's toolkit of sorts, I invite you to allow creativity and innovation will also guide the facilitator and the participants in virtual sessions when necessary. The facilitator can either give the participants a list of items they will need for their individual toolkit for the lessons or provide the resources as a drive-by, pick-up option at their church; three-dimensional objects that were being used for the lesson can be presented as two-dimensional images or screenshots for virtual sessions.

Finally, as this Lenten curriculum model is inspired by the Nsaka Sunsum (Touching the Spirit) of the Akan people of Ghana, facilitators serve as "Jegnochs" or special people who have been tested in struggle or battle, demonstrated extraordinary and unusual fearlessness, and showed determination and courage in protecting your people. You will remind participants to engage what they have in front of them and actively listen, see, taste, touch, and hear each lesson. Facilitator Extraordinaire: "Work with what you have and trust that God will meet you in the process!" Virtual gatherings may be a new normal, but always remember that it is a new day, and God ordained it!





# Greetings!

*Drawing from the Black Southern colloquial expression (you actin' womanish), the word "womanist" is a dynamic term that describes a growing field of study and social movement that takes seriously the historical and contemporary experiences of Black women while advocating for the wholeness and wellbeing of all humanity.*

Union Presbyterian Seminary developed the Center for Womanist Leadership "to inspire, equip, connect and support Black women divinely motivated to serve as change makers in their community." This guiding statement reflects the visionary insight of the late Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, former Annie Scales Rogers Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Union, who, in 1974, became the first African-American woman to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

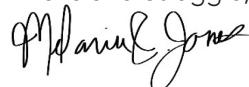
In 2019, Union Presbyterian Seminary Trustees named the Center in memory of Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon.

The Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership (KGCCWL) at Union Presbyterian Seminary recognizes the significance of centering Black women's scholarship and wisdom as viable sources and resources for theological education. The mission of KGCCWL is to nurture the soul of Black women as we cultivate pathways to whole communities. Of the six core initiatives of KGCCWL (i.e. womanist wellness, witness, wisdom, worship, wares, and works), the Womanist Worship tenet informs the liturgical arm of the Center. Womanist Worship honors and affirms the justice seeking, truth-telling, and wisdom-bearing gifts that Black women embody in preaching, music, dance, drama, and liturgical curation.

When I encounter faith communities, I hear a recurring inquiry, "How can womanism resource our worship and learning?" The vision of KGCCWL is to serve as a catalyst for "making womanism plain" as individuals and communities connect womanist theory and practice. One of the central tasks of the Womanist Worship initiative is to gather liturgical faith resources utilizing womanist methods and epistemologies to inform faith communities through free digital access.

It brings me great joy to launch this initiative of KGCCWL with the "It's A New Day Lenten Journey" curriculum inspired by the witness of the fierce poet and elder, Dr. Sonia Sanchez, and authored by womanist curator, Rev. Lisa Janes. Janes builds on the legacies of womanist thinkers such as Dr. Anne Streaty Wimberly's story-link method to connect the life of Sanchez with the narrative of Jesus, Dr. Itihari Toure's Nsaka Sunsum model as an Africentric approach to "touch the Spirit" in Christian education, and Dr. Katie Cannon's "Dance of Redemption" to inform the liberationist ethos of the curriculum. The brilliance of this Lenten Journey is that Janes reimagines the Lenten season as creative space to lean into the womanist wisdom of Sonia Sanchez and experience transformation. It is my prayer that teachers, participants, and faith communities will be empowered by this resource for many years to come.

In Love and Struggle,



Rev. Melanie C. Jones

Director, The Katie Geneva Cannon Center For Womanist Leadership



## “It’s A New Day”: A Lenten Journey with Sonia Sanchez

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

# Reverend Lisa Renea Janes

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Reverend Lisa R. Janes, a native of Richmond, Virginia, is the only child born to the late Burnett L. Janes. She became interested in art at the age of six, and being a visual artist became her lifelong quest. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1987 and a Master of Fine Arts in 1992 from Virginia Commonwealth University. Her art career led to positions in teaching art at the elementary school level. She also served as a museum educator at the Valentine Museum of Richmond and the Children's Museum of Richmond. She also taught art classes at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Elegba Folklore Society.

Rev. Janes accepted her call to the ministry and was licensed by First Union Baptist Church in 2005. She received her Master of Divinity at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, graduating Cum Laude in 2008. She was ordained to the gospel ministry in 2010 and served as Minister of Christian Education at Faith Community Baptist Church from 2011-2015. Currently, she serves as an Associate Pastor.

Rev. Janes is currently employed as a Circulation Supervisor at the William Smith Morton Library on the campus of Union Presbyterian Seminary. She is also working on a social media project on Instagram which is a return to her artist and teaching roots. This project, "godintheskin," is a blend of music, politics, social history, spirituality, and art. Her goal is also to complete a book based on her experiences on Instagram and how it is shaping her faith journey. Future goals also include the publication of the curriculum she produced as Minister of Christian Education at Faith Community Baptist Church.



# Introduction

*“Let the children come, let your mothers hear you laugh. Let the grown men come, let your wives and your children see you dance. Women I want you to weep for the living, for the dead, weep!”<sup>1</sup>*

In 2011, I became Minister of Christian Education at Faith Community Baptist Church, located in the east end of Richmond, Virginia. Three years earlier, in April 2008, I joined this congregation during my internship as a seminary student at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. The pastor and founding visionary of this church, which began in 1995, is the Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Gould-Champ. She was called by God and given a vision and mission to pastor in the midst of three public housing communities – Fairfield, Whitcomb and Creighton Courts. As I stepped into the mantle of leadership, our church moved from the standard curriculum to developing its own unique lesson plans. My pastor is forward-thinking and can truly be described as an evolutionary-revolutionary who is always thinking thousands of miles ahead while you have just walked one block. The greatest and most radical gift my pastor allowed me to do was to create curriculum for the church school, which was not on Sunday mornings, but on Tuesday nights.

It was also in 2011 that I began to develop curriculum ideas that blended the global, political, cultural, and historical of our most relevant times with the biblical text. I did not realize it at the time, but I was creating a clearing. A clearing is defined as an open area within a woodland that can be caused by avalanches, poor soils, or fire damage. If I could use my holy imagination, in the best sense of the African American tradition, a clearing is that space cut deep into the woods for our holy creativity where we leave the heat of the oppression that enslaves us and where we and God can breathe, dwell, and transform both the landscape and the inhabitants that dare to walk in it.

When I think about the development of my curriculum, the Holy Spirit reminded me of the character Baby Suggs and her sermon from the book, *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison. She was described as holy and was followed by every Black man, woman and child into the heart of the clearing when warm weather came. Baby Suggs, during the heat of a Saturday afternoon, sat in the clearing while the people waited in the midst of the trees. In many ways, the blank space on my iPad became my clearing. As I sat sometimes during the week, and on an occasional hot, Saturday afternoon, I waited for the inspiration to arrive and compose itself.

Inspired by the book, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*, by Dr. Anne Streaty Wimberly, I began to experiment by story-linking the lives of national and international leaders, singers, artists, activists and historians to the biblical text. They were innovative, fresh, out of the box ideas that God-shaped everything from the human brain, to the soul stories of Alice Walker, Paul Robeson, Fannie Lou Hamer, Louis Armstrong, Robert F. Kennedy, Harry Belafonte, the Freedom Riders, Nina Simone, Bill Withers, Pete Seeger, Mavis Staples, Bob Dylan, Curtis Mayfield, Jill Scott, Nelson Mandela and Maya Angelou.

Like a mighty rushing river, the ideas came day and night as the creative process danced freely in my brain.

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<sup>1</sup> Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. (New York: Knopf: Random House, 1987), 5.



Then a seismic shift changed the landscape of my life forever. In August 2014, as I completed my most monumental curriculum project ever, “Express Yourself and Take A Stand,” my mother died suddenly. As an only child and always her baby, I was shattered. I now had to exist in this world without her in the physical, and yet I knew that it was God that was nudging me through what the Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon beautifully calls “my labyrinth of grief.”

In 2015, I received a job promotion and became the Circulation Supervisor at the William Smith Morton Library on the Richmond campus at Union Presbyterian Seminary. Due to my new responsibilities, I decided to step down as Minister of Christian Education at my church. For a year I did not create any curriculum, and then I returned, assisting the incoming Director of the Christian Education Ministry at the time with my focus as a curriculum developer. The iPad, along with Pinterest, helped to shape my curriculum ideas. As a visual artist, for me these were not just lesson plans, but works of art. All the while I was looking at how to compile all these curriculum ideas into a package to be used for the wider church community. Finally, after many years of sitting in a digital green field, with a yield only to be harvested for my own church use, God plucked some of my curriculum corn out of the field before it became overripe.

Before her passing in August 2018, I spoke to the Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, the former Annie Scales Rogers Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Union Presbyterian Seminary, about my curriculum, and I shared with her the samples of all that I had developed. We spoke in passing about how it could be published. She knew like I knew that this was for a different church member in the pew that could sit still for a while but not for long. It was hard for me to fathom seeing this curriculum in the standard and conservative church curriculum publishing houses. After much time germinating in thought and in a dark wet/dry place, the seed finally germinated on October 18, 2019 when the Rev. Melanie Jones gave me an opportunity to develop this digital curriculum as a resource for faith communities through The Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership. I was so honored and somehow I knew that God had been preparing this day all along. All I had to do was remain obedient, committed, and faithful to the task at hand. The doors to the church were opened, the clearing invited me in, and I sat silently. The inspired ancestors and relevant ones of the twentieth and twenty-first century were there watching, and they knew when I was ready that I, like Baby Suggs in *Beloved*, “would put my stick down<sup>2</sup>” and declare that it’s a new day!

I dedicate this curriculum to these three women: my mother, Burnett L. Janes (1942-2014), who always supported and loved me in my creative confidence; to my pastor, the Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Gould-Champ, who gave me the space to create a sacred fire in the church; and to the Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon (1950-2018), a womanist theologian of the highest order who lovingly embraced my story, creativity and encouraged me to stand in my truth, value my voice, and bring forth a living document that would last beyond my time on earth.

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2 Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. (New York: Knopf: Random House, 1987),5.

# Preface

Lent is the forty-day period (or season) lasting from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. The forty days represent the time Jesus spent in the desert, enduring the temptation of Satan. Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a “mini-Easter” celebration of Jesus’s victory over sin and death. Lent is a time of preparation for Holy Week, which recalls the events linked to the Passion Week and culminates in Easter, the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, the focus of this season is penance which always points us to the grace of God.<sup>3</sup>

For many of us who have experienced the Lenten season of the Christian year, it has become a source of abstaining or taking away those things we delight or have succumbed to in our life walk such as chocolate, reruns of “Power,” cigarettes, reality TV, etc. As we move through this Lenten season of the Christian year of 2021, we are asked to put on and wear a new day, inspired by the work of poet and playwright Dr. Sonia Sanchez. Shortly after birth, this Birmingham, Alabama native faced the early death of her mother, and just a few years later, the untimely death of her grandmother, who had taken on the role of being Sanchez’s guardian. She faced life as a stutterer, and finally discovered her identity in the community of Harlem, New York as she emerged with a strong, full voice that was, in paraphrasing her poetic tone and language, “badddDDD, badder than bad!”

The goal of this Lenten journey is to not only introduce this important time in the Christian year as a creative process, but to also introduce the artistic genius of a powerful, relevant poet and wordsmith by the name of Dr. Sonia Sanchez. When I think of Dr. Sonia Sanchez, I think of the savory soup with the most powerful and spicy ingredients that will both warm your body and nourish your soul. Yes, it may even be a gumbo, but with Dr. Sanchez being vegetarian I will stick with a thick, spicy soup, maybe even a vegetable stew as a metaphor. As a poet, playwright, author, professor, and mother, Sanchez’s life and body of work is readily accessible in numerous published accounts and online resources. You may also find additional resources for further study at the end of this lesson plan.

Sonia Sanchez is an evolutionary-revolutionary, someone who breaks the mold on “what is, but does not mind their mold being broken for ‘what can be’ for growth and healing.” This is possibly one of the reasons she is so beloved in the hip-hop and spoken word communities.



<sup>3</sup> Patricia A Gould-Champ, *Through the Christian Year with Colors: Church School Teacher Training*. (Richmond: Faith Community Baptist Church, January 2011).



Sonia Sanchez is a warrior-woman of words, but she also was a pioneer in the halls of academia in Black Literature or what is now known as African American Literature. She created (after being initiated by her students) the first college course on the Black woman at the University of Pittsburgh in 1969. Sanchez came to what she called the "University of Pitt" after resigning her position as a college professor of Black Literature at San Francisco State University where she worked and started the first Black Studies program from 1967-1969. A Black revolution and a people's revolution were running free in America at that time, and those who participated in or who labored as midwives to these radical babies being born, simply had hell to pay. For Sanchez, this would result in a loss of employment, being blacklisted from receiving offers of new job positions, and even visits from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) which was prompted by her Black Literature course.

There is even this delightful story about that amazing, powerful and traumatic time to be Black in America, and being Sonia Sanchez. During Sanchez' time as a professor at San Francisco State University, FBI agents tried to get her landlord to evict her because of her "politics." They were unsuccessful. Sanchez was not evicted. She was even protected by a dog named Snow that had been given to her by her landlord. She began to love this revolutionary canine who stood in front of her as one of the FBI agents verbally harassed her. Sanchez promised to buy her new bodyguard a steak. Because she was an evolutionary-revolutionary, in the early days of her teaching career, Sanchez moved positions frequently. Like the finest sand, she made remarkable imprints and impressions everywhere she went. She lectured at several colleges and universities: Rutgers University (1970-71), Manhattan Community College (1971-73), and at Amherst College (1972-75), where she became the first African American woman to teach. In 1977, Sonia Sanchez began a much longer sojourn as a Professor of English at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She became the Laura H. Carnell Professor of English. at Temple University until her retirement in 1999. She continues to spread her love and poetic wisdom and power to prisons, libraries, workshops, classrooms, churches, and universities throughout the world, even outside the front porch of her home in Philadelphia. In the community of Germantown, she planted deeper roots as a mother, professor, and activist.

This daughter of Birmingham, who moved to Harlem, participated in each decade's rising movements: the American Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Nation of Islam, the Black Arts Movement, etc. Now at 86, she is still moving, and with each diminutive and beautiful step, she speaks truth to power. Dr. Sanchez gives us the charge, asking us to begin to answer the most relevant question of the twenty-first century, "What does it mean to be human?" In paraphrasing the words of our beautiful sister, queen mother, Poet Laureate of Philadelphia, "A-men, A-men, A-men, A-woman, A-woman, A-men....AAAAYEEE BABO (Praise God)."

# The Lesson Plan Units

*The lesson plan units for this curriculum, inspired by the Lenten season of the Christian year and the work of Dr. Sonia Sanchez, will consist of the following:*

In **PREPARATION • Lesson One & Lesson Two**: We will examine Jesus's baptism moment at the Jordan River with John and explore Sonia Sanchez through the use of a Japanese form of poetry known as haiku. We will also map out and investigate the five senses and even dig into those of Jesus and Sonia Sanchez. Even though we know that the presence of the Holy Spirit was there, we know that the humanity of Jesus was also there in that water, too.

In **TEMPTATION • Lesson Three & Lesson Four**: We get into the bare-bones facts of a true wilderness test when the water not only leaves our landscape, but our bodies and minds, too. What kind of things inhabit our minds and bodies when the water runs dry? I do, we do battle not only with the enemy known as the devil, Lucifer, Satan, but with ourselves as well. Like Jesus, we find Sonia Sanchez facing a similar test as she faces the desert wilderness of rejection by academia in her pursuit of truth and justice. *She do battle, we do battle, I do battle!*

In **REVELATION • Lesson Five & Lesson Six**: We emerge from a battlefield and discover who we be in the midst of the chaos, confusion, and demonic combativeness we have already faced. We must now, after being ordained by God, know that we have fought a good fight, but we must also now go home to the familiar and the unfamiliar and create radical holy moments.

Finally, in **ANTICIPATION • Lesson Seven**: We reach not only the sacred time for Christians known as Holy Week, but also the sacred time when we continue to proclaim resurrection power in our lives as God-realized beings.

## Course Objectives

- ❖ Participants will **explore** and learn about the season of Lent in the Christian year.
- ❖ Participants will **examine** both the life and poetry of Sonia Sanchez.
- ❖ Participants will **investigate** how the life and ministry of Jesus is intergenerational and crosses cultural borders.
- ❖ Participants will **correlate** Sonia Sanchez's use of poetry with the relevant issues of today's twenty-first century context.



## Course Methodology

The course methodology for this lesson is first inspired by the book, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* by Dr. Anne Streaty Wimberly. My focus has been on the story-linking process as defined by Dr. Wimberly as, “a process whereby we connect parts of our everyday stories with the Christian faith outside the Bible. In this process, we link with Bible stories by using them as mirrors through which we reflect critically on the liberation we have already found or are still seeking, as well as glean wisdom that guides our ongoing liberation efforts.”<sup>4</sup>

Next, the course methodology is also motivated by the Nsaka Sunsum (Touching the Spirit) curriculum model. I was introduced to and inspired by this curriculum model at the 2015 Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference. I was taking an African Centered Christian Education Worldview course taught by Dr. Itihari Y. Toure, Director of the Sankofa Center for Strategic Planning and Evaluation for the Interdenominational Theological Center. According to Dr. Wade Nobles, Professor Emeritus of Africana studies and Black psychology at San Francisco State University, Nsaka Sunsum is Twi (a language of the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa) or “Touching the Spirit” which is a revolutionary, educational process that realigns the educational intent, method, practices and cultural applications in the service of maximizing students’ educational potential. This African-centered teaching model and pedagogy has been created to help the teacher to connect deeply with the Spirit (God essence) of the learner and views teaching and learning as a “divine dance” between the life purpose and mission of both the teacher and the student. In Nsaka Sunsum, the best teachers are Jegnoch, or special people who have been tested in struggle or battle, demonstrated extraordinary and unusual fearlessness, shown determination and courage in protecting his/her people.<sup>5</sup>

The beautiful part of this model is that if the teacher allows themselves to be natural and flow in the learning model, ideas and seeds of wisdom will freely flow from the learner who becomes the teacher and the teacher who becomes the learner. This is known as “Divine Dancing” where the teacher moves among the students and creates and encourages active physical harmony in an intense and stimulating environment. Dancing in the classroom or sanctuary space of learning is seen in the pace of instruction. Instruction should be quick, spirited and lively. The teacher or leader in the learning experience can inform the participants that divine dancing is simply learning how to see God and the spirit of God in everything and anything we do.

## Course Overview

As you follow this Lenten journey, you will be engaging the Nsaka Sunsum teaching model:

**MASTERY** • Attaining a high level of skill, knowledge, technique, and proficiency regarding a subject.

**MAJESTY** • Seeing majesty within ourselves as an intrinsic power, authority, worth or value.

**MEMORY** • Connecting everything that we learn to the heart.

**MEANING** • Uncovering or discovering the deeper significance, importance, and relevance of the information and ideas representing learning.

<sup>4</sup> Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Revised edition. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Wade W. Nobles, Adeleke Nobles, and Zetha Chinaza. “Nsaka Sunsum (Touching the Spirit): A Pedagogy and Process of Black Educational Excellence,” *Multicultural Learning and Teaching* 6, no. 2 (2011).

*Our lesson plan units, inspired by the Nsaka Sunsum curriculum model, will involve the following:*



### UNIT 1 • Preparation: It's A New Day

Lesson One and Lesson Two will focus on *Igniting the Inner Genius*. Lessons should be filled with colorful, visual aids. This can consist of vibrant markers and journals to begin the stimulation of the participants' thoughts. These lessons should also include visual images of locations mentioned in the lesson, maps, online audio, and visual clips, photographs or images of persons or events that are a part of the lesson.



### UNIT 2 • Temptation: When We Come

Lesson Three and Lesson Four will focus on *Divine Dancing*. This involves the teacher moving among the participants. The teacher creates and encourages active physical harmony in an intense and stimulating environment. This pace of instruction should be quick, spirited, and lively. Movement along with audio/visual enhancements can be extremely helpful in assisting participants by giving them a backdrop that brings connectivity.



### UNIT 3 • Revelation: We Can Be

Lesson Five and Lesson Six will focus on *Learning Gumbo*. The spirit of the participants is "touched" by the teacher. This reinforces in the gathering space a passion for learning and a desire to know. The teacher mixes strong praise, high expectations, and continuous challenges. The teacher and the participants make connections among the physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural realms of their lives and why they are learning what they are learning. Emphasis is placed on making connections or correlation between the multiple worlds of the participants: home, university, church, family, employment, community, etc., and the usefulness of learning.



### UNIT 4 • Anticipation: Let Me Wear the Day

Lesson Seven will focus on *Expressive Personhood* where the teacher consciously integrates the participants' personal feelings, thoughts, and actions. The teacher openly encourages the distinctive learning styles and language of the participants. This can be achieved in the classroom or sanctuary space by stressing oral, aural, visual, tactile, and movement virtuosity. Participants are encouraged to speak and express themselves confidently. The classroom decor reflects the cultures of all the students in the room.



## The Teacher's Toolkit

*Every teacher needs a great toolkit like that of a carpenter, construction worker, etc. You are creating and building a new highway of learning. Even if there is an existing road, building or residence, you are new to the terrain and bringing a fresh, new perspective that is uniquely yours.*

The following is a list of course materials that you will need throughout the lesson. However, be prepared that as you journey through each lesson, you may be guided to add more to your toolkit.

### Course Materials

- 1 • Journals
- 2 • Computer and projector
- 3 • Whiteboards
- 4 • Large presentation paper
- 5 • Loose, colorful recycled paper for classroom tables (to be used for random notes/thoughts)
- 6 • Colored markers
- 7 • Colored pencils
- 8 • Pencils/erasers
- 9 • Sticky notes of all colors
- 10 • Use of audio/visual clips (i.e. YouTube)
- 11 • Artifacts (i.e. can include objects such as replicas of things found in the desert like bones, snakes, scorpions, etc.)
- 12 • CD player or Smart Speaker
- 13 • Holy Bible
- 14 • Worksheet for participants that can include synopsis, poems, and excerpts used for each lesson as well as critical questions
- 15 • Photographs of Sonia Sanchez (throughout the years)
- 16 • Images and photographs of the location focus in lesson
- 17 • Images and meaning of Adinkra symbols from Ghana, West Africa
- 18 • Large reproductions of images related to Holy Week
- 19 • Cushions or mats

It is important that teachers have a gathering space that is conducive to the use of the internet. Many of the sources used in this lesson will involve the use of YouTube or videos to introduce the participants to Sonia Sanchez. Like a great architect, work out your blueprint and plan accordingly for each lesson, reviewing both the teacher, participant and highlighted portions of each lesson. Most of all, have fun learning and creating as you and the participants engage this Lenten journey to prepare for a new day!

# Unit 1 – Lesson One

## “Preparation: It’s A New Day!”

**PRAYER:** *Thank you LORD for beginning our journey at the river, a place that symbolizes birth and transformation. Today we are going to learn how to do that, how to do that, how to do that! As we go to the next level and layer that is within us, that is within me, help me to learn how to breathe and wear both humility and strength as I begin a new day!*



TITLE

*We Gonna Do That*

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3:13-17

New Revised Standard Version

**SYNOPSIS:** In the first lesson for our Lenten journey, we find Jesus at the Jordan River, having just arrived from Galilee. He is amongst the crowd praying and waiting to be baptized. He is God’s son, who was not placed in a ritual pool separated from the others or in the twenty-first century context – he is not being immersed in a water-filtered jacuzzi. Jesus had to prepare and be prepared for God to show up. Like Jesus, we too, must follow the route that God has assigned for us.

As we story-link with Jesus, we also find that before she was Sonia Sanchez, she was Wilsonia Benita Driver, born on September 9, 1934, in Birmingham, Alabama. Sonia Sanchez’s mother died when Sonia was only one year old. As a young girl, she lived with relatives. Sonia was especially close to her grandmother, who in many ways, became her mother. Like Jesus, Sonia Sanchez would find herself both preparing and being prepared for the greatness of the moment ahead that would invoke “a new day.”

## TOOLKIT FOR LESSON ONE

# Igniting the Inner Genius

.....

*The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and begin Igniting the Inner Genius:*

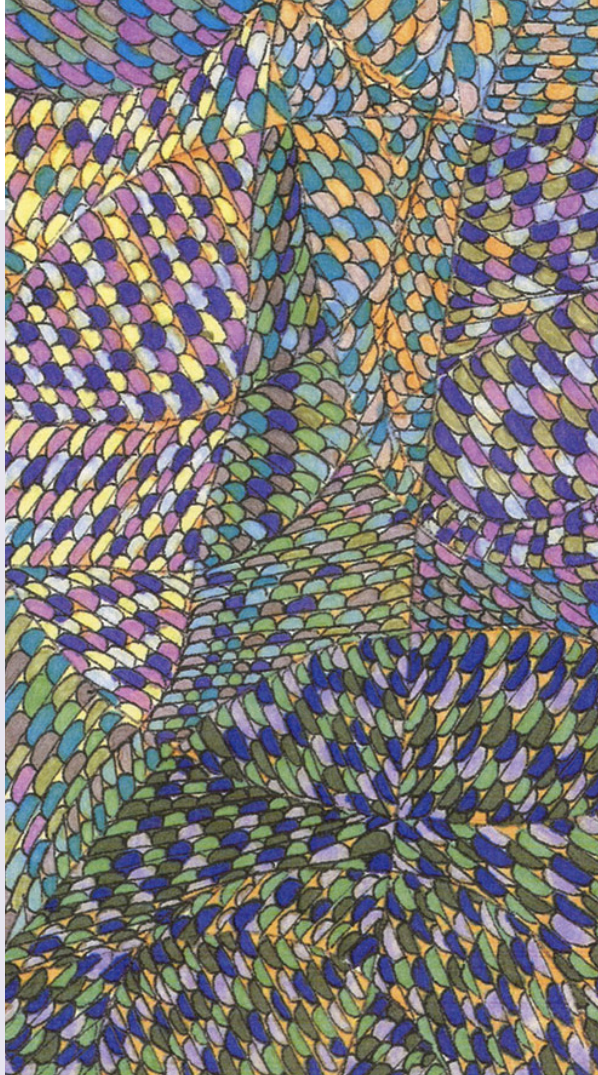
**TEACHER:** Begin with the YouTube clip by Sonia Sanchez, "It's A New Day." This comes from a 1971 album by Sanchez, *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*.<sup>6</sup> Before the audio/visual clip, the participants will be informed that as Sonia Sanchez reads aloud her poetry, they will need to write the words that speak to their "spirit." The teacher can also write words on the whiteboard that they are experiencing from the poem. The teacher may feel compelled to play this audio clip twice as led by the moment. Speak three times the first line of Sonia Sanchez's poem just played: "We gonna do that, we gonna do that, we gonna do that..." The participants will be asked to repeat that phrase three times as well.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will take three deep breaths and will be asked to unpack the moment. What are some of the words that spoke to their "spirit" as Sonia Sanchez spoke about a new day? How did it make them feel? Did it provoke memories for them? How did it inspire them culturally, spiritually, etc.? Did they recognize in her poem African American leaders, artists, writers and activists like Minister Louis Farrakhan, Fannie Lou Hamer, Gwendolyn Brooks, etc.?

**TEACHER:** Ask the participants about their familiarity with the life and poetry of Sonia Sanchez. The process of story-linking will be defined by the teacher to the participants based on Dr. Anne Streaty Wimberly's model as explained in the course methodology. The participants will be asked whether Jesus and Sonia Sanchez have similarities in terms of their life experiences. Once again, invoke the first line of Sonia Sanchez's poem, "We gonna do that." Read aloud Matthew 3:13-17 (New Revised Standard Version) to the participants.

Introduce the Lenten season of the Christian year and its significance in the life of the believer with its emphasis on preparation. Part One titled, *Dropping Some Knowledge*, will be distributed to each participant. A participant will be asked to read aloud the following information to begin the "Dropping Some Knowledge" exercise:

<sup>6</sup> Sonia Sanchez, "It's A New Day," on *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*. Folkways Records & Service Corporation 75-752813, 1971, vinyl recording.







## DROPPING SOME KNOWLEDGE: (PART ONE)

In our biblical text, we find Jesus getting ready to go to the next level. He knew that baptism was the next thing to do, and as such, he had to get ready. He was going to John the Baptist, the radical prophet in the wilderness of Judea, the locust and wild honey brother. And even though John the Baptist felt out of place, Jesus didn't. Is it just me or did you think about this, 'Could Jesus swim?' 'Did anyone else notice him out there as something out of the ordinary?' Finally, when God in the form of the Holy Spirit showed up, did it feel like a Neo and Morpheus moment from *The Matrix* (1999) movie?

Unlike Neo, Jesus did not have to choose either the red pill or the blue pill; he just got baptized and he knew that it was time. Isn't it amazing that even if we are anxious, a little bit uncertain, have no tangible evidence that proves the divine claim, God will enter into our bodies, hearts and minds, create a holy of holies, and then say 'Go!'

As we reflect on this moment, think about the Jordan River and the way it must have sounded, the people who were frantic and excited about being baptized by John the Baptist. What kind of smells were present? Were people cooking or preparing food while they waited or were they fasting? How were people dressed or undressed? Were the Pharisees there documenting and looking at the family members who were disgracing the commandments of God in their eyes? Now close your eyes and take a deep breath.

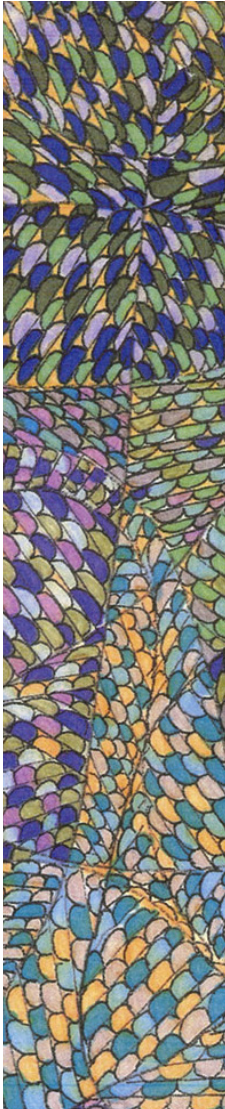
**TEACHER:** As the participants open their eyes, begin a relaxation exercise that shows images of the Jordan River by way of a PowerPoint image or photograph, as well as have the sound of a river playing for the participants to experience. Ask the participants to virtually stand in the Jordan River with Jesus for a moment. This can be a five-minute exercise. It is important for the participants to be able to process all that has been shared to ignite their inner genius. After this moment, have a participant read aloud the following poem (write it on the whiteboard) by Sonia Sanchez:

*Haiku [for you]*  
*love between us is*  
*speech and breath. loving you is*  
*a long river running.*<sup>6</sup>

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked the following questions: Do you see some correlation between the biblical text and the haiku by Sonia Sanchez? Are they both (Jesus and Sonia) preparing for something, like a new day?! The participants will be asked to re-read silently the Sonia Sanchez poem, "Haiku [for you]."

**TEACHER:** Ask a participant to once again read aloud the Sonia Sanchez poem, "Haiku [for you]" and then read the following information from *Dropping Some Knowledge*:





## DROPPING SOME KNOWLEDGE (PART TWO)

A haiku is a very short form of Japanese poetry, in three phrases. As we reflect on the “Haiku [for you]” by Sonia Sanchez, we cannot help but ponder on the following words: love, breath, speech and river. What comes to mind when you think about those four words? When Sonia Sanchez was one year old her mother died in child-birth. When she was six, her beloved grandmother died. As a result of this traumatic event, she would become a stutterer and it would be a mark upon her. Her condition caused her to read more and pay close attention to language and its sounds. In 1943 she moved to Harlem, New York and lived with her father, her sister and her new stepmother. While living in Harlem, Sonia Sanchez overcame her stuttering and excelled in school, finding her poetic voice.

As we story-link back to Jesus, we cannot help but think that Jesus’s earthly father, Joseph, has probably died during this time. He is not mentioned in the biblical text after Jesus’s infancy and early childhood. Jesus, like Sonia, is facing the stigma of coming from a community that had been labeled as no good. Jesus’ home community of Nazareth is referenced in the biblical text of John 1:43-46. Sonia Sanchez, who grew up in the shackles of segregation, racial terror and discrimination in Birmingham, would see first-hand the trauma facing Black people in the United States. Yet, in spite of this caustic reality, we are reminded by the life witness of Jesus and Sonia Sanchez, that the love of God is always with us as we move into our divine assignment toward greatness. The breath of the Holy Spirit confirms and affirms our call, the speech from God that proclaims us and finally the river that we all metaphorically carry within us, from our ancestral beginnings to our present-day realities invokes memory, meaning, and majesty as we move into the next level and season of our life.

**TEACHER:** Participants are placed in groups and are asked to reflect on all that they have heard and experienced from the lesson. Next in their groups, they are to explore Jesus’ moment at the Jordan and Sonia’s moment as they both prepare for greatness. As the participants undergo this Lenten journey, what are some of the lessons they are learning from Jesus and Sonia about the process of preparation? This can be a five-minute to seven-minute gathering of the groups. A representative from each group can share their thoughts either on the whiteboard (if it is big enough) or they can share them on large sheets of presentation paper. Teachers may want to incorporate white paper on their tables and have groups write and record their think-tank findings.

Present the Adinkra symbol DWENNIMMEN which means “Humility and Strength” to the participants. They will learn that these symbols from Ghana, West Africa are not only beautiful visual symbols that adorn clothing, but they also have a rich meaning in terms of wisdom. Ask the participants whether they are familiar with the Adinkra symbols and if so, what are their favorite symbols and why.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** As Lesson One ends the participants will be asked to keep their journals with them at all times during this Lenten journey exercise, even by their bedside to record (by writing and/or drawing)

any thoughts or feelings that they may experience while undergoing their Lenten journey.

**TEACHER:** Explain to the participants that after each lesson they will receive a worksheet that contains a takeaway (a reflection to ponder over), and critical questions (except for two of the lessons) to answer. Participants should be encouraged to feel free to respond to the takeaway in their journals or even write questions that come to mind about Lesson One. Before praying and closing out the lesson, each participant will receive the following takeaway as well as the critical questions.



## Takeaway

As Sonia Sanchez accepted her divine call to be a poet, her journey toward activism began. She would not only meet and befriend Malcolm X, but she would also involve her-self in the American Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement. Some of her first series of published poetry include *Homecoming* (1969) and *We Are A BaddDDD People* (1970). Her poetry was radical and affirmed with pride her identity as a Black American and a person of African descent. As she was preparing for the new day, Sonia Sanchez the revolutionary, like Jesus, would have to walk on, be it, do it! As a professor and educator, Sanchez was a leader in the effort to establish the discipline of Black Studies at the university level. In 1966, while teaching at San Francisco State University, she introduced Black Studies and Black Literature courses. In 1969, while teaching at the University of Pittsburgh, Sanchez was the first to create and teach a course discussing the Black Woman and Literature in the United States. It was a new platform for the study of race and a challenge to the institutional biases of American universities. Sonia Sanchez, like Jesus, was now undergoing a new baptism of thought and introspection.

# Critical Questions

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- 1 • As you continue to reflect, how does the process of preparation compare and contrast with Jesus and Sonia Sanchez? What are some of the things you need to prepare for as you begin your Lenten journey?

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- 2 • What are the memories of your baptism (before, during, and after)? If you have not been baptized, what are your experiences in witnessing the baptism of others?

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- 3 • How did the life experiences of Wilsonia Benita Driver prepare her for the life of poet, author, playwright, mother, professor and activist Sonia Sanchez? How have your past experiences prepared you as you take your Lenten journey?

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## “It’s A New Day”

We gonna do that. We gonna come together and be together as one. Because it be about that at this time, at this place, because whether we want to deal with it or not as I said once before, in my book for young brothers and sisters, I said it’s a new day, and it is a new day. If you check out how people be moving today, it is a new day. We’re not about going back to the 20’s, 30’s, 40’s 50’s or even the 60’s, it’s a new day and we’re in the 70’s and we gonna move on.

we gon be

we gon be some badddDDD people  
just you wait and see  
we gon be some badddDDD people  
just you wait and see.....<sup>7</sup>

**An excerpt of Sonia Sanchez (1971) *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry***

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<sup>7</sup> Sonia Sanchez, “It’s A New Day”, in *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*, Folkways Records & Service Corporation 75-752813, 1971, vinyl recording liner notes, 7.



# Unit 1 – Lesson Two

## “Preparation: It’s A New Day”

**PRAYER:** *Dear God, let me breathe and come to my senses as a new life unfolds amidst drama and chaos. For it is out of chaos that you, Mother and Father God, brought forth the heavens and the earth. Show me how to move and be, let me step boldly into the river that is surrounded by discontent and let me see, hear, taste, smell and touch on a new frequency; one that is shaped by a holy boldness that you are revealing to me.*



### TITLE

*Breathe and Come to Your Senses*

### SCRIPTURES

Matthew 3:1-12; Matthew 3:13-17

New Revised Standard Version

**SYNOPSIS:** For some of us, the text of Matthew 3:13-17 is so awe inspiring that it is easy to overlook the humanity of Jesus, John the Baptist, and the people waiting to be baptized in the wilderness of Judea. In this second lesson of the Lenten journey, we will explore the breath as well as the five senses: taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight. Even though a voice is coming from heaven to affirm Jesus, there is still drama in the background.

In our first lesson, we began to explore preparation and how Jesus and Sonia Sanchez had to undergo the process of preparation in order to move into the place of greatness that God had for them. In our second lesson, we will examine the “breath” of Jesus and Sonia Sanchez and how they maintained their senses as they navigated through the vicissitudes of life. Even as you move toward a new day, it does not mean that everything around you is new; you will need to move through old, even moldy, smelly, toxic people, places, and things. As you take the time to breathe, not only are you a witness to the blessing and affirmation of God for your life, but you also bear witness to the ongoing chaos and choppy, contaminated waters that are still in the river of life.

## TOOLKIT FOR LESSON TWO

# Igniting the Inner Genius

*The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and the Igniting the Inner Genius begins:*

**TEACHER:** Begin by having a participant re-read aloud the Scripture passage from Lesson One: Matthew 3:13-17. Participants will be reminded that Jesus knew his assignment and was ready to fulfill it in order to begin his ministry. Share that Sonia Sanchez had to endure the deaths of her mother and grandmother and even the ridicule of being a stutterer as the result of these traumatic events. Ask the participants to take a series of three deep breaths, as they think about Jesus stepping into the Jordan River, knowing that his life would never be the same. For a moment, ask the participants to not think of the divine Jesus, but to think of Jesus the man, who would have to face ridicule and even drama from his own family and the religious leaders in his hometown community of Nazareth. Remind the participants that Jesus experienced rejection both accepting the call and answering the call from God, yet he took a breath. Ask the participants to take one long breath.

**NOTE:** The teacher could have the sound of water or a river flowing, like the exercise in Lesson One, as participants take a series of breaths.

**TEACHER:** Story-link Jesus' moment back to Sonia Sanchez as she moves into a new mantle of leadership as a teacher, poet, and activist.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will receive a copy of the following excerpt from the book, Sonia Sanchez's *Poetic Spirit Through Haiku*, edited by John Zheng:

• *When Sonia Sanchez fell in love with haiku she was living in New York City, happening*  
 • *upon a compact form with a deep message, carrying nature at its base, companion*  
 • *syllables held snugly together. Even as Sanchez danced a 1960s song, many of her poems*  
 • *careening onto the page in rhythm's rebellion, she also wrote haiku, her intercontinental*  
 • *enjambment, offering us the world.*

• *While Sanchez sprinkled haiku into many of her books, beginning with *Love Poems**  
 • *(1973), it was not until she was in her seventies that *Morning Haiku* was released (2010),*  
 • *an entire book of haiku, the book I have carried to more continents than any other. In*  
 • *her introduction, "haikuography," Sanchez sees haiku as a way of being that puts you*  
 • *on pause and accepts death and re-birth. With this description, she allows us to reckon*  
 • *with paradox, meditation and song, abuse and serenity, even when the gun is pointed*  
 • *in your direction. Read across the decades, Sanchez's haiku offer models for what it*  
 • *means to write embodied poetry; how poetry can run ahead of its time, speaking to*  
 • *generations years after it is first written; and can offer us loving tributes to living people*  
 • *and our ancestors.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Becky Thompson, "Constant Sky: Sonia Sanchez's Haiku," in *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit Through Haiku*, edited by John Zheng, (Lexington Books, 2017), 55.

**TEACHER:** Read aloud the above excerpt as participants read it silently. Participants will be instructed to once again take a deep breath as they process the story-link with Sonia Sanchez. Re-read the “Haiku [for you]” that was a part of Lesson One. Participants will be asked if they have any reflections from the haiku from Lesson One.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked to close their eyes and picture in their mind Jesus and John the Baptist in the Jordan River. They will also be asked to think about the chaos that surrounds this holy moment. For example, the Pharisees and Sadducees signifying on John the Baptist, questioning both his legitimacy as a prophet as well as the location of these baptisms taking place in the wilderness.

**TEACHER:** Ask the participants – while their eyes are still closed – to imagine the heat in the desert, the insects and other animals (i.e. scorpions and snakes) the sights, smells and sounds of all kinds of people. Also ask them to imagine when John the Baptist scolded the Pharisees and Sadducees calling them “a brood of vipers” (the teacher may even want to exegete or explore this description further). Share with the participants that as Jesus was moving to the next spiritual level, the immediate context that surrounded him was becoming more unlevel, dangerous, and uncertain. As the participants continue to take a deep breath and keep their eyes closed, read aloud Matthew 3:1-12 (New Revised Standard Version).

**TEACHER:** After the Scripture has been read, ask the participants to open their eyes and think about some of the images that came to mind as their eyes were closed. Did some object appear before them in their mind like an ax, tree, fruit, fire, etc.? This would also be a good time to unpack and define such things mentioned in the Scripture like the winnowing fork, the threshing floor, etc.

Participants will view the YouTube video clip, “Sonia Sanchez: Reading Poetry.”<sup>9</sup> After the viewing of the video, participants can take a moment to explore in their journals a free association exercise based on sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. Introduce such sentences as: What do you love to smell in the universe? / What did you see that frightened you? / When I taste \_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_\_. / When I touch \_\_\_\_\_ I am ready to \_\_\_\_\_. / My most favorite song I love to hear is \_\_\_\_\_. Music can be played during this time, something soft and environmental like birds singing and the wind gently blowing. The teacher may need to do some guided exercises to encourage the participants to write.

The following question(s) will be placed by the teacher on the whiteboard: How does breathing play a role in the Scripture? How did the breathing of John the Baptist differ from the Pharisees and Sadducees who were confronting him? Even though it is not mentioned in the text, we know that the Pharisees and Sadducees were probably anxious if not fearful by John the Baptist’s reaction to them being in the wilderness with him.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will work on their free association exercise in their journals employing sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing based on the guided exercise by the teacher as well as the reflections gathered in their experience with Lesson Two. They will be asked to also reflect on how our breathing changes during times when we are joyful, stressed, fearful, happy, etc.

**TEACHER:** Share the YouTube video, “Sonia Sanchez on the Peace is Haiku Song Project.”<sup>10</sup> After the video clip, the teacher and participants will reflect on the importance of learning how to breathe as human beings and the peace and shared vision that the haiku brings according to Sonia Sanchez. A group discussion can

<sup>9</sup> Sonia Sanchez, “Sonia Sanchez: Reading Poetry,” Filmed [2002-2013]. YouTube video, 10:21. <http://www.visionaryproject.org/sanchezsonia> (accessed December 18, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Sonia Sanchez, “Sonia Sanchez on the Peace is Haiku Song Project.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uQJEghXDyA> (accessed December 18, 2019).

be shared about what Sonia Sanchez stated about how our breath becomes compromised as we grow older because of the stresses of life. Share with the participants the following excerpt, a Harvard Health article, *Take A Deep Breath*, as a classroom think-tank moment of discussion:

- ***Proper breathing goes by many names. You may have heard it called diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing, or belly breathing. When you breathe deeply, the air coming in through your nose fully fills your lungs, and you will notice that your lower belly rises. The ability to breathe so deeply and powerfully is not limited to a select few. This skill is inborn but often lies dormant. Reawakening it allows you to tap one of your body's strongest self-healing mechanisms.***
- ***Why does breathing deeply seem unnatural to many of us? One reason may be that our culture often rewards us for stifling strong emotions. Girls and women are expected to rein in anger. Boys and men are exhorted not to cry. What happens when you hold back tears, stifle anger during a charged confrontation, tiptoe through a fearful situation, or try to keep pain at bay? Unconsciously, you hold your breath or breathe irregularly.***<sup>11</sup>

Ask the participants how has their breath become labored or compromised because of the vicissitudes of life. Sonia Sanchez reminds us that “breath is life.” As Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist, and is affirmed by God as God’s son, he must now take some deep breaths for the Lenten journey ahead in the desert wilderness. Even as Sonia Sanchez continued to be a revolutionary poet, facing discrimination as an African American woman and as an activist for civil and human rights, she continued to explore and teach the contemplative practice of writing haiku. Inform the participants that there are many online resources regarding the haiku. An online article, *How to Write a Haiku Poem: Haiku Examples and Tips*, shares the following definition of a haiku poem:

Haiku is a Japanese poetry form. A haiku uses just a few words to capture a moment and create a picture in the reader’s mind. It is like a tiny window into a scene much larger than itself.

Traditionally, haiku is written in three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line, and five syllables in the third line.<sup>12</sup>

Introduce to the participants the following haiku poem, “21 Haiku,” by Sonia Sanchez from her book, *Morning Haiku*:

[Click HERE](#) for link to "21 Haiku"

Inform the participants that each haiku poem in “21 Haiku” was written to honor the singer, Odetta, who was an African American singer, actress, guitarist, and civil and human rights activist. The participants will listen to an audio recording of Odetta singing “Hit Or Miss” and view an image or photograph of her as well.

Next, participants will begin to create their own haiku poem. The teacher can play some soft jazz for this exercise (maybe even jazz from the Japanese musician Keiko Matsui, like the composition “Bridge Over The Stars”).

<sup>11</sup> Harvard Medical School. “Take a Deep Breath.” Harvard Health Publishing, May, 2009. [www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/take-a-deep-breath](http://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/take-a-deep-breath) (accessed January 24, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> William Victor, S.L. “How to Write a Haiku Poem: Haiku Examples and Tips” in *Creative Writing Now.2009-2019*. [www.creative-writing-now.com/how-to-write-a-haiku.html](http://www.creative-writing-now.com/how-to-write-a-haiku.html) (accessed January 24, 2020).



**PARTICIPANT(S):** Each participant will create their own haiku poem in their journals. These poems can come from their free association exercise with smell, taste, touch, seeing, and hearing. This literary exercise is not about right or wrong in terms of structure, but it is about the participant beginning to explore what Sonia Sanchez has described as a “wonderful beautiful form.”

**TEACHER:** As the class begins to wrap up, ask the participants to close their journals and take some deep, slow breaths. Story-link the participants back to Jesus’s moment at the Jordan River with John the Baptist and the motif of water. Place clear bowls of water at the participants’ tables for them to touch and see.

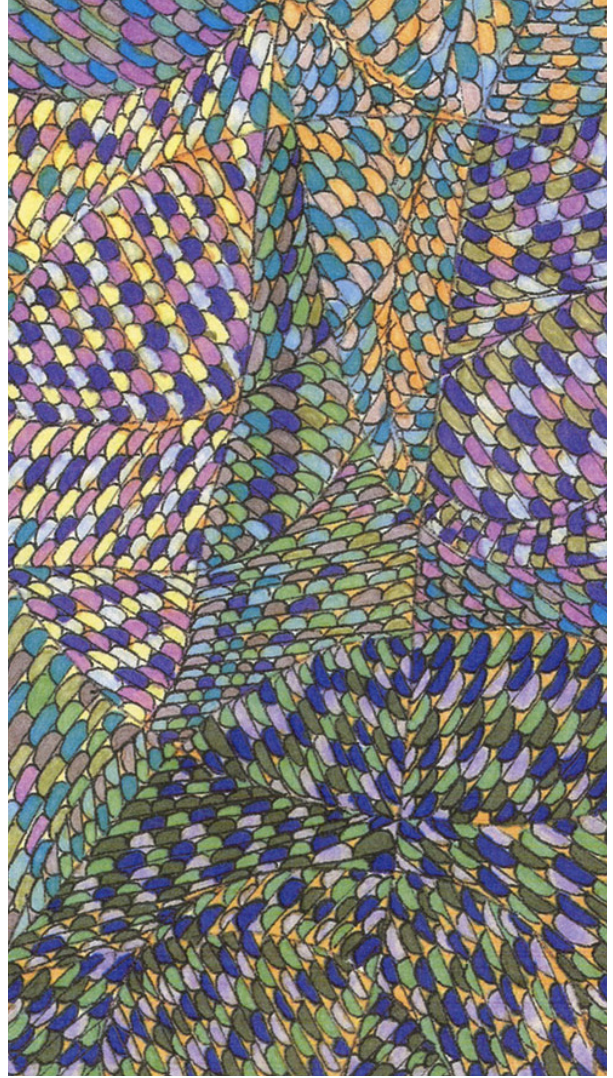
Read the following as a reflection:

### Africentric Reflection: Water in the African Traditional Religion

*Water is a source of life, and spirituality is a core African value. Traditionally water was recognized as both an essential life force and a source of strong spiritual power.<sup>13</sup> Water, in African Traditional Religion, is a living force with the power to transform people from one state to another at a spiritual or physical level.*

*When a woman is pregnant and “her water breaks” the amniotic sac has ruptured and the labor or the birth of the baby is imminent if not already underway. This water has been described as either a gush or a splash. This water, like the river or ocean of life, has its own unique flow for each woman who gives birth.*

Remind the participants as they continue on their Lenten journey to remember to take the time to breathe properly as God reveals God-self to their reality. Also participants should be encouraged to consider reading their haiku aloud in class at the next Lenten journey session.



13 Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute. “African Traditional”.2018. <https://safcei.org> (accessed January 20, 2020).

# Takeaway

Before praying and closing out the lesson, ask the participants how they think Sonia Sanchez, who was a stutterer, felt being able to finally read her poetry aloud and to be affirmed as a great poet? Each participant will receive critical questions to answer, and for their takeaway, they will receive a poem, "Haiku and Tanka for Harriet Tubman" by Sonia Sanchez that was published in the April 2018 issue of *Poetry*.

A tanka is defined as a Japanese poem consisting of five lines, the first and third of which have five syllables and the other seven syllables. These series of haikus and tankas for Harriet Tubman have been described in an online article by Meta L. Schettler, *Sonia Sanchez's 'magic/now': Black History, Haiku and Healing*, as the following:

: *These poems include many of the hallmarks of Sanchez's haiku written for Black history, the magical realism, the value of community, and a tumultuous combination of multiple images of Nature blended together to evoke supernatural powers and larger than life experience. The poems that open the series show Tubman's orisha status, heroic, iconic, and large looming:*

Click [HERE](#) to view "Haiku and Tanka For Harriet Tubman"

: *This repetition of Tubman's honorary status as a general and commanding role in the war against slavery reads like an incantation and a blessing. The ending of the poem with its focus on air and breath also affirms a sacred approach, honoring Tubman with basic elements of life, breathing life into the people and the country as a whole...<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>14</sup> Meta L. Schettler, "Sonia Sanchez's 'magic/now': Black History, Haiku and Healing". The Haiku Foundation, 2008-2019. [www.thehaikufoundation.org/juxta-4-1/sonia-sanchezs-magic-now-black-history-haiku-and-healing/](http://www.thehaikufoundation.org/juxta-4-1/sonia-sanchezs-magic-now-black-history-haiku-and-healing/) (accessed January 20, 2020).

# Critical Questions

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- 1 • What traumatic events or moments of rejection have God nudged and pushed you through as you moved into another spiritual and emotional level in your life?

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- 2 • What important role does the element of water play in this spiritual and emotional transformation for Jesus? How does this role correlate to the concept of water in African Traditional Religion found in our Africentric reflection in Lesson Two?

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- 3 • How does Sonia Sanchez's use of the Japanese poetry form of the haiku help us to explore contemplation and reflection in our daily lives and in our daily walk with God?

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# Unit 2 – Lesson Three

## “Temptation: When We Come!”

**PRAYER:** *Jesus, I hear the bones rattling on the desert floor, and I see the shadows of snakes and scorpions. I must face my desert wilderness now, and my whole body is covered with the hot sand of life that is unbearable by day and excruciating at night. Show me how to stand and divinely dance in the dread and doom that faces me. Let me spit and speak a new holy verse that confounds the devil and tears down the systems of oppression that surround me and dare to offer me contaminated water to parch my holy thirst.*



TITLE

*Bone to Spirit*

SCRIPTURE

Luke 4:1-8

New Revised Standard Version

**SYNOPSIS:** It is one thing to be celebrated in your ministry, but it is quite another to be tested because of it. We will discover in Lesson Three that right after Jesus is affirmed by God as the beloved son, the Holy Spirit of God chases him in the desert wilderness to prepare for a “rap battle” with Satan.

As we move through this Lenten journey and prepare for a greater growth spurt with God, we must also prepare for distractions, crises, and chaos in the ground that surrounds us. In spite of this earthly turbulence, we are reminded that the most beautiful terrain lies within us. If we allow our creative seed to germinate, bud, sprout and grow, it will become a fertile space watered by God. Wherever we blow on the face of the earth, a garden oasis awaits, even in the bones we carry and leave behind. Yeah, we can be that and yes, we gonna do that! Breathe child, come to your senses; with the power of God, it is a new day!!!!



## TOOLKIT FOR LESSON THREE

# Divine Dancing

*The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Divine Dancing begins:*

**TEACHER:** Instruct the participants that things will move at a different pace, because now they are going to the desert. As a result of that, they will need to move a little more deliberate and intentional on their feet as they navigate through extremely hot days, cold nights, snakes, scorpions, hunger, thirst, isolation and yes, the devil, Satan.

Play the YouTube clip by Sonia Sanchez, "When We Come" from *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*.<sup>15</sup>

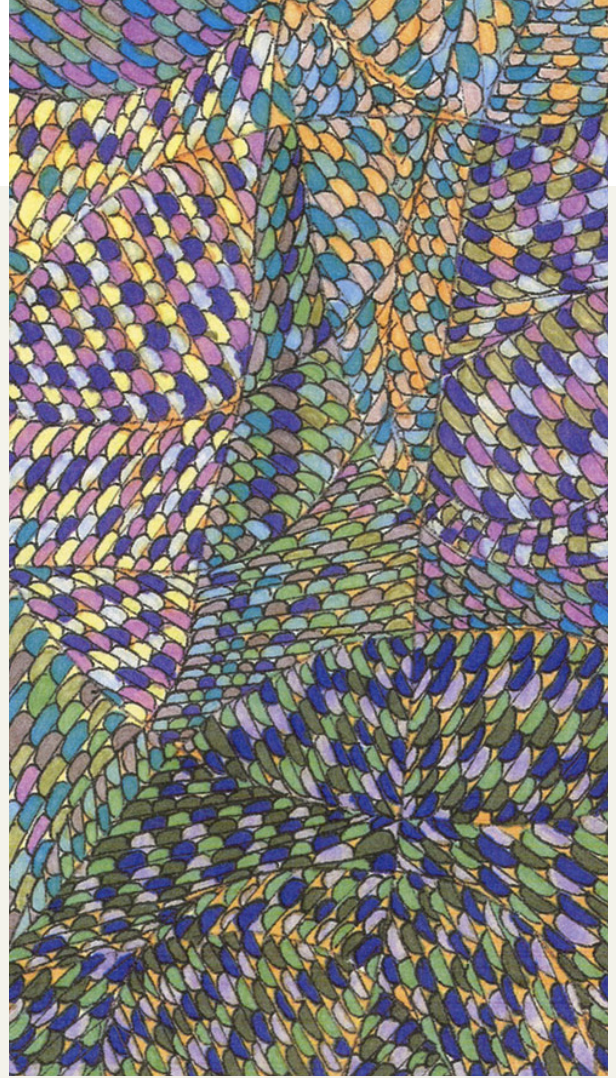
Participants will be informed by the teacher that Sonia Sanchez has been called the inspiration for many in our new generation of rap, hip-hop, and spoken word artists. Artists such as Mos Def have even had Sonia Sanchez appear on HBOs "Def Poetry Jam" to be introduced to a younger generation. But musical, poetic and even social, cultural, spiritual, and political rap battles are not new. Before there was a turntable and a microphone, the origins of battles are biblical and indigenous. Many times, these battles of words were not to kill, rather they were to enlighten and empower the hearer and the speaker. These challenges were not always written down but spoken. Yet a battle is a battle and it can leave you physically, emotionally and psychologically 'beat down.' But what happens when God chases you to a desert without food or water for a battle?

Ask a participant to read aloud the text of Luke 4:1-8 (New Revised Standard Version).

Remind the participants that according to our Scripture passage, Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. The participants and the teacher can discuss what this moment could have possibly been for Jesus, who was alone and fasting. Jesus had to spiritually, emotionally and psychologically move from flesh to spirit in order to function and fight the devil. Walk around to each participant and ask them what does it mean to be full of the Holy Spirit and how have they experienced that in their lives, (i.e. the birth of a child, the death of a parent, child, spouse, etc.).

Mention in your dialogue that Jesus, like a modern-day artist of rap, hip-hop, or spoken word, had to "move in the spirit of God" and do free-verse as he kept the true flow of God's word while he dropped some beats on the devil, who was busy spinning his own verses, using samples of God's word for his power play.

<sup>15</sup> Sonia Sanchez, "When We Come," in *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*. Folkways Records & Service Corporation 75-752813, 1971, vinyl recording.



**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be introduced to a story-link to Sonia Sanchez through two poems as they still reflect on Luke 4:1-8:

• *never may my thirst*  
 • *for freedom be*  
 • *appeased by*  
 • *modern urinals*<sup>16</sup>

Click [HERE](#) to view "Towhomitmayconcern"

**TEACHER:** Ask the participants what type of poetry form is Sonia Sanchez using in her first poem. (Answer: haiku) The teacher and the participants will reflect on the following excerpt based on the first poem in this lesson from the book, *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit Through Haiku* edited by John Zheng.

*...this sip of freedom from a urinal means we are a long way off from freedom for people of African descent.*<sup>17</sup>

Inform the participants that in our text, the devil is presenting Jesus with a freedom to do all that he was big and bad enough to do. But what is the price and cost of the ticket? As the elders would always say, nothing in this life is free. You must work and sacrifice to create a good life for yourself. Even Jesus, isolated and alone with God, but also with the devil, needed to work out his soul salvation before the ultimate game of death and life would begin.

In the second poem, "Towhomitmayconcern" the teacher and the participants can also explore Sonia Sanchez's use of dialect which has been beautifully described as a transformation of slave coding.

Show a video recitation from YouTube, "The Poetry of Sonia Sanchez-TOWHOMITMAYCONCERN- read by Debra Wright & Pat McLean."<sup>18</sup>

Keep the hum that is present in the video and encourage the participants to do the same. While the participants and the teacher continue to hum as they move and dance around the room, write "Bone to Spirt: The Desert Wilderness Facts!" on the whiteboard. The humming stanza can end as the Holy Spirit gives prophetic utterance to the teacher or even the participants.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** Each participant will view the following desert wilderness facts either on the whiteboard or on a PowerPoint:

• *The Judean desert, where it is believed that Jesus's 40-day journey took place, is an area with a special morphological structure along the east of the Judean mountains. It is sometimes known as "Yeshimon" meaning object or wild land. All deserts are arid or dry and may not receive more than 10 inches of precipitation a year.*  
 • *Some deserts can reach a daytime temperature of 130 degrees and a nighttime temperature of 30 degrees. These wilderness places*

<sup>16</sup> Sonia Sanchez, *I've Been A Woman: New and Selected Poems*. (Third World Press, Chicago, 1985), 72.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Iadonisi, "Some Beauty...Some Love," in Sonia Sanchez's *Poetic Spirit Through Haiku*, edited by John Zheng (Lexington Books, 2017), 37.

<sup>18</sup> America Reframed. "The Poetry of Sonia Sanchez: TOWHOMITMAYCONCERN-read by Debra Wright & Pat McLean" <https://worldchannel.org/episode/america-reframed-baddddd-sonia-sanchez/> (accessed January 24, 2020).

*can be found in Africa and also Antarctica. In spite of their harsh terrain, deserts are home to a variety of plants, animals and other organisms. These wilderness areas can consist of sand dunes, rocks, salt flats, and mountains.*

**TEACHER:** The teacher and the participants can examine the desert as a metaphor for their place of testing. As they undergo their Lenten journey, each participant will have their own unique desert wilderness to face in their isolation. Each of these deserts will look different, temperatures will fluctuate, yet like all deserts, their resources will be limited. Place objects native to the desert on the tables of the participants (i.e. fake snakes, scorpions, if available fossils, cacti, rocks, sand, etc.).

**PARTICIPANTS:** Each participant will be given a large white sheet of drawing paper. They will be asked to draw what their desert wilderness looks like in their eyes. The teacher will need to remind the participants that there is no right or wrong, or perfect skill needed for this exercise. Participants can draw a representational drawing (artwork where you can identify people, places, etc.) or an abstract/non-representational drawing (artwork where only lines, shapes, colors are used, etc.).

**TEACHER:** Play the song, "A Long Walk" by Jill Scott, Philadelphia native and admirer of Sonia Sanchez. If participants need a few more minutes, then play Jill Scott's song "Hate On Me." Move around the room and participants can share their desert wilderness drawings with their fellow desert dwellers as they go deep into their Lenten journey. This can also be a great time to gather in a circle after sharing their desert art and to have participants share reflections from their journals from Lesson One and even a haiku from Lesson Two.

Before praying and closing out the lesson, the teacher and participants will view the YouTube clip, "Commencement 2018-Sonia Sanchez."<sup>19</sup> Give each participant a copy of the Adinkra symbol, WaWa ABA, which means "perseverance, hardiness, toughness." Along with the symbol, each participant will only receive the takeaway. **There are no critical questions for Lesson Three.** Remind the participants that this is a time for disorientation and for them to go home after their lesson and be still, reflective, and strong as they move from bone to spirit!

19 Swarthmore College. "Commencement 2018-Sonia Sanchez". [www.swarthmore.edu/commencement-2018/sonia-sanchez](http://www.swarthmore.edu/commencement-2018/sonia-sanchez) (accessed January 24, 2020).

## Takeaway

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The Adinkra symbol from Ghana, West Africa, the WaWa ABA means "perseverance, hardiness, toughness." This symbol is meant to encourage the individual who is enduring a hard time or a difficult battle. Jesus would first begin his battle in the desert wilderness. Sonia Sanchez would endure her battle against the administration on those college campuses that did not want her to teach or profess truth to power. Her declaration through poetry and the spoken word would be celebrated by the oppressed but vilified by the oppressors. Sonia Sanchez would continue like Jesus to move through the desert and speak aloud the word that brings life! Bone to Spirit, We Have Come!





# Unit 2 – Lesson Four

## “Temptation: When We Come!”

**PRAYER:** *LORD God, now I got to fight. There is no one in my corner but you. The contenders are all around me, but I must speak, stand in my truth, and spit a powerful verse of justice. I am ready for the haters, even when I feel I am not ready, for this battle is not based on feelings but on power! The time is now oh LORD. You prepared the battlefield; I shall be triumphant!*



TITLE

*I Do Battle!*

SCRIPTURE

Luke 4:9-13

New Revised Standard Version

**SYNOPSIS:** Yeah, Jesus is out there battling and spitting some God rhymes with the devil. The devil has his imaginary turntable always trying to bring a groove that will unsettle this itinerant teacher and preacher from Nazareth. The devil knows that Jesus is alone and has been without food and water for forty days and that there is no entourage, no promise of a position with the Sadducees or Pharisees. Yes, the devil even knows that like John the Baptist, Jesus’s ministry has hermeneutics of suspicion. Is he really being called by God, Joseph’s son? Is this the son of Mary? Sabotage may be brewing in Galilee, but justice is resting in the wilderness of Judea.

In Lesson Four, we still continue to examine the battle taking place between Jesus and the devil. Like Jesus, Sonia Sanchez is facing her test as well. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) came to Sonia Sanchez’s landlord suggesting to him that he should remove her from his apartment building. Sonia Sanchez was facing possible eviction from her apartment due to her teaching of Black Studies that explored Paul Robeson, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. As a professor at the university, Sanchez was battling oppressors in the academic institution who had labeled her as a “militant.” From 1967-1969, as a professor at San Francisco State University, she was a young woman in her prime. Likewise, when we think

of Jesus, who was also 30 years old. Like Jesus, Sonia Sanchez understood the politics behind the battle she faced. Even though she faced a loss of teaching positions and harassment by oppressive systems and institutions, she continued to speak poetically truth to power.

## TOOLKIT FOR LESSON FOUR

# Divine Dancing

*The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Divine Dancing begins:*

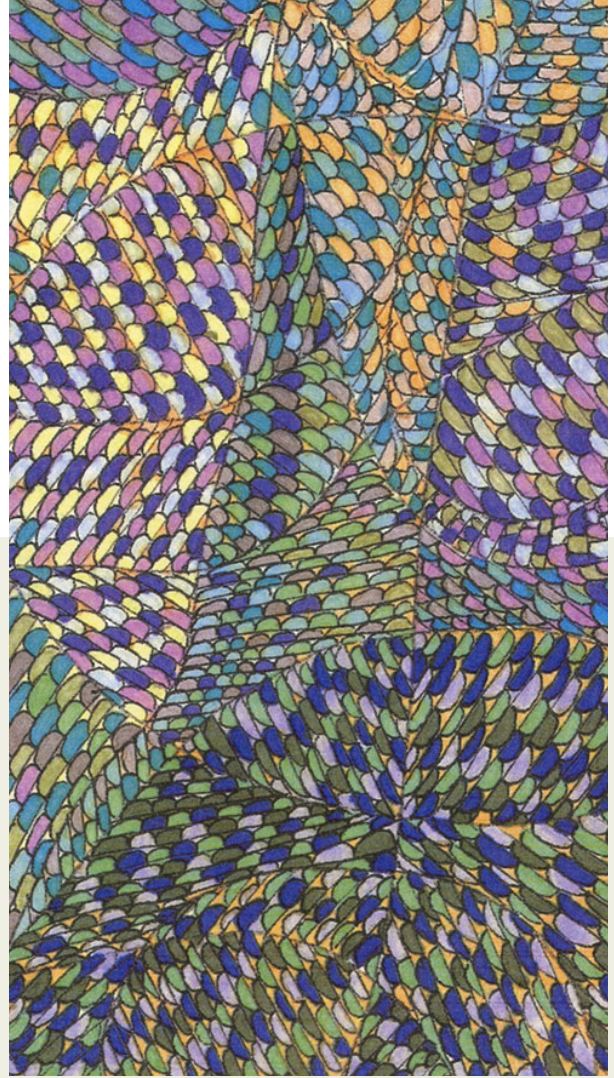
**TEACHER:** Write on the whiteboard the words, "I Do Battle!" The participants will discover that this phrase was gleaned from Sanchez's poem, "Towhomitmayconcern," in Lesson Three. Move around and have the students to sit in a circle. Ask the participants to join hands as a prayer is said for those who are about to do battle. Next, ask the students in the circle the question, "Who/What are you battling with at this time in your life?" Some participants may feel comfortable sharing, while others may decline from speaking. That is okay. Remember that you as the teacher, in the Nsaka Sunsum model, are a Jegnoch, that special one who has been tested in struggle or battle. As the facilitator of this lesson, you will need to be as transparent as you can be in unpacking one struggle in your life. Like any good sacred contract, the Holy Spirit, once allowed to enter, will always allow peace to emerge from chaos.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will sit in a circle and will be asked by the teacher to imagine that the inner circle they are sitting around is their desert.

**TEACHER:** Ask the participants the question, "What truth can you speak to your battle that will set you free?" The teacher may also have some participants who will engage in the dialogue and some who may decline from doing so. This is okay. Remind participants that even in their discomfort and fear, they are doing battle. The teacher will read aloud Luke 4:9-13 (New Revised Standard Version).

**PARTICIPANT(S):** As the participants sit in a circle, they can share as a group what happens to them emotionally, psychologically, and physically when they are in a battle. They can also share what happens to them when God is in the midst of their battle.

**TEACHER:** Ask the participants to think of a moment when they were in the battle for their lives and God showed up and gave them extraordinary strength and endurance during a traumatic moment. Give the



participants some colorful sticky notes and ask the participants in the circle to write one word on the sticky note that God allowed them to be victorious from in battle. They do not have to write their names. These sticky notes can be folded and placed in the inner circle.

Next, ask the participants if there is someone who is now in a battle, but does not wish to speak about it, but would like to write it. After these are finished, pray over it (or them). The participants will crumble their sticky note and throw it in the center of the inner circle. Play an audio recording of Richard Smallwood's song, "Total Praise."

As the participants unpack their battle moment, this is a moment for quiet reflection, even possibly tears and support from the group. Have some tissues and light refreshments on hand, such as fruit, water, juice, cheese and crackers. This is for the participants on this journey to get some nourishment and think about what they shared or heard from the group discussion. Ask the participants to remove themselves from the original circle and get comfortable, as they view a video clip from You Tube entitled: "BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez Trailer."<sup>20</sup> The teacher and the participants will share reflections from the video and the teacher can also ask if anyone has seen the documentary based on Sonia Sanchez's life and poetry. If you have access to the documentary, a special session may be designated to a screening.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will receive from the teacher the following excerpt from the book, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* by Barbara A. Holmes. In Chapter 2: "Retrieving Lost Legacies: Contemplation in West Africa":

• ***For the Yoruba, bliss is not just personal joy but an "inner glow." It is the ignition point for the reunion of the human heart with the divine spirit. This event is not something within the control of the supplicant but rather, "it is an expression of our transformative libido. Bliss opens playful energies, it mushrooms creative possibilities."***<sup>21</sup>

**TEACHER:** Explore the above excerpt in a group discussion with the participants and define the Yoruba culture. Share Sonia Sanchez's use of the Yoruba language in her poems. In an online website, *Quiet On the Set Magazine* an article, *BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez*, shares the following based on the documentary about her life:

• ***Language, the use of it, and its undeniable power is something that has constantly fascinated Sanchez, who often uses the Yoruba language in her poems. The Yoruba are one of the largest African ethnic groups south of the Sahara Desert. They are, in fact, not a single group, but rather a collection of diverse people bound together by a common language, history, and culture. Within Nigeria, the Yoruba dominate the western part of the country. It has many dialects, but its speakers can all understand each other. It is a tonal language. The same combination of vowels and consonants has different meanings depending on the pitch of the vowels (whether they are pronounced with a high voice or a low voice).***

• ***Sanchez sees the poet as a 'creator of social values' and the performance as a renewal of ancient rituals: She sings, chants, whispers, clicks her tongue and shouts while reciting her poetry. Sanchez explains why the Yoruba language is important to her, even now.***

20 California Newsreel. "BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez Trailer." <http://newsreel.org/video/BADDDDD-SONIA-SANCHEZ> (accessed January 24, 2020).

21 Barbara A. Holmes, "Lost Legacies: Contemplation in West Africa." in *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 53.

- *“The slave masters told us to speak English, not Yoruba or any of the other African languages we came here with. They told us to speak English, but they didn’t tell us how to speak English. We couldn’t go to school, so our English came out in a different form which transformed into Black English. It is an amazing form of English when you think about it and hear it. Really, it’s a much richer language than standard English.”<sup>22</sup>*

**PARTICIPANT(S):** Participants will share with the group what words give them power during battle. They can be English or African, or any other world language that the participant has been introduced to from birth or life experiences.

**TEACHER:** Begin a group discussion on why some African Americans, especially Christians, struggle with any discussion of African Traditional Religion as it relates to our exploration of Jesus in the Gospels. Offer resources to the students for further reading such as *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* by Barbara A. Holmes. Before praying and closing out the lesson, inform the students that their takeaway poem, “Aaaayeee Babo (Praise God),” can be found in the book, *Shake Loose My Skin: New and Selected Poems*, by Sonia Sanchez. There are also critical questions after the poem.

Begin reading “Aaaayeee Babo (Praise God)” by Sonia Sanchez. Each participant will read a portion of it before Lesson Four ends.

## Takeaway

### Aaaayeee Babo (Praise God) by Sonia Sanchez

Click [HERE](#) to view poem

<sup>22</sup> Sonia Sanchez, “BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez”. Interview by Darryl Rembert and Erik Humphrey. *Quiet On the Set Magazine*. March 28, 2016. <http://www.quietonthesetmagazine.com/?s=sonia+sanchez> (accessed December 18, 2019).



# Critical Questions

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- 1 • How does Jesus' encounter with the devil encourage/challenge you as you face temptation and rejection?

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- 2 • Did the poem "Aaaayeee Babo (Praise God)" by Sonia Sanchez challenge/stretch your faith as a Christian in any way? Explain.

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- 3 • Have you ever been introduced to the Yoruba language and/or any traditions from the continent of Africa? Have you ever seen a map of the continent of Africa? How many countries can you identify on a map of Africa?

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# Unit 3 – Lesson Five

## “Revelation: We Can Be!”

**PRAYER:** *Dear God, I have just returned home after battling the enemy: But now I have another contender that looks like me, that ate the same food from my table, and even worshipped with me. They hover me not like a mother bird but like a curious vulture. Some of my kinfolk and community members are saying, “How can this be, the LORD can’t be using you!” But as I stand and allow the potential and the possibilities of God to be unrolled before me, I know that you got me LORD and that I got to keep on moving, in truth and power!*



TITLE

*Who He Be!/ Who She Be!/ Who You Be!*

SCRIPTURE

**Luke 4:14-21**

New Revised Standard Version

**SYNOPSIS:** Jesus has just survived a ferocious 40-day battle in the desert wilderness with Satan. He has been tested, without food or water, by way of the ultimate ordination exam. Now Jesus has achieved victory; now he has to return home. Just as he left the Jordan in the “power of the Spirit,” he returns with that same power to Nazareth. Jesus was in the Galilean headlines for his teaching in the synagogues; everyone was now praising him. Now he was returning to his kinfolk, the brothers and the sisters on the block. *Who is this?... Jesus, the son of Mary? Say what?!*

But Jesus stood up, read the word of God found in Isaiah and announced who he be! There is a Wolof proverb from the West African country of Senegal that states, “Know who you are before they have to tell you.” Jesus understood his mission and he had to keep on moving and do and be “creative” in his ministry. Now was the time to be! Like Jesus, Sonia Sanchez was also picking up the book and laying it down in a holy radical verse

that continued to speak truth to power about the human condition and the ongoing struggle for liberation for African American people as well as other people of color throughout the world. As she took a stand for the rights of the oppressed, she would lose teaching positions. Like Jesus the itinerant preacher, the life of Sonia Sanchez would also be that of an itinerant poet, educator, activist as she used the power of words to empower, educate, excavate, and eliminate on her terrain, the sleeping giant of social injustice and racial discrimination.

## TOOLKIT FOR LESSON FIVE

# Learning Gumbo

*The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then the Learning Gumbo begins:*

**TEACHER:** Ask the participants to bring out their journals. Next, play the YouTube clip, “We Can Be” from *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry* by Sonia Sanchez,<sup>23</sup> and ask participants to write the words that stand out to them.

**TEACHER’S NOTE:** For example, after hearing the YouTube clip, “We Can Be,” the following words could resonate with participants: kill, love, be, move, young. Share with the participants that even though “thou shalt not kill” is one of our Ten Commandments from the Bible, they also know that there are some things metaphorically we should kill that keep us from growing or moving forward such as procrastination or laziness. Yet, we are reminded by Sonia Sanchez that if we love who we be we will not want to kill anybody.

Begin to walk around and ask the participants to share some of the words they have. All the words of the participants, including those of the teacher, will be placed on the whiteboard. Examine those words with the participants reflect on the fact that Jesus was in that desert wilderness alone, and not only was he fighting the devil, he was also fighting and dealing with his humanity.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked if there are any words in the group of words on the whiteboard that stand out to them as significant.

**TEACHER:** Draw a circle around the words chosen by the participants. One suggested activity is to have one whiteboard as “Sonia’s Words” and the other as “Jesus’ Words.” The teacher and participants can review these words and compare and contrast what is before them. While exploring Sonia’s words, the participants will now begin the same exercise of writing words that resonate with them.

***Read aloud Luke 4:14-21 (New Revised Standard Version).***

<sup>23</sup> Sanchez, Sonia. “We Can Be”. On *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*. Folkways Records & Service Corporation 75-752813, 1971, vinyl recording.

**TEACHER'S NOTE:** The teacher will lead this exercise as well. Thinking about words that stand out in Luke 4:14-21, begin by writing words that stand out to you: filled, stood up, unrolled, release, rolled up, fulfilled. Use this as an example of an interesting exercise that challenges the participants to think deeply and critically. On another board (if available), a presentation board, or a large sheet of paper, create the following based on the teacher's words. For example, as a teacher you would do the following:

### SONIA'S WORDS

KILL  
LOVE  
BE  
MOVE  
YOUNG

### JESUS'S WORDS

FILLED  
STOOD UP  
UNROLLED  
RELEASE  
ROLLED UP

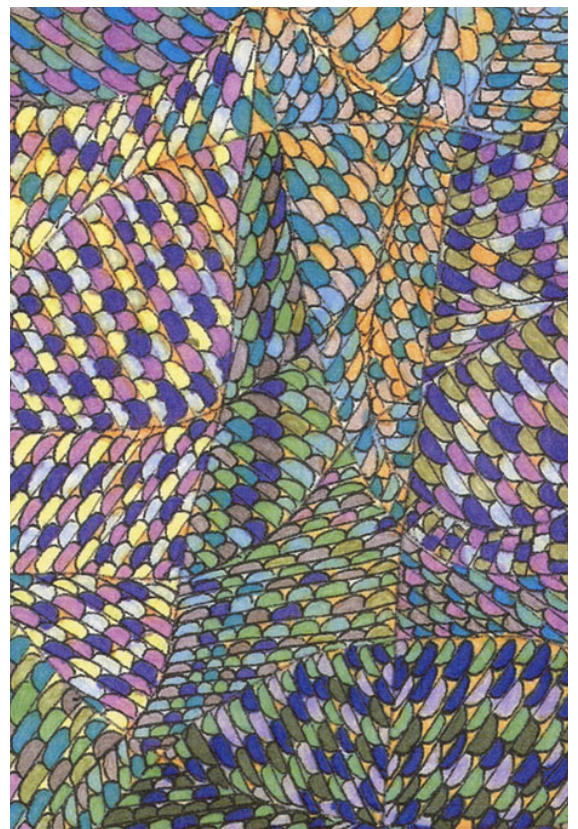
## FULFILLED

After the teacher creates their list, they will compare and contrast the words that are side by side as an example for group discussion with the students. For example, begin with the words "kill" and "filled." In listening to the word "kill" from Sonia's Words, it appears that if you know who you be, you will not have the desire to kill someone else. Also if you look at the use of the word "filled" in Jesus's Words, you can say that when you are filled with the power of God's Spirit, there will be those who will wish to kill the power you are walking in because now you know who you be! The teacher can go down the next series of matching words, comparing and contrasting those words, i.e. "love" and "stood up." The goal is to critically think and reflect on the words you have gathered as seeds and see what takes root in your think-tank of thought.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will try this exercise based on the words they have also jotted down that were Sonia's Words and Jesus's Words. If they find a word that stands alone, that does not have a matching word with it, the goal is to take that one word and see how it relates to the other words when you reflect on Jesus who had to return home and make his declaration of independence and say "I am the one you have been waiting for." For Sonia, the little girl who was a stutterer and who fell in love with words, she became an awesome poet who stood up for the civil and human rights of Black people. She began to tell her people that they were beautiful Black ones. Sonia Sanchez, like Jesus, would also have to stand up and read and announce her arrival to the community and to the nation.

**TEACHER:** Have the participants share their revelations after this word exercise in a group discussion. After a break, the teacher and participants will look at the YouTube video clip, "Sonia Sanchez: How I Overcame Stuttering."<sup>24</sup> Ask the participants, "How does this video by Sonia Sanchez challenge/empower them?"

<sup>24</sup> Sonia Sanchez, "Sonia Sanchez: How I Overcame Stuttering." <http://www.visionaryproject.org/sanchezsonia> (accessed January 24, 2020).





The teacher and the participants, as they partake of the Lenten journey, will also examine their voice. Ask the participants, “Do you speak with power?” This of course has nothing to do with volume or braggadocio; it is merely one’s authenticity and essence of being. Words have power and the language we speak about ourselves and about others carries a vibration, a frequency.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will document in their journals those areas of their lives that they struggle speaking about the most. Also, the participants will be encouraged to document in their journals those times and spaces in their lives where their voice was heard, proclaimed, and affirmed.

**TEACHER:** Remind the participants that the Lenten journey is not only a time for reflection, but also a time of revelation. Share the following reflection:

*We know that Jesus had to return home as his Galilean ministry had begun. Even Sonia Sanchez had to break ground as a woman, an African American, a poet and as a single mother. After her marriage to Etheridge Knight ended in divorce in 1970, Sonia would have to return home for a while to live with her father. Like Jesus, she too, would have to face isolation and rejection as she was growing into who she was becoming.*

Also share the following with the participants:

*According to Haki Madhubuti, an African American author, educator and poet who was a leader in the Black Arts Movement (BAM) and the co-founder of Third World Press Publishing, he stated the following in an essay, “Storm Coming: Memoir and History,” in the book SOS-Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader:*

*We came to change the conversation. We arrived not only as very young representatives of ‘the fire next time,’ but as the three-dimensional wind gaining hurricane strength attacking America’s white supremacy as manifested in the politics, economics, education, military, history, psychology, literature, entertainment, health care, urban and rural policies of Western culture. No small task for poets and artists. However, we were as serious as a first love and had excellent teachers and examples.<sup>25</sup>*

The teacher could also mention that in hearing this excerpt of Haki Madhubuti’s essay, one cannot help but think about Jesus coming on the scene to change the conversation as well, becoming a three-dimensional hurricane to release the oppressed. As an active member of the Black Arts Movement (BAM), Sonia Sanchez would also carry that same fire and wind.

Before praying and closing out the lesson, the participants will be introduced to one of Sonia Sanchez’s favorite musicians and artists, jazz saxophonist and composer, John Coltrane, by way of the YouTube clip, “John Coltrane Quartet-‘My Favorite Things.’”<sup>26</sup>

Participants can be reminded that John Coltrane was always on the quest to find the mystical beauty of the universe in a world that struggled with war, racism, social injustice, and poverty.

The participants will receive for their takeaway and reflection, the poem, “This Is Not A Small Voice,” by Sonia Sanchez followed by some critical questions.

25 Haki Madhubuti, “Storm Coming: Memoir and History,” in *SOS-Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* edited by John H. Bracey, Jr., Sonia Sanchez and James Smethurst (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 254.

26 John Coltrane, “My Favorite Things” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWYWgda5f0I> (accessed January 24, 2020).

# Takeaway

## This Is Not a Small Voice

Click [HERE](#) to view "This Is Not a Small Voice"

# Critical Questions

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- 1 • In our Scripture lesson, Luke 4:14-21, it states that Jesus was 'filled with the power of the Spirit.' How has God revealed the power of the Spirit in your life personally, professionally, spiritually, etc.?

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- 2 • Have you, like Sonia Sanchez, experienced a loss (i.e. job, relationship, etc.) as you took a stand for justice? How did this experience shape your journey into arriving at who you be?

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- 3 • How are you changing the conversation against social justice with your voice, gifts and contributions?

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# Unit 3 – Lesson Six: “Revelation: “We Can Be!”

**PRAYER:** *Jesus, rejection is the pill that I must swallow and drink down. Some of my relatives and community members are mad with me now. They are trying to “push” away my sanctified notion of having an experience with you, God. As they surround me with back-up that includes brotherly and sisterly relations, I must accept the bitter taste of rejection as it goes into my mouth and down in my heart. Yet, this too shall pass. I have to keep moving to where you are leading me, God. When I reach a river or a stream, I will drink from it, and as I move and grow, I know that the LORD is with me.*



TITLE

*“Amen, Amen, A woman, A woman, Amen!”*

SCRIPTURE

**Luke 4:22-30**

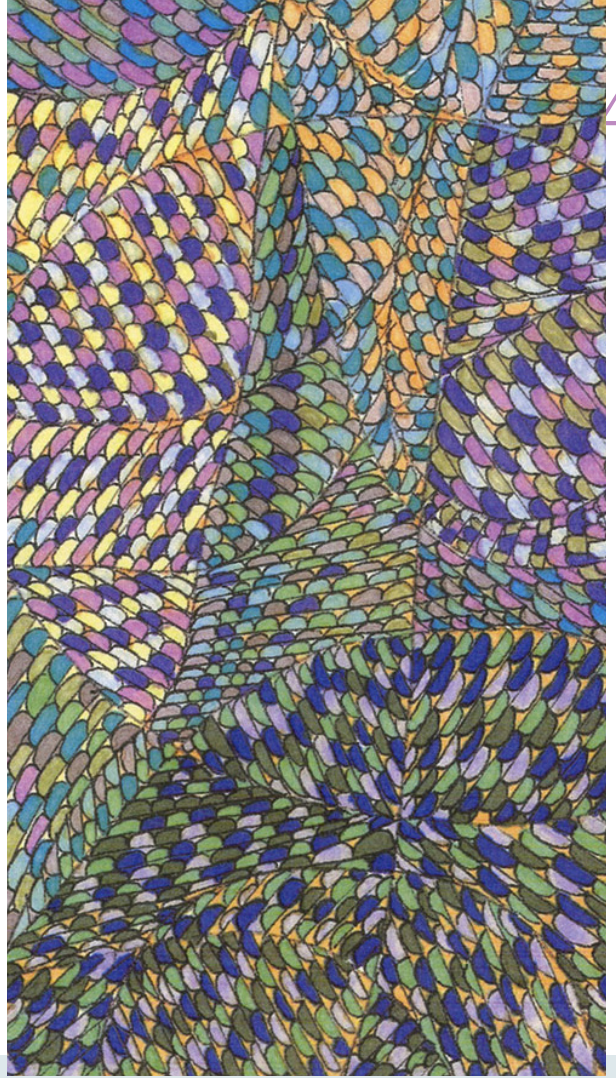
New Revised Standard Version

**SYNOPSIS:** As we near the end of our Lenten journey, we find Jesus in his hometown of Nazareth, blowing the mind of his kinfolk and community; yet their faith that God is speaking through Jesus is mingled with doubt and is based on Jesus’s background and pedigree. As Jesus reminds the people of Nazareth that prophets receive no honor in their native land, and as he is able to exegete the Old Testament accounts of such behavior, all in the synagogue become enraged. They drive Jesus out of town and try to “push” Jesus off the cliff, however, as the text reminds us in Luke 4:30, ‘But he (Jesus) passed through the midst of them and went on his way.’

Amen, Amen, which means ‘so be it’ is normally said after a prayer. The rejection of Jesus at Nazareth did not end with a period, but with a comma because after all of that, Jesus not only went on his way, but he continued to heal, preach, teach, and grow in his Galilean ministry – a ministry that also included women as disciples. “Amen, Amen, A woman, A woman, Amen!”



As we story-link the “push off the cliff” of Jesus that was attempted by those in the synagogue, we find Sonia Sanchez being “pushed” out of New York City during her time as an Assistant Professor of Black Literature and Creative Writing at Manhattan Community College from 1971-1973. She was supporting her students of color who were demanding that the administration be more conscious of the needs of African American and Puerto Rican students. Like Jesus, Sonia Sanchez continued to push through in spite of efforts to destroy her teaching career and livelihood. Like Jesus’s return to Nazareth, Sonia Sanchez was also facing some personal crises in her life. As she stood for social and racial justice, unlike Jesus, she was a single mother with two young children at home and yet her life, like that of Jesus, was a powerful prayer that walked amongst the people and community and stood up to the oppressor. Jesus and Sonia Sanchez wore their rejection like a badge of honor for they knew that ‘a new day’ was on the horizon. “Amen, Amen, A woman, A woman, Amen!”



## TOOLKIT FOR LESSON SIX

# Learning Gumbo

*The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then the Learning Gumbo begins:*

**TEACHER:** Write the following word on the whiteboard: AMEN. The teacher and participants will discuss the significance of this word. Next, write the following based on a phrase normally incorporated into the poetry of Sonia Sanchez, “AMEN, AMEN, A WOMAN, A WOMAN, AMEN.”

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked to reflect on Sonia Sanchez’s use of the word ‘amen’ in this context and their thoughts on it.

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that Sonia Sanchez was bringing awareness to the personal pain and suffering of women, which was just as equal as that of men. The teacher and the participants will listen to the YouTube clip of Sonia Sanchez’s poem, “A Black/Woman/Speaks” from the album, *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*.<sup>27</sup>

27 Sonia Sanchez, “A Black/Woman/Speaks”. On *A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*. Folkways Records & Service Corporation 75-752813, 1971, vinyl recording.

Participants will also view another YouTube clip, "Sonia Sanchez: A Course on the Black Woman."<sup>28</sup>

Write the following word on the whiteboard: REJECTION. The participants and the teacher will share and unpack some moments of rejection to be shared with the group and how they felt during this experience. Ask the participants to close their eyes while the teacher reads aloud Luke 4:22-30 (New Revised Standard Version).

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will open their eyes after the Scripture has been read. Now the teacher will ask the participants not to spiritualize the moment, but to humanize it – to remember that Jesus was both human and divine.

**TEACHER:** Write the following on the whiteboard:

***"How do you think Jesus humanly felt being rejected in his hometown of Nazareth?"***

Also reflect upon the following with the participants as a group discussion:

***This rejection of Jesus in his hometown of Nazareth came after being embraced all throughout Galilee. Jesus's ministry as a healer, teacher and preacher is growing. Yet, Jesus is facing and suffering the pain and rejection by the religious authorities of his day.***

As the participants move through the Lenten journey, remind them that throughout the week, they learned some important contemplative practices like learning how to breathe and write haiku and now they must return home and face their haters.

Share with the participants that even as Sonia Sanchez wrote revolutionary poetry that spoke to the condition of Black people in America, she was facing her own share of personal pain during such a revolutionary and radical time. In an online piece, *Essay: Love and Liberation: Sonia Sanchez's Literary Uses of Personal Pain*, by writer, filmmaker and educator, Kalamu ya Salaam, he shares the following:

***Life for Sanchez has been no crystal stair, particularly in her attempts to actualize a stable woman/man relationship. She has slipped and been tripped, fallen down and sometimes briefly been turned around, but she has never quit, never stop climbing. Sanchez has, with a minimum of whining and with a courageousness and feistiness inversely proportioned to her diminutive body build, demonstrated a remarkable staying power, an archetypal persistence in embodying the advice the old folks constantly admonished: you just got to keep on keeping onto keep on going despite whatever hardships and disappointments you suffer in your personal life.***

***Sonia Sanchez's keeping on has produced a body of work terrible in its honesty about the joys and pains of her personal life as well as profound in the relevance that the lessons drawn from Sanchez's bittersweet years impact to us. Chief among those lessons is a constant refutation of internalized oppression. While there is both greatness and suffering in Sanchez's work, there is no tragedy in the classic sense of the individual suffering because of an alleged fatal flaw in their makeup. As Sanchez sagaciously points out, the majority of our suffering is because of man's inhumanity to man-more specifically, Whites' historic inhumanity to people of color and men's general inhumanity to women.***<sup>29</sup>

28 Sonia Sanchez, "Sonia Sanchez: A Course on the Black Woman." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISn0x008eFI> (accessed January 20, 2020).

29 Kalamu ya Salaam, "Essay: Love and Liberation: Sonia Sanchez's Literary Uses of Personal Pain". Word Up-Kalamu's Words. September 16, 2011. <https://wordup.posthaven.com> (accessed January 15, 2020).

Explore the gender discrimination that Sonia Sanchez must have also experienced as a woman, a Black woman, a single mother with twin boys, a poet, an activist, etc. Share the video from YouTube, "Sonia Sanchez: I Was Pushed Out of New York City."<sup>30</sup>

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The teacher will ask the following question: What if Jesus was a woman, meaning what if God called a sister from Nazareth, with two young sons, to be baptized, go into the desert wilderness to battle with the devil, and to return home to face those in the synagogue? What kind of reception would she have faced? The teacher and the group participants will share their thoughts.

**TEACHER:** The teacher and the participants will view the YouTube clip, "Sonia Sanchez: Harlem Hospital Protest and My Father."<sup>31</sup>

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants and the teacher will sit in a circle. The teacher will present a large image (or artwork) of Jesus being rejected at Nazareth. This image will be placed in the center of the circle. Now it is time to unpack and reflect upon the following:

- **How did Jesus face rejection at Nazareth? How did Sonia Sanchez face rejection as a Black woman and poet/activist in America? How did you face rejection before your Lenten journey? How will you transform your "rejected" space after your Lenten journey as you move on?**
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The goal for each participant is to begin to look at their life as a prayer. The teacher and the participants will begin by saying, "Dear Lord..." as they release their joy, pain, suffering, and expected hope as they, like Jesus, face rejection at its deepest core and move on their way toward liberation.

**TEACHER:** As the teacher and the participants release their words to the universe and close this segment of the exercise, a great meditation song suggestion is John Coltrane's "Dear Lord" which can be played either through YouTube, or a compact disc player.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** Participants can begin to write in their journals some reflections based on the most relevant question of the 21st century according to Sonia Sanchez, "What does it mean to be human?" This could involve participating in a community action project such as a community garden, peace mural, peace site, social justice project, etc.

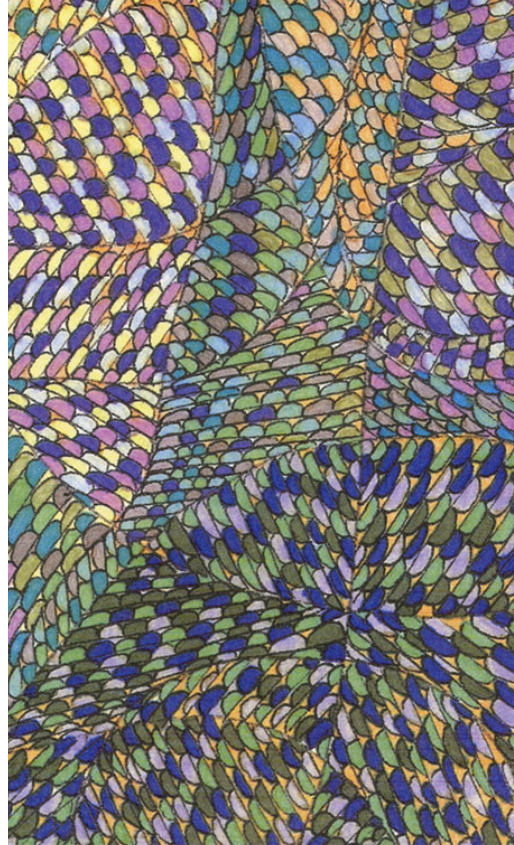
**TEACHER:** Incorporate additional music during this exercise such as John Coltrane's "Wise One." The participants can share one or some of their reflections. Next, play the song, "Feeling Good," by Nina Simone and read aloud the following untitled poem by Sonia Sanchez from *Morning Haiku*:

- **Let me wear the day**
- **Well so when it reaches you**
- **You will enjoy it.<sup>32</sup>**

30 Sonia Sanchez, "Sonia Sanchez: I Was Pushed Out of New York City". <http://www.visionaryproject.org/sanchezsonia> (accessed January 20, 2020).

31 Sonia Sanchez, "Sonia Sanchez: Harlem Hospital Protest and My Father". <http://www.visionaryproject.org/sanchezsonia> (accessed January 20, 2020).

32 Sonia Sanchez, *Morning Haiku*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), Dedication page.





Before praying and closing out the lesson, remind the participants that Holy Week awaits them. As they prepare for the last week of Jesus's earthly life and ministry, they will watch the YouTube clip by Sonia Sanchez, "Put on the Sleeves of Love."<sup>33</sup> Participants will also receive a takeaway as well as a haiku by Sonia Sanchez to meditate upon as they enter Holy Week.

## Takeaway

### As You Move On /As You Wear the Day

On June 10, 2001, in the *Hartford Courant*, an online article, *First Poet of the 10th Season: Sonia Sanchez*, by Kyrie O'Connor, shares the following personal account of Sonia

Sanchez's life:

: *In 1977, she (Sonia Sanchez) accepts a teaching position at Temple University,*  
 : *becoming the first Presidential Scholar and holding the Laura Carnell Chair*  
 : *in English. And she has twin sons-and no time to write. 'Sometimes I would*  
 : *just stop and feel sorry for myself,' she says. But she'd come home, feed*  
 : *the kids, help with the homework, grade papers and then from 12:30a.m.*  
 : *to 3 a.m., write. And then get up at 6. "I tell you frankly, it was killing me,"*  
 : *she says, but this is the way she lived for years. "I could never go away to*  
 : *an artist's colony—I had kids. But I said to myself, 'Oh, Sonia, just go ahead*  
 : *and do it in this strange, raggedy way." Touching one of her books, looking*  
 : *at it, would make her smile and give her energy to go on.*<sup>34</sup>

After Jesus was thrown out of Nazareth, he continued to move on his way and in his ministry. We find Jesus journeying after his rejection in his hometown of Nazareth in Luke 4:31-37 (New Revised Standard Version):

: *He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on*  
 : *the sabbath. They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with*  
 : *authority.*

In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have

<sup>33</sup> Sonia Sanchez, "Put on the Sleeves of Love". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp3zyr-EK-w> (accessed January 24, 2020).

<sup>34</sup> Kyrie O'Connor, "First Poet of the 10th Season: Sonia Sanchez". *Hartford Courant*. June 10, 2001. [courant.com](http://courant.com).



you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

But, Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent and come out of him!” When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm. They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, “What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!” And a report about him began to reach every place in the region.

⋮ *“How to dance*  
⋮ *in blood and*  
⋮ *remain sane?”<sup>35</sup>*

Sonia Sanchez, from “6 Haiku,” *Morning Haiku*

## Unit 4 – Lesson Seven

“Anticipation: Let Me Wear The Day!”

**PRAYER:** *God I am ready to dance, but this will be a hard series of steps as I move toward redemption. Some of my moves on this dance floor will be both bloody and painful. There will be some trauma and some tears, but I will discover my power in the midst of the horror. I must face death in all of its complexities, and say unapologetically that I must experience the pain and agony of Jesus’s death and sit in it so that I will be able to express in my personhood how noble it is to die a good death while you are on assignment with God!*



### TITLE

*“Walk On, Be It, Do It!”  
A Journey Through Holy Week*

### SCRIPTURES

Matthew 21:1-11; 12-17; Matthew 26:47-56,  
Mark 14:22-25; 14:32-42; Mark 15:21-32; 33-41; John 13:1-9

**TEACHER’S NOTE(S):** As the participants reflect on their Lenten journey, the teacher or the Jegnoch, as defined in the methodology of the Lenten journey study guide, must now prepare everyone as they experience Holy Week or Passion Week. The haiku that was left in the takeaway of Lesson Six will be placed on the whiteboard for Lesson Seven and will remain there through the Holy Week lessons. Also, it would be ideal to have it available for the participants to place in their journals as a moment of reflection.

## Course Methodology For Lesson Seven

The course methodology for Lesson Seven will continue to incorporate both the story-linking model as evidenced in *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* by Dr. Anne Streaty Wimberly as well as the Nsaka Sunsum model that was described in the course methodology of the Lenten journey study guide.

For Lesson Seven, we will also introduce “The Dance of Redemption” which is defined by the following:

- ❖ **CONSCIENTIZATION:** When you make a discovery that challenges the assumptions and worldview of others. It may even challenge your faith convictions.
- ❖ **EMANCIPATORY HISTORIOGRAPHY:** What systems are responsible for the oppression that is taking place? Are they social, economic, racial, cultural? What is the response of the church? What is the response of the person of faith?
- ❖ **THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES:** How does our spiritual community uphold and/or hinder the oppressive structures and systems that are harmful to us? Do our worship practices reinforce a sense of oppression or “othering?”
- ❖ **NORM CLARIFICATION:** How are your values clearer? To whom are you accountable? Are you responsible to anyone? Do we allow individuals, groups, communities, etc., to hold a sort of responsibility over us?
- ❖ **STRATEGIC OPTIONS:** Brainstorming. How can I use my discovery? What have I learned?
- ❖ **ANNUNCIATION AND CELEBRATION:** I can’t do this...by myself. Together let us remember, name and celebrate the presence and power that sustains struggle. We have the community to tackle the big issue. A reflection that requires communal conversation and discernment.
- ❖ **REFLECTION/STRATEGIC ACTION:** You are able to look back and see how things have changed, but also to see what kind of work still needs to be done.

In this lesson, we will story-link the seven components of “The Dance of Redemption” with the events of Jesus’s life and ministry that lead to Good Friday and Holy Saturday. One of the challenges is not to instantly speed up to the resurrection of Jesus, or what Christians celebrate as Easter, and what in the Christian year is defined as “Eastertide.” It is important that the teacher allow the participants to undergo the process of suffering and trauma that Jesus endured as well as those who followed him in those final moments before and after his death on the cross. It is in our suffering that we find our greatest strength and power. This issue of human suffering and trauma is vividly examined in the book *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* by Shelly Rambo. In exploring the aftermath of trauma, the author shares the following:

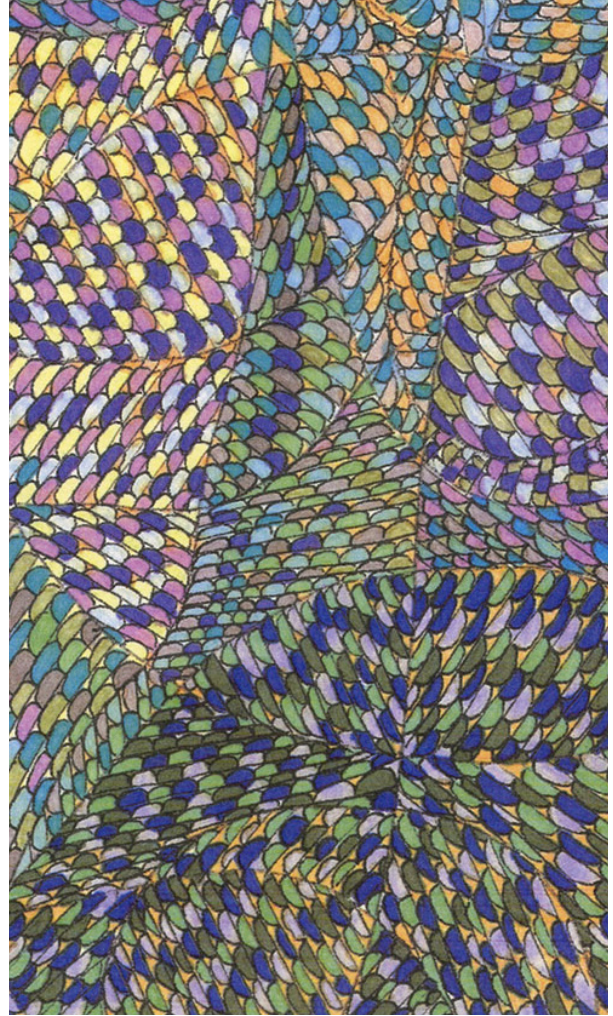
: *In the aftermath of trauma, death and life no longer stand in opposition. Instead, death*  
 : *haunts life. The challenge for those who experience trauma is to move in a world in*  
 : *which the boundaries and parameters of life and death no longer seem to hold, to*  
 : *provide meaning. The challenge for those who take seriously the problem of trauma is to*  
 : *witness trauma in all of its complexities—to account for the ongoing experience of death*  
 : *in life. The challenge, for both, is to forge a path of healing amid all of the complexities.*<sup>36</sup>

36 Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 3.

In other words, we know that Jesus was both human and divine. Jesus underwent the total experience of a human death, and those who witnessed his execution on the cross also bore the trauma of this event. The goal of our lesson is how do we continue to move during the death walk and trauma, and what do we learn in terms of our strengths during this period of mourning which can relate to what we know of as Holy Saturday.

This lesson will consist of a series of movements. For Holy Week many churches have Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. This lesson will be based on movements that will also incorporate the Nsaka Sunsum praxis of "Expressive Personhood." In practicing expressive personhood, the teacher consciously integrates the participants' personal feelings, thoughts, and actions.

The teacher openly encourages the distinctive learning styles and language of the participants. This can be achieved in the classroom by stressing oral, aural, visual, tactile, and movement virtuosity. Participants are encouraged to speak and express themselves confidently. The classroom decor reflects the culture, race and ethnicity of all the students in the room.



- ❖ **SYNOPSIS FOR LESSON SEVEN (ALL MOVEMENTS):** For Christians, Holy Week is one of the most significant times in the life of the believer. It is the last week of the Lenten season. Holy Week precedes Easter Sunday (Resurrection Sunday) and includes the entire week between Palm Sunday and Holy Saturday.

The metaphor of dance will be used throughout this lesson or series of movements. Our focus will continue to story-link the last days of Jesus with the life of poet/activist/educator Sonia Sanchez. In our journey through Holy Week, we will focus on Sonia Sanchez in her later years and her activism that began as a new day and now allows her to wear the day! Behind the metaphor of this new day is a sense of liberation of spirit, mind and body which, under the layers of this beautiful garment, embodies identity. In *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*, Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, writes about, "The Dance of Redemption,"

*The theory that informs my womanist pedagogy imaged as wheels in the middle of wheels can be summed up in the definition of liberation ethics that I created in 1981 when I was a tutor in the Introduction to Christian Ethics class with Beverly Harrison at Union Theological Seminary in New York. When asked by students to define the special nature of "liberation ethics," I wrote the following on the chalkboard:*

**Liberation ethics is debunking, unmasking, and disentangling the ideologies, theologies, and systems of value operative in a particular society.**

**How is it done?**

**By analyzing the established power relationships that determine cultural, political, and**

economic presuppositions and by evaluating the legitimating myths that sanction the enforcement of such values.

*Why is it worth doing?*

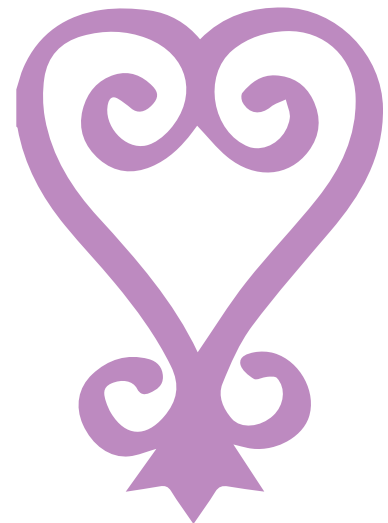
**In order that we may become responsible decision-makers who envision structural and systematic alternatives that embrace the well-being of us all.<sup>37</sup>**

We will use this model, “The Dance of Redemption,” as a framework that unpacks Jesus’s journey to the cross. The creativity and life witness of Sonia Sanchez the poet, mother, professor and activist, will also be utilized. In reflecting on the ever-evolving revolutionary of pen, paper and spoken word, Sonia Sanchez stated the following in *I Dream A World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America*:

*I used to say in glib fashion in my 1960s days, “I write because that way I don’t kill anyone.” It was oh, so dramatic. But I write to keep in contact with our ancestors and to spread truth to people.<sup>38</sup>*

In the Nsaka Sunsum teaching model, we will explore “Expressive Personhood” where the participants will integrate their personal thoughts, feelings and actions as they examine Holy Week. Also, in preserving the Nsaka Sunsum methodology introduced in our Lenten journey, the power of the dance beckons to our immediate context as we keep one eye on the lens of our ancestors and the other eye on the horizon before us. This is best defined in what we term as Sankofa, an Adinkra symbol from Ghana, West Africa which means “go back and fetch it.”

Dance in our African context was much more than a physical sensation. It was a spiritual activity that empowered and transformed everything and everyone around it. According to the book, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* by Barbara A. Holmes, “Dance—more than any other form of worship—is bodily prayer.”<sup>39</sup>



37 Katie Geneva Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. (New York: Continuum, 1995, 140).

38 Lanker, Brian Lanker, *I Dream A World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America*. (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1989).

39 Barbara A Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable*, 102.



## TOOLKIT FOR LESSON SEVEN

# Expressive Personhood

*The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Expressive Personhood begins:*

**MOVEMENT ONE/CONSCIENTIZATION:** When you make a discovery that challenges the assumptions and worldview of others. It may even challenge your faith convictions.

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that *Movement One* will involve Palm Sunday, or Jesus’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This movement could occur as a Sunday school lesson. Review and read aloud the following haiku by Sonia Sanchez:

: **How to dance**  
 : **in blood and**  
 : **remain sane?**  
 :  
 : **Sonia Sanchez, from “6 Haiku,” Morning Haiku**

Inform the participants that it is believed that this haiku was inspired by the Middle Passage where thousands – and it is believed millions – of enslaved Africans died on slave ships. Participants will learn that blood plays an important role in this chapter of Jesus’s life in that he and the disciples were entering Jerusalem for the Passover. Review and define what happened in the original Passover in the book of Exodus. Participants will also be introduced to the focus on “anticipation” and learning to how to wear the day, based on the poem by Sonia Sanchez on page 53 of our Lenten journey guide.

The teacher will play the song, “Are You Gonna Go My Way,” by Lenny Kravitz.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked, “Do you feel Jesus in this song?” The teacher will inform the participants that this song, by musician, songwriter and singer Lenny Kravitz, was inspired by the life of Jesus.

**TEACHER:** Ask a participant to read aloud Matthew 21:1-11 (New Revised Standard Version).

**TEACHER:** Write on the whiteboard the following:

**“A big chair does not make a king.” — Sudanese Proverb**

As the participants and the teacher unpack the Sudanese (African) Proverb and the “humility of Jesus” as a king, the teacher can then introduce the participants to “The Dance of Redemption” and the developer of this model, the Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon. Great resources on the life and academic achievements of the [Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon](#). Additional bibliographic resources can also be found online at the [Katie Geneva Cannon Research Collection](#) located on the Union Presbyterian Seminary Library website.

The participants will learn that our Holy Week movements will involve not only “The Dance of Redemption” but also our poet-in residence for our Lenten journey, Dr. Sonia Sanchez.

Introduce the first step of the dance – **Conscientization**: When you make a discovery that challenges the assumptions and worldview of others. It may even challenge your faith convictions.

**PARTICIPANT(S)**: Participants will be asked the following question: What is the biggest assumption Jesus has broken about the Kingdom of God based on our lesson text, Matthew 21:1-11? Their reflections can be documented in their journals.

**TEACHER**: As the participants reflect on the question, play the YouTube video, “Sonia Sanchez-Enslaved People.”<sup>40</sup> The participants will be asked to “move on the idea of being free” based on a thought by Sonia Sanchez mentioned in the video. After the video, distribute to the participants a handout of “The Dance of Redemption” based on Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon’s model found on pages 58 of the Lenten study guide. Also share a handout with the following inspired reflections based on “Sonia Sanchez’s Enslaved People” video:

- ❖ **MOVEMENT ONE: Sonia’s Reflection: Move on the idea of being free.**  
**Conscientization** *Jesus Entering Jerusalem* Matthew – 21:1-11
- ❖ **MOVEMENT TWO: Sonia’s Reflection: I am not here to get something from you, I have something to give to you.**  
**Emancipatory Historiography** *Jesus Cleanses the Temple* Matthew – 21:12-17
- ❖ **MOVEMENT THREE: Sonia’s Reflection: Where else are we on this earth?**  
**Theological Resources** *Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet* – John 13:1-20
- ❖ **MOVEMENT FOUR: Sonia’s Reflection: Move to a different level in this world.**  
**Norm Clarification** *The Last Supper* Mark – 14:22-25
- ❖ **MOVEMENT FIVE: Sonia’s Reflection: How are we holding people accountable?**  
**Strategic Options** *Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane* Mark – 14:32-42
- ❖ **MOVEMENT SIX: Sonia’s Reflection: We will not wallow! What does it mean to be human?**  
**Annunciation and Celebration** *The Arrest and Crucifixion of Jesus* – Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 15:21-32
- ❖ **MOVEMENT SEVEN: Sonia’s Reflection: Where is the history we are making? What are you doing now? How are we living now? What are we moving to now?**  
**Reflection/Strategic Action** *The Death of Jesus* – Mark 15:33-41

40 Sonia Sanchez, “Sonia Sanchez: Enslaved People”. <http://www.visionaryproject.org/sanchezsonia> (accessed January 14, 2020).

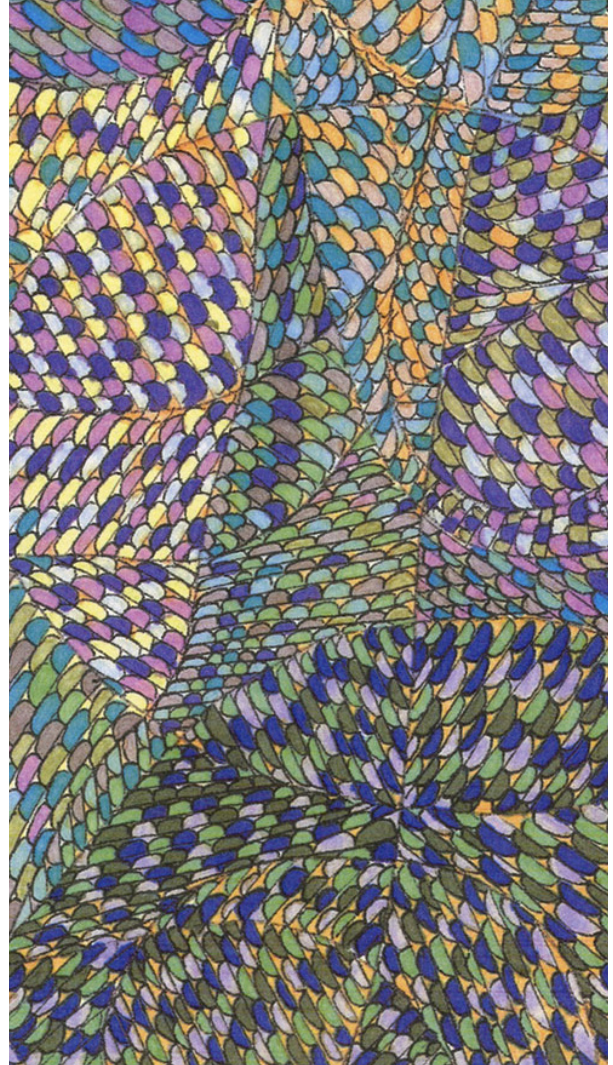
## Movement One

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that this is our plan as we undergo our Holy Week with Jesus. Participants will be asked to share their reflections in terms of the assumptions that Jesus broke about the Kingdom of God.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participant will see a large image of a young donkey displayed in the middle of the classroom with the word: *Conscientization/Movement One*. A transparent sheet will be placed over the image so that notes can be written on it. Participants will be encouraged by the teacher to get into a sacred circle and quietly walk toward the donkey and lay upon it by writing one word that speaks to their conscious about Jesus entering Jerusalem. After writing their word, they are to sit quietly and reflectively.

**TEACHER:** At the end of this exercise as *Movement Two: Emancipatory Historiography* begins, remind the participants to move on the idea of being free.

Participants will be asked to stretch and physically move as a free person, creatively and spiritually. Now that they are free, they must tear down any oppressive barriers to their freedom and that of others. End with a closing prayer or with a reflective prayer to continue to *Movement Two* if time permits.



## Movement Two

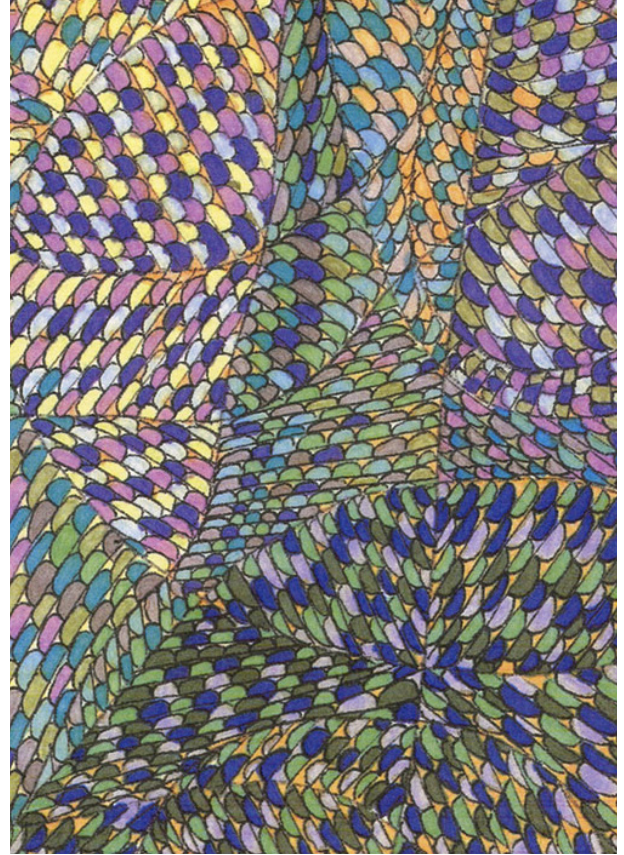
- ❖ **MOVEMENT TWO/EMANCIPATORY HISTORIOGRAPHY:** What systems are responsible for the oppression that is taking place? Are they social, economic, racial, cultural? What is the response of the church? What is the response of the person of faith?

**The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Expressive Personhood begins:**

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that *Movement Two* will involve Jesus cleansing the temple. Participants and the teacher should review *Movement One* and how they were inspired by Sonia Sanchez to move on the idea of being free as we story-linked this powerful insight to Jesus entering Jerusalem or what we termed in the Christian faith as Palm Sunday. This lesson or movement could be a continuation of *Movement One* or a part of a special weekday reflection for Holy Week. Review or read aloud the following haiku by Sonia Sanchez:

- *How to dance*
- *in blood and*
- *remain sane?*
- *Sonia Sanchez, from "6 Haiku," Morning Haiku*





Participants will be informed that normally this is not a part of a Holy Week reflection, but it is an important moment in the life of the church and the believer to look at oppression in all of its forms, especially those found in the church. Address the radical Jesus, who broke gender discrimination by having women as disciples, healed on the Sabbath, hung out with publicans and sinners and even turned over a few tables of the money changers in the church. As we move to the second step of “The Dance of Redemption,” we will examine *Emancipatory Historiography: Where is the oppression coming from?* Is it social, economic, cultural, racial? How is the church responding? How are the people of faith responding?

Begin this lesson by having a participant read aloud Matthew 21:12-17 (New Revised Standard Version).

**PARTICIPANT(S):** Participants will be introduced to the following excerpt of the temple incident based on the book *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* by Bruce Chilton:

• *The vendors were busy transacting business on large stone tables within the colonnades around the great Court. Tethered cattle, sheep and goats bellowed and bleated in fright, birds fluttered, squawked, and moaned the lament of doves to their cages. In the Temple where Jesus had intended to enact the vision of Zechariah, he found a direct contradiction of Zechariah’s prophecy. He felt a catastrophic collision between what he had expected to find and what was actually there...Three days after his initial visit to the Temple he returned, after walking from Bethany early in the morning with thirty male followers...His followers moved in squads. They overturned the vendors’ tables, released the birds, untethered animals and drove them out the ceremonial gate on the west side of the Temple. The vendors yelled and shouted in outrage and horror. Some were pushed and dragged out of the Temple by Jesus’ followers.<sup>41</sup>*

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that often they will see paintings or images of Jesus driving out the money changers who were defiling the Temple but Jesus had a following who was also supporting him in his struggle against the oppressors who had seized what we know today as the institutionalized church. This image is not often dealt with, but we know that the Pharisees and Sadducees were in collusion and collision with the Roman empire. As a result, their religious authority and rank was preserved before the people, but corruption had now entered the hearts, minds, and religious rituals of the Temple.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** As the participants reflect on this, they will examine the second movement of *Emancipatory Historiography*. The following questions will be explored: What are some of the oppressive tendencies in the church that challenge them, that they would like to see overturned? How does the church challenge oppressive powers? How does the church become complicit in oppression? How do we as people of faith challenge/submit to oppression?

41 Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography*. (New York: Doubleday, Random House, 2000, 227-228).

**TEACHER:** This is a think-tank moment as the participants and the teacher explore these questions as a group discussion and more as they reflect on this moment in the Temple. These questions can be placed on the whiteboard or can be placed on a separate sheet to be viewed by participants at their desks or tables.

After the think-tank reflection, the teacher and participants will view the You Tube clip by Sonia Sanchez, "2008: Sonia Sanchez-Middle Passage."<sup>42</sup> Ask the participants how does this moment compare/contrast to the first century oppression that Jesus, a Palestinian Jew, saw in terms of God's people by the religious authorities.

Offer a reflection from "Sonia Sanchez's Enslaved People," a YouTube video from *Movement One*. In paraphrasing her thoughts, the teacher and the participants will reflect on the following: "I am not here to get something from you, I have something to give to you." Sonia Sanchez declares in the video that she is an equal.

**TEACHER'S NOTE:** It is important that the image that the teacher uses for Jesus in *Movement Two* displays Jesus in his true ethnicity, not based on the European image that has been a part of the Renaissance art period for centuries. Also, the image of the donkey that was used for *Movement One* should not be too far away.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** In the middle of the room, participants will see a large image of Jesus driving out the money changers. It will have these words: *Emancipatory Historiography/Movement Two*. A transparent sheet will be placed over the image of Jesus driving out the money changers. The participants will once again write one word that they would like to see Jesus give them the power to overturn in terms of oppression. After writing their word they are to sit quietly and reflectively. The teacher and students will view the YouTube clip, "Sonia Sanchez: My Family/Growing Up in Birmingham."<sup>43</sup> The reflection/question for the participants and teacher to ponder is: Through poetry, how did Sonia Sanchez cleanse and overturn the story of her herstory/history?

**TEACHER:** At the end of this exercise as *Movement Three: Theological Resources* begins, remind the participants to focus on what they are going to give. Participants will be asked to stretch and physically move as a person ready to give something, creatively and spiritually. Now that they are ready to give they must cleanse any toxic spaces and speak a liberating word or words into their life and that of others. End with a closing prayer or with a reflective prayer to continue to *Movement Three* if time permits.

42 Sonia Sanchez, "2008: Sonia Sanchez—Middle Passage". <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=P98JZhWUijY> (accessed January 20, 2020).

43 Sanchez, Sonia. "My Family/Growing Up in Birmingham". <http://www.visionaryproject.org/sanchezsonia> (accessed January 20, 2020).

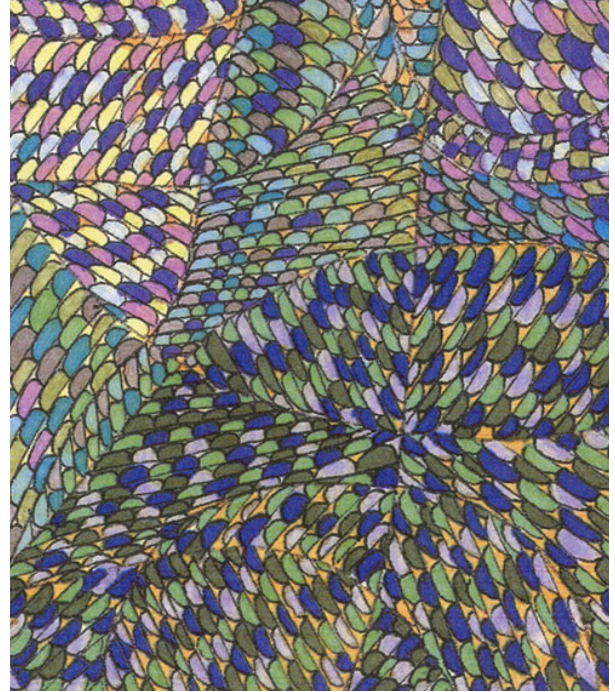


## Movement Three

### ❖ MOVEMENT THREE/THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

How does our spiritual community uphold and/or hinder the oppressive structures and systems that are harmful to us? Do our worship practices reinforce a sense of oppression or "othering?"

**The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Expressive Personhood begins:**



**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that Movement Three will involve Jesus washing the disciples' feet. This lesson can be a part of a Maundy Thursday service. Review or read aloud the following haiku by Sonia Sanchez:

*How to dance*

*in blood and*

*remain sane?*

*Sonia Sanchez, from "6 Haiku," Morning Haiku*

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will explore the following thought offered by Sonia Sanchez from the YouTube clip, "Sonia Sanchez-Enslaved People": "Where else are we on this earth?" Sonia Sanchez challenges us to move forward and find ourselves, beyond the slavery and bondage, as free and creative people of African descent all over the world. In exploring *Movement Three: Theological Resources* how does the church suppress our creative lens by keeping Jesus in this holy, holy, holy place and denying his humanity?

**TEACHER:** Show on a PowerPoint a huge pair of dirty feet. Participants will be asked to imagine washing the feet of guests who arrived in first century Palestinian homes. Even with sandals, feet would carry not only dirt and mud but possibly human and animal waste on them. As Jesus was moving toward the fulfillment of his ministry, he was demonstrating a radical and creative messiah who allowed God to improvise his movements from Jesus to Christ.

A participant will read aloud John 13: 1-9 (New Revised Standard Version).

Share with the participants that this moment is not only about the humility of Jesus to wash the disciples' feet, but the power of Jesus to use his hands to transform an ordinary moment into an extraordinary act.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked how have they used their hands to defy moments in their church that allow oppression to enter (i.e., by writing/painting positive affirmations about members of our humanity who have been viewed as the "other," etc.). This can be a group discussion with the teacher and participants.

**TEACHER:** Also explore Sonia Sanchez's quote: "Where else are we on this earth?" by showing individuals of African descent throughout the world. This could be a PowerPoint presentation or a series of laminated images (possibly from National Geographic) that the participants could look at personally and touch.

Share the YouTube video, "A Conversation with Sonia Sanchez."<sup>44</sup> The teacher may want to begin this video at 13 minutes and 41 seconds (13:41). In her voice as the *praiser* and the poet, Sonia shares the power of resistance, how we should break into a dance of butterflies against lies, having hands that reach out to humankind. The teacher and participants can share their reflections about Jesus' act of washing the disciples' feet and thoughts from "A Conversation with Sonia Sanchez."

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will see either on the whiteboard or on the table before them, the question that Sonia Sanchez stated that we must ponder in the 21st century, "What does it mean to be human?" Participants will be asked to think about that question and write their thoughts in their journals.

The participants will see a large image of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. These words: *Theological Resources/Movement Three* will be placed in the middle of the classroom. The images from *Movement One* and *Movement Two* should also be in the room. A transparent sheet will be placed over the image so that words can be written on it. Participants will be asked to write one word that could describe how they could use their hands. For example, some words could include: heal, harvest, share, gather, etc. After writing their words, the participants will sit quietly and reflectively.

**TEACHER:** Create a Maundy Thursday moment of reflection for the participants to wash their feet and/or wash their hands. At Faith Community Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia where the author/curriculum developer of this Lenten journey guide serves as an Associate Pastor, their Maundy Thursday Service involves the washing of hands since our hands have been exposed to more unclean moments in the world than our feet. Soft environmental or sacred music can be played during the time of the washing of hands or feet.

At the end of this exercise as *Movement Four: Norm Clarification* begins, remind the participants to continue to discover where we as people of African descent are throughout the world. Participants will be asked to stretch and physically move as a global person, creatively and spiritually. End with a closing prayer or with a reflective prayer to continue to *Movement Four* if time permits.

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44 Sonia Sanchez, "A Conversation with Sonia Sanchez". <http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcEDSgSA8A> (accessed January 20, 2020).

## Movement Four

### ❖ MOVEMENT FOUR/NORM CLARIFICATION:

How are your values clearer? To whom are you accountable? Are you responsible to anyone? Do we allow individuals, groups, communities, etc., to hold a sort of responsibility over us?

**The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Expressive Personhood begins:**

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that *Movement Four* will explore The Last Supper. This lesson can be part of a Maundy Thursday service or part of a special workshop. Begin by showing the famous painting of "The Last Supper" by artist Leonardo da Vinci. In this painting, we find Jesus and his disciples seated in chairs. This iconic image adorned many homes, particularly in the African American community. Participants will learn or rediscover that according to traditional dining customs during the time of Jesus, persons sat on cushions and often reclined and ate. Present PowerPoint images that demonstrate this "non-traditional" image in action. Review or read aloud the following haiku by Sonia Sanchez:

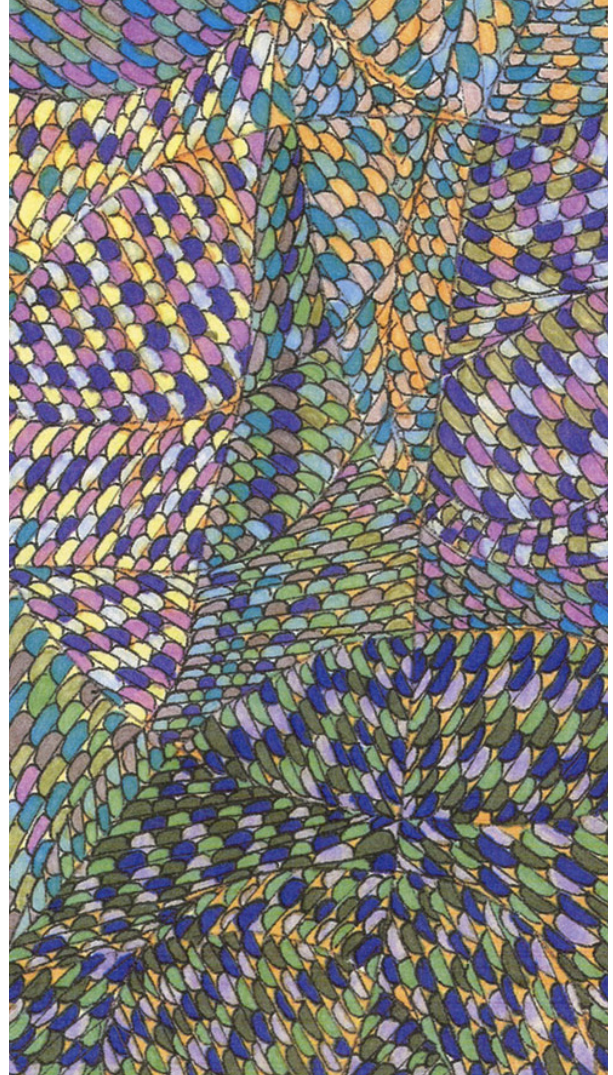
⋮ **How to dance**  
 ⋮ **in blood and**  
 ⋮ **remain sane?**  
 ⋮ **Sonia Sanchez, from "6 Haiku" Morning Haiku**

Ask a participant to read aloud Mark 14:22-25 (New Revised Standard Version).

Begin by exploring the fact that those of us who have participated in what we as Christians know as Holy Communion, have intimately aligned the words and actions of Jesus, the bread and the wine, to his flesh and his blood. This moment, in its holiness and reverence as we know, was filled with both intrigue and betrayal. Jesus and his disciples previously had intimate private meals together but this one was different; this was a flesh and blood dinner invite. Blood is the motif during this time of Passover, and before the blood of Jesus would be shed, it would be deposited into the disciples as a symbol of empowerment as well as redemption.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will learn that *Movement Four* will be exploring the following from *Norm Clarification*: Are we clear in our values? Is there any accountability and responsibility running warm like the blood in our veins? Do we allow individuals, groups, and communities to hold responsibility over us? Also, the participants are story-linking the quote from poet/activist Dr. Sonia Sanchez from her YouTube video, "Enslaved People," that instructs us to "Move to a different level in this world."

**TEACHER:** Move to Sonia Sanchez's involvement with the hip-hop generation. The 'blood' of her Black Arts/Black Power Movement was being intravenously and spiritually transfused into a younger hip-hop and rap





music genre. Participants will view the YouTube clip, "Sonia Sanchez: My Involvement with Rappers."<sup>45</sup>

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will share feedback from the YouTube video featuring Sonia Sanchez. How was her moment at the table with her sons and their friends transformative? As we story-link Sonia Sanchez's moment with her sons about rap music/culture with Jesus and the disciples as they struggle to understand Jesus as he moves their meal to another level, what are some of the values that are being challenged and confronted? As the group discussion is shared, those thoughts and reflections can be shared on the whiteboard.

**TEACHER:** Share with the participants the following excerpt by Sonia Sanchez from an online website, 50BOLD, in an interview, "A Conversation with the Eminent Sonia Sanchez" by Angela Kinamore:

**50BOLD:** *Over the years, you've often spoken about the word "resist." Can you discuss the importance of resisting injustices?*

**Sonia:** *We have to resist my sister! Robert Hayden, a great Black poet said, 'It is time to call the children into the evening quiet of the living room and teach them the lessons of their blood.' That's what we have to do! And these lessons are to be mindful of...the way you walk, how you talk, what you drink, what you put in your mouth, who you love, who you bring into your sacred space, how you educate yourself, how you take in information. All of these things are important to understand. And it's important that we also deal with language, we need to learn language which is why I teach literature; that's why I teach writing. Literature assures [us]that our life goes on, that it doesn't end, that the story is left unfinished for the next generation to continue and keep it going. And the point is to remind people that they come from a bloodline of Black educators, women, and men, who in a sense, reconstructed themselves after being enslaved. They literally reconstructed themselves after being enslaved. They answered life with a yes. They didn't go around killing people but they answered life affirmatively. They kneeled down at the sound of love, of family, of books, of freedom, of roots...We waited for our children to be born...And we rescued our tongue from mourning...<sup>46</sup>*

**PARTICIPANT(S):** For *Movement Four/Norm Clarification*, the participants and the teacher will become both art and life personified. Using cushions, mats and a large mat for a makeshift table, the teacher and participants will recline like Jesus and the disciples in the center of the classroom, and will reflect on all that has been shared. A sign indicating that this is *Movement Four/Norm Clarification* will be placed on the makeshift table. The images from *Movements One, Two and Three* should also be displayed in the room. The participants will view the YouTube video, "Sonia Sanchez: These Are Dangerous Times."<sup>47</sup> The teacher and the participants will share in Holy Communion. Each participant will end this moment with a sentence prayer.

**TEACHER:** At the end of this exercise as *Movement Five: Strategic Options* begins, remind the participants to move to a different level in this world. Participants will be asked to stretch and physically move as a person going to a different level, creatively and spiritually. End with a closing prayer or with a reflective prayer to continue to *Movement Five* if time permits.

45 Sonia Sanchez, "Sonia Sanchez: My Involvement with Rappers". <http://www.visionaryproject.org/sanchezsonia> (accessed January 20, 2020).

46 Sanchez, Sonia. "A Conversation with the Eminent Sonia Sanchez". Interview by Angela Kinamore. 50Bold. December 2017. <https://50bold.com/conversation-eminant-sonia-sanchez/>.

47 Sanchez, Sonia. "Sonia Sanchez-These Are Dangerous Times." YouTube video, 4:29. Posted [February 2016]. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=FL6fipgFdnE>.

## Movement Five

### ❖ MOVEMENT FIVE/STRATEGIC OPTIONS:

Brainstorming. How can I use my discovery? What have I learned?

**The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Expressive Personhood begins:**

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that *Movement Five* will explore Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. This lesson can be part of a Maundy Thursday service or part of a special workshop. Review or read aloud the following haiku by Sonia Sanchez:



**How to dance  
in blood and  
remain sane?**

**Sonia Sanchez, from "6 Haiku" Morning Haiku**

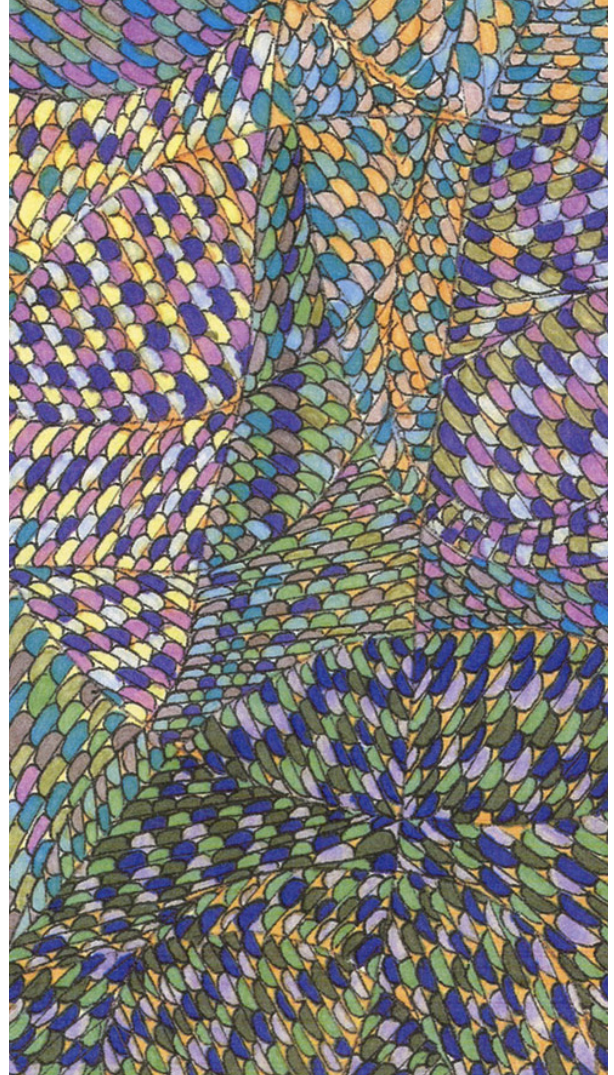
**TEACHER:** Share with the participants that many of us, as Christians, are aware of the events of The Last Supper and the betrayal of Judas. Then we find ourselves in that familiar story with Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane, where some of the disciples are asked to stay awake as Jesus goes into prayer with God. Jesus asks Abba (Father God) if he can avoid the cup of death, that of crucifixion. We see the humanity of Jesus being manifested; no one wants to die by way of the cross – not even Jesus. But then there is a moment, a slight gap where Jesus doesn't change his mind; instead he accepts what is coming.

Remind the participants in *Movement Five* that they will story-link what Sonia Sanchez states in her "Enslaved People" video clip, "How are we holding people accountable?" with the following regarding Strategic Options as it relates to "The Dance of Redemption": Brainstorming. How do I use my discovery? What have I learned?

Ask a participant to read aloud Mark 14:32-42 (New Revised Standard Version).

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked: What type of Jesus do we find in the Garden of Gethsemane in the Gospel of Mark? What does this very human moment in the life of Jesus in the Garden show us about our walk with God as we seek the divine in our lives?

**TEACHER:** After the participants respond, the teacher may even mention (if it has not already been stated) that we find a Jesus who was agitated, grieved, depressed, possibly suicidal. The teacher may want to mention that it is hard for us to imagine Jesus as being suicidal but it is interesting that he took three disciples with him, that he was deeply grieved to the point of death, and he instructs the disciples to stay awake. Jesus knew that his time or his hour had come for the next level. But for a moment the teacher will return the participants to the intimate moment that Jesus has with God. Something occurs that gives Jesus the strength to accept both the betrayal and death by crucifixion. Some may say it was the Holy Spirit, or that Jesus was fully divine as well as being fully human. But there is an interesting moment, almost a glitch in the text in verse 36, where we find the





yet; there is some type of transformation that begins to take place.

Share with the participants a story-link moment back to Sonia Sanchez. In *Rookie Magazine*, we find a wonderful article, *Just Listen: An Interview With Sonia Sanchez*. The following is an excerpt from the Sonia Sanchez' interview with Diamond Sharp:

**What is the most important thing you've learned during your career as a writer? If you can pick out a single thing what would that be?**

*You can't do a single thing. My life, at 83, is an accumulation of lots of reading, poetry, and other books. Lots of listening. You know, the most important thing to do is to listen. I went to teach at Amherst College and my writing class during the fall was so beautiful. My first classes were held outdoors. We sat on the grass. I made them listen. They said, "Listen for what?" I said, "Listen. Just listen." They began to write about what they heard. We don't ever listen. We need to listen to each other. We're so busy ready to tell what we know. Listen. I still have that love affair with listening...<sup>48</sup>*

The teacher can also convey that even in the midst of these beautiful moments of listening, Sonia Sanchez was breaking new ground as the first African American woman professor at Amherst. According to Sonia Sanchez's *Poetic Spirit Through Haiku*, we discover the following in regard to Sonia Sanchez's experience as a professor at Amherst College:

**Although a gifted teacher she had to struggle, a Black womanist poet and professor in overwhelmingly white settings...<sup>49</sup>**

In *Under A Soprano Sky*, Sonia Sanchez shares the following from "Notes From A Journal" also based on her experience as a professor at Amherst College:

***the class was crowded. how to teach creative writing to 40 students? Amherst was a terrifying time for me, not the town itself. there was beauty laid out so expensively against the sky that men looked cheap in comparison. but the death songs tattooed on men's tongues rising as gold dust in new england classrooms. and their women. bodies out of control ready to explode and burst into any hell.<sup>50</sup>***

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked if they see a correlation between what Sonia Sanchez is sharing and what Jesus is enduring and the disciples' inability to stay awake. How are we holding people accountable?

**TEACHER:** Use this Scripture as an interesting brainstorming session with the participants. For example, share with the participants if the disciples stayed awake each time Jesus returned, would it have changed the narrative about his arrest? No. But maybe Jesus in his agitated and distressed state just needed the disciples to have his back now that it was against the wall. Maybe it is not about obedience, but just having support.

In story-linking back to Sonia Sanchez, she was a professor and the first African American woman to teach at Amherst College located in Amherst, Massachusetts. This period of her academic career occurred between 1972-1975 after she was banned from teaching in New York because of her social justice stance with the

48 Sonia Sanchez, "Just Listen: An Interview with Sonia Sanchez". Interview by Diamond Sharp. *Rookie Magazine* (Issue 75). November 6, 2017. <http://www.rookiemag.com/2017/11/just-listen-interview-sonia-sanchez/>.

49 John Zheng, *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit Through Haiku*, 57.

50 Sonia Sanchez, *Under A Soprano Sky*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1987), 98.

students at Manhattan Community College. As a single mother of twin boys, Sonia Sanchez was writing, teaching, loving, learning, struggling, striving, and living.

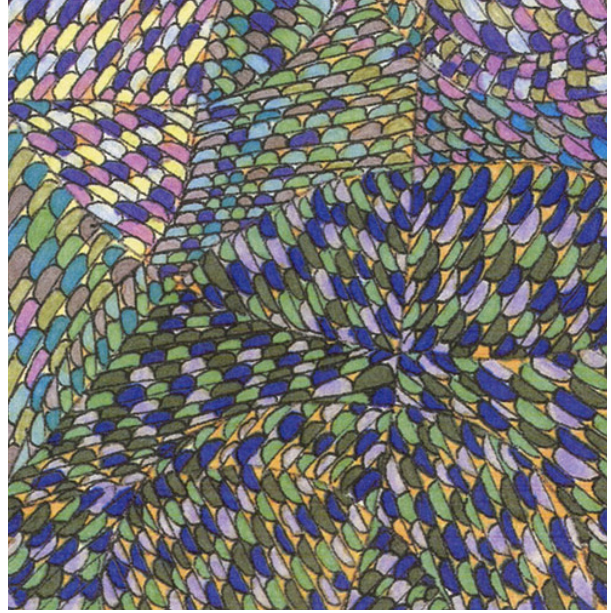
Present the YouTube video, "Sonia Sanchez-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Symposium."<sup>51</sup> Dr. Sanchez delivered the keynote address at the second annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Symposium in 2018 at Amherst College. Fast forward to the wonderful introduction by Jean Moss, a storyteller and former Associate Dean of students at Amherst College, as she shares about the labor and the fatigue that Sonia Sanchez pushed and pressed through. There are some interesting moments in the video as Sonia Sanchez lectures while being in a cold room. We also see her wisdom nuggets on courage and resistance. The video is lengthy so the teacher may need to shorten it and share the second portion at another time.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** Participants will share with the teacher their reflections from the video. The participants will see a large image of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane with the words: *Strategic Options/Movement Five* placed in the middle of the classroom. The images from *Movements One* through *Four* should also be in the room. A transparent sheet will be placed over the image so that words can be written on it. Participants will share one word that answers the question: What did you discover or learn from Jesus or from the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane? After writing their words, the participants will sit quietly and reflectively.

**TEACHER:** At the end of this exercise as *Movement Six: Annunciation and Celebration* begins, remind the participants to always take time to listen, brainstorm, and discover. Participants will be asked to stretch and physically move as a person who is holding people accountable with integrity and authenticity and to learn to actively listen to the people and the world that surrounds them. End with a closing prayer or with a reflective prayer to continue to *Movement Six* if time permits.

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51 Amherst College. "Sonia Sanchez: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Symposium." January 2018. <https://www.amherst.edu>.



## Movement Six

- ❖ **MOVEMENT SIX/ANNUNCIATION AND CELEBRATION:** I can't do this...by myself. Together let us remember, name and celebrate the presence and power that sustains struggle. We have the community to tackle the big issue. A reflection that requires communal conversation and discernment.

**The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Expressive Personhood begins:**

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that *Movement Six* will examine the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. This lesson can accompany a Maundy Thursday service or be introduced as a special lesson with an emphasis on Good Friday. Review or read aloud the following haiku by Sonia Sanchez:

*How to dance  
in blood and  
remain sane?*

*Sonia Sanchez, from "6 Haiku" Morning Haiku*

**TEACHER:** Participants will be instructed that this lesson will not go through the entire narrative of the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. It will highlight pivotal moments but will require the participants to meditate in their private time on all the details leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus.

The focus of *Annunciation and Celebration* in *Movement Six* will story-link the following thoughts and reflections from Sonia Sanchez based on her YouTube video, "Sonia Sanchez-Enslaved People":

*For the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: "We will not wallow."  
For the crucifixion of Jesus: "What does it mean to be human?"*

As the participants reflect on the arrest of Jesus in the Garden, the teacher can revisit with the participants the original definition of "Annunciation and Celebration" based on the "The Dance of Redemption": I can't do this...by myself. Together let us remember, name and celebrate the presence and power that sustains struggle. We have the community to tackle the big issue. A reflection that requires communal conversation and discernment.

Ask a participant to read aloud Matthew 26:47-56 (New Revised Standard Version).

Share with the participants that even though the original definition of "Annunciation and Celebration" involves the community walking with you, we find that the disciples of Jesus flee the scene when he is arrested. It is this paradox that we also find something interesting mentioned in the Scripture in verse 56, "But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." In the midst of Jesus's most traumatic moment, not only is God with him, but prophets as well as the ancestors are with him, too, even though they are not mentioned in the biblical text.

Like Jesus, Sonia Sanchez is very comfortable in the ancestral realm and in the prophetic world of the ancients. She states, "I write to keep in contact with our ancestors and to spread truth to people." The ancestors give us not only support, but power, that they will not allow us to wallow.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** Participants can explore the power of ancestors in our daily walk on earth, especially when our living relatives are either estranged from us or misunderstand our purpose or direction in life. Then there are times when we are not meant to be understood. The participants will be asked to reflect on the fact that Jesus was the fulfillment of these prophetic ancestral voices. In Sonia Sanchez's book, *Does Your House Have Lions?* we see the confrontation between a father and his son based on a real-life account of Sonia Sanchez's brother who, as a gay man afflicted by HIV-AIDS, is estranged from his father. We have a father's voice, a brother's voice, a sister's voice, and then we have the family voices/ancestors' voices, like the following:

•	<b>ancestor's voice (male)</b>	
•	<b>do you remember me.</b>	<b>huh?</b>
•	<b>when our teeth were iron.</b>	<b>huh?</b>
•	<b>did you drum about me?</b>	<b>hey?</b>
•	<b>and not babylon?</b>	<b>hey?</b>
•	<b>did you take your weapon,</b>	<b>huh?</b>
•	<b>rattle it on my mattress,</b>	<b>hey?</b>
•	<b>if you became powerless?</b>	<b>hey, nuh, heyyyyyyyyy?</b>
•	<b>ancestor's voice (female)</b>	
•	<b>do you remember me,</b>	<b>ayyyyyy?</b>
•	<b>when our wombs were cerebral.</b>	<b>ayyyyyy?</b>
•	<b>did you dream about me,</b>	<b>ayyyyyy?</b>
•	<b>and not betrayal,</b>	<b>ayyyyyy?</b>
•	<b>did you take your coastal</b>	
•	<b>blood to any playground</b>	<b>ayyyyyy?</b>
•	<b>to every resident clown?</b>	<b>ayyyyyyyyyyyyyy?<sup>52</sup></b>

**PARTICIPANT(S):** Participants will be asked which of the ancestor's voices capture their attention the greatest – the female ancestor, the male ancestor or both. The teacher will ask the participants to share in their journal how a deceased ancestor helped them (i.e. through a memory, artifact, music, etc.). The participant will also examine the fact that we know that Jesus had that communal time with God throughout his ministry and with the prophetic utterances of his ancestors.

**TEACHER:** Use this exercise as a group discussion. Participants can share their ancestral reflections.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants and the teacher will view the YouTube video clip, "Lucille Clifton & Sonia Sanchez: Mirrors & Windows."<sup>53</sup>

**TEACHER:** Lead a group discussion about reflections from the film. After the reflections, the teacher will ask the participants to take a break, a stretch and to find a moment to sit quietly and reflectively. Bring a large wooden cross and sit it in the middle of the classroom with the label *Annunciation & Celebration: Movement*

52 Sonia Sanchez, *Does Your House Have Lions?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 37.

53 Cave Canem Foundation. "Lucille Clifton & Sonia Sanchez: Mirrors & Windows". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8aCnU9oArl> (accessed January 20, 2020).



Seven. Ask the participants to sit in a circle around the cross. All of the images and artifacts from *Movements One through Five* will also be displayed in the classroom.

Ask a participant to read aloud Mark 15:21-32 (New Revised Standard Version).

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants and the teacher will be asked to come forward to the wooden cross and to lift it up as a group, as a sign of the cross we all have to carry. Participants are to quietly reflect on how God surrounded them with a cloud of witnesses, the memory of their ancestors, during their times of distress and uncertainty as they dwell with those who live in community with them. Yet, participants are also to remember and reflect on that which Sonia Sanchez states is our clarion call of the twenty-first century: "What does it mean to be human?"

**TEACHER:** As the teacher and the participants move toward the final movement, *Movement Seven: Reflection/Strategic Action*, they will recite aloud the following haiku poems by Sonia Sanchez:

*what is done is done  
what is not done is not done  
let it go...like the wind. (page 27)*

*let us be one with  
the earth expelling anger  
spirit unbroken. (page 44)*

*you are rock garden  
austere in your loving  
in exile from touch. (page 97)*

*mixed with day and sun  
i crouched in the earth carry  
you like a dark river<sup>54</sup> (page 36)*

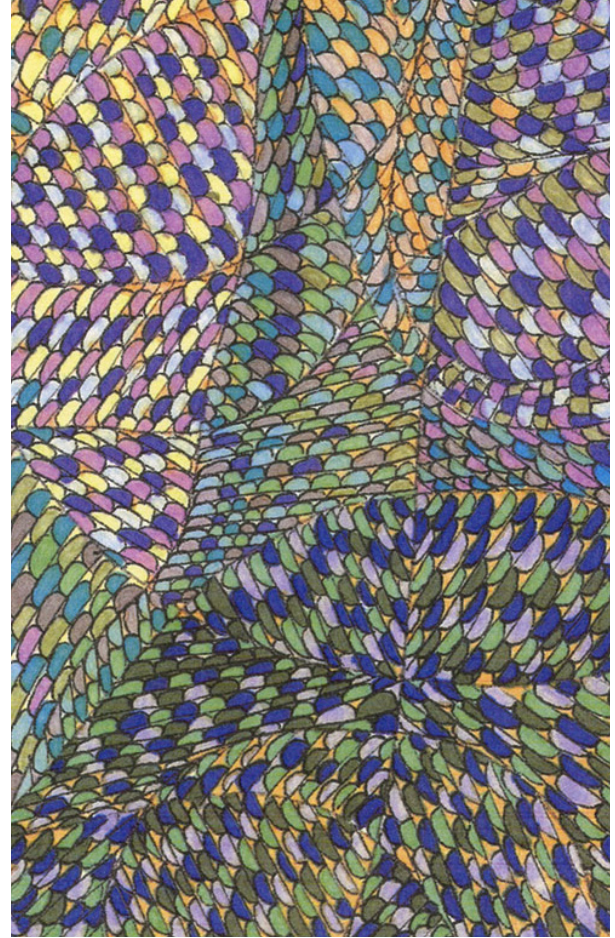
54 Sonia Sanchez, *Like the Singing Coming Off the Drums*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

## Movement Seven

- ❖ **MOVEMENT SEVEN/REFLECTION/STRATEGIC ACTION:** You are able to look back and see how things have changed, but also to see what kind of work still needs to be done.

*The teacher will begin the lesson with prayer, read aloud the synopsis, and then Expressive Personhood begins:*

**TEACHER:** Begin this final movement with the participants by reviewing all of the movements that preceded *Movement Seven*. This will involve both memory and movement. As the teacher shares the definition/reflection/question of each of the seven methods in “The Dance of Redemption,” they will also add the reflections of Sonia Sanchez to each based on her “Enslaved People” video. As each movement is recognized, participants will be asked to move the images or artifacts that were part of each movement into the middle of the classroom or sanctuary space and create a circle beginning with Movement One: Conscientization at the top and allowing each image to go clockwise in the middle of the room. An example can exist like the following based on Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon’s model of “The Dance of Redemption”:



**TEACHER:** After the models that represent each of the six movements of “The Dance of Redemption” are set up, introduce *Movement Seven: Reflection & Strategic Action* to the participants. State that this is a movement that brings awareness of Holy Saturday to the participants. Inform the participants that “Holy Saturday” is a period of reflection, quiet meditation and waiting. Many of us experience people running to and from store to store to find candy bunnies and dresses for Easter Sunday; however, before we can get to Resurrection Sunday, we must experience fully the bloody, brutal, and painful death of Jesus in all of its forms as well as the aftermath. In other words, the teacher will share with the participants that it is okay to undergo the trauma of Jesus’s death and the grief that shadows it. Also how does the death of Jesus relate to our own losses and grief in our life journey?

• **How to dance**  
 • **in blood and**  
 • **remain sane?**  
 • **Sonia Sanchez, from “6 Haiku,” Morning Haiku**

Participants will be reminded that this haiku by Sonia Sanchez has been ever present in our Lenten journey for Lesson Seven. Now as we move into “Reflection/Strategic Action” the teacher will have the following either on the whiteboard or as a PowerPoint presentation:

❖ **MOVEMENT SEVEN: REFLECTION/STRATEGIC ACTION:** You are able to look back and see how things have changed, but also to see what kind of work still needs to be done.

Story-link back to Sonia Sanchez and have displayed on the whiteboard or as a PowerPoint the following reflective questions that were inspired by her YouTube video “Enslaved People”:

• **Where is the history we are making?**  
 • **How are we living now?**  
 • **What are we moving to now?**

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants can write in their journals some answers or thoughts related to the reflective questions. Then the teacher and the participants will have a brief group discussion based on these questions.

**TEACHER:** Share the following statement by Sonia Sanchez based on the death of her mother:

**“...my mother died trying to give birth to twins. They all died—she died and they died in her.”<sup>55</sup>**

Explore with the participants the trauma not only Sonia’s father and her grandmother must have experienced, but also the trauma Sonia Sanchez and her sister would experience growing up and grieving the loss of their biological mother. As the teacher and participants move through this painful moment of loss, ask a participant to read aloud Mark 15:33-41 (New Revised Standard Version).

**PARTICIPANT(S):** Ask the participants how do moments of our scriptural text correlate with the death of Sonia’s mother? For example, the loud cry of Jesus with possibly the loud cry of anguish that Sonia’s mother may have endured as she died in childbirth.

**TEACHER:** This is truly a painful moment during this movement. Allow participants to unpack through words, tears, or even silence. Play Marvin Sapp’s “My Testimony (With Intro).”

55 Joyce A Joyce, ed., *Conversations with Sonia Sanchez*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).

As participants listen to this moving song, they should be informed or reminded that this song was composed after the death of Marvin Sapp's wife. One of the song's lyrics, is "I made it through." Ask the participants how did Sonia Sanchez, after the deaths of her mother and grandmother make it through? Also, how did she build and continue their legacy? Participants can be informed that in an interview with Susan Kelly in *African American Review*, Sonia Sanchez revealed the following:

• *It is that love of language that has propelled me, that love of language that came from listening to my grandmother speak black English...It is that love of language that says, simply, to the ancestors who have done this before you, 'I am keeping the love of life alive, the love of language alive. I am keeping words that are spinning on my tongue and getting them transferred on paper. I'm keeping this great tradition of American poetry alive.'*<sup>56</sup>

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will be asked the question: What great tradition(s) are you trying to keep alive within your family, church, and community?

**TEACHER:** Inform the participants that in her young adult years, Sonia Sanchez would have three children, a daughter named Anita and twin sons, Morani and Mungu. Share with the participants the following YouTube clips: "To Anita"<sup>57</sup> and "To Morani/Mungu."<sup>58</sup>

Also share with the participants that it is truly amazing that Sonia Sanchez would have twin sons and how their survival and life essence in many ways honor her twin siblings that died with her mother in childbirth.

In story-linking back to Jesus's death, the followers of Jesus – like that of Sonia – had to wait and live for the resurrected hope to come forth. For the followers of Jesus, it was the resurrection of Jesus from death; for Sonia Sanchez, it was keeping alive the words of her ancestral journey.

**PARTICIPANT(S):** The participants will share their reflections as a group discussion with the teacher based on all that has been shared with an emphasis on the three questions posed by Sonia Sanchez.

**TEACHER:** As *Movement Seven* ends, encourage the participants to begin to develop a strategic action plan beginning with self, family, church, and community. This will involve goals that will keep alive healthy ancestral traditions as well as introducing innovative strategies for healing and wholeness including learning how to breathe based on the wisdom of Sonia Sanchez. Participants need to be reminded that this has been an intentional plan that can start with a year, then three years, and finally five years. This plan should also involve writing a daily haiku poem as a part of their journey. Share with the participants the YouTube video by Sonia Sanchez, "Poet Sonia Sanchez Celebrates Her 75th Birthday."<sup>59</sup>

After the video, the participants will gather in the center of all of the artifacts/images that were a part of "The Dance of Redemption." Play John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" and gather with the participants. Beginning with *Movement One*, the participants will move and/or walk through each movement. As they arrive at *Movement Seven*, they will wait for each other, for they as a collective body of sacred people, will become *Movement Seven*.

56 Susan Kelly. "Discipline and Craft: An Interview with Sonia Sanchez." *African American Review* 50, no. 4 (2017): 1033-1041. doi:10.1353/afa.2017.0158.

57 Sonia Sanchez, "To Anita". *On A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*. Folkways Records & Service Corporation 75-752813, 1971. vinyl recording.

58 Sonia Sanchez, "To Morani/Mungu". *On A Sun Lady For All Seasons Reads Her Poetry*. Folkways Records & Service Corporation 75-752813, 1971. vinyl recording.

59 "Poet Sonia Sanchez Celebrates Her 75th Birthday". <https://www.beaconbroadside.com>.



As all gather to say farewell to each other at *Movement Seven*, the teacher will read aloud the following excerpt from Sonia Sanchez's 2018 Commencement Address from Swarthmore College:

*...Finally, you and I must paint our face as guardians of the Earth and of each other. Finally, must know that we are not quoting Oppenheimer, I have become death. No. We are, must be, must quote, I have become life. And must oppose any and all killings, murders, wars, rapes, invasions, executions, invasive actions. I have become life. I walk in the light. I move like the dawn with a tint of blue in my hair. I say, I say, I have become life. And you must become small miracles. Must push the wind down into the slow bloodstream of America.*

*Scrape the rust from your eyes. Go floor by floor, window by window. Become new brides and bridegrooms among change. Breathe in Latinos, Blacks, Native Americans, Jews, gays, Muslims, Asians, Whites, lesbians, Chicanos, Africans, transgender. So come. Come, come with yourselves singing life, life, life, life. Singing eyes. Singing hands. Alarming the death singers that we have come to celebrate life, life, life until we become seen, women and men again walking barefoot across our souls, always with a prayer on our tongues.*

*The day is walking towards us and I say, give us the spirit, oh Lord. Oh my sisters and brothers and for it put, to put on our eyes. And forever, let us be in the eyelash of your memory. In the eyelash of your memory. Where there is always the precision of young men and women serving themselves, sewing themselves into the sleeves of justice and activism and change and love. And if we do that, inaugurating a new way of breathing for the world. It will get better in three words, ee bay. Ee bay, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, bay. Ee bay, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, bay. Ee bay, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, bay. Ee bay, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, bay. It'll get better.*



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