My Soul's Been Anchored:

Tradition & Disruptive Imagining in Historically Black Education

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Abstract

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This dissertation focuses on the role of tradition and ritual in historically Black education, particularly combating the legacy of antiblackness in school discipline. The study argues for the use of prophetic disruptive rituals that are grounded in meaning, hope, and love. Using Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia as a philosophical case study, the project draws on digital archival research to answer the central question: How can education empower students to resist the nihilism and despair resulting from continued racial oppression and instead look to the future with hope and imagination?

The dissertation acknowledges the significant role of student agency and campus traditions in institutional life and aims to move beyond the deficit-laden approach to historically Black education. Ultimately, the study provides a framework for creating *ensouling* experiences that breathe life into dry bones.

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Acknowledgments

I can still hear Dr. Butts quoting his mentor, the Rev. Samuel DeWitt Proctor: *"If you ever see a turtle sitting on a tree stump, know that it didn't get there by itself."* This page cannot hold the names of all those who have placed me on this mountaintop.

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In Loving Memory of

THE REVEREND DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS III (1949-2022)

& DEACONESS GERTRUDE MOSES (1935-2022)

"Brother, where is the dissertation?"

Here it is, Reverend

I. Introduction

"Go to School and Get Your Lesson"

My earliest introduction to the philosophy of education came by way of my grandmother's dining room table. She would often lecture my twin sister and me on the importance of 'going to school to get [our] lesson.' As the daughter of sharecroppers, she spent most of her childhood working on a farm and attended school only when it rained. On those rare occasions, she walked miles in the rain to a one-room schoolhouse while the bus carrying white students passed her on the way. My grandmother grew up in a poor black community in the backwoods of Lydia, South Carolina. She later moved to New York City during the Great Migration in the 1950s, hoping to ensure better opportunities for her family. Although she never finished high school, she regarded education as a sacred rite. She collected *Ebony* magazines and recorded PBS programs to supplement what we learned in school. My grandmother did not have an exhaustive understanding of education, but she knew there was something deeper to 'getting your lesson' than learning information. "Once you get an education," she would say, "they can't take that from you." She shared her philosophy of education in those afternoon chats that have never faded from my memory.

My grandmother's story is indicative of the historical narrative of education in the United States. While we love to imagine schools as magical places for learning, history tells two sides of the story. Some children experience school as a warm and protective place—perhaps like the school bus on a rainy day; others suffer harsh and unsympathetic treatment—like the splattering puddle on a rainy and muddy morning. Education has been used as both a tool and a weapon. It has helped some fulfill the American Dream while simultaneously barring others from securing a better quality of life.

The earliest generations of African-Americans suffered great losses just for the opportunity to learn how to read, write, and count. Many were willing to sacrifice their lives because they believed education would help them in the struggle for freedom and liberation. Enslaved people lost their fingers trying to learn how to read. During Reconstruction, Black Codes made literacy a punishable crime. Black children like Ruby Bridges were assaulted as they made their way into newly de-segregated schools. And today, Black children in urban charter school classrooms are drastically disciplined and suspended to the extent that discourages curiosity and interest in schooling altogether.

Yet, the story of black education is not all dismal. It is a testament to the resilience of a people who have creatively struggled to empower themselves, teach their children, and reclaim the most vulnerable of society from despair and nihilism. Cornel West calls these traditions and institutions "cultural armor." In the face of social death, cultural armor inspires love, meaning, and hope, giving us the strength to 'beat back the demons of despair and nihilism.'[1] This dissertation is not an attempt to offer a defense for the relevance of historically black colleges or universities (HBCUs). Instead, I begin this work with the assertion that the value of HBCUs is justified by their ability to teach, reclaim, and empower in the face of lynchings, Jim Crow, and other forms of racial violence.

My grandmother and the elders in my church spoke of education the same way they talked about the importance of being 'born again.' They were serious about their Baptist faith, but their notion of salvation was not defined by a narrow, conservative evangelical emphasis on purity. Their notion of salvation was informed by the work of the Black Social Gospelers and organizations that believed faith and education would be the source of freedom and social transformation. Through fundraisers, missionary efforts, and community organizing, they put their faith into action by

[1] Cornel West, "Nihilism in Black America," in *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 9–20.

creating programs and traditions to save their children from the apathy and misery of poverty and urban plight.

I hope exploring the philosophy of historically black hidden curriculum will serve as a model for challenging the neoliberal influence in urban education that leaves students and parents misguided, miseducated and disempowered. The charter school movement, which has nearly taken over education in cities like New York, once promised an alternative to public schools with higher test scores and achievement rates. Elise Castillo's article "A Neoliberal Grammar of Schooling: How a Progressive Charter School Moved Toward Market Values" shows how a neoliberal ideology, which assumes public education can be improved the market forces, such as accountability, competition, efficiency, and managerialism, influences a school's enrollment, instruction, and community engagement.[2] Over time, the driving forces of market values edge out the possibility of providing an ensouling education, as demonstrated by the long history of black education. Historically black education is a timely reminder that the story can be told another way with stories and examples of how students of color can be affirmed by practices and rituals grounded in liberatory values.

The history of Black education tells the story of a community that has often turned to rituals to create meaning, hope, and belonging in the face of racial violence and injustice. Although history has been told by historians, I believe the story deserves to be excavated as philosophical anthropology. Philosophical anthropology studies the nature of human beings, our values, and how we construct meaning in our lives. Instead of rehearsing the same tired and time-worn value judgments on HBCUs, this work examines the role of education in creating meaning and value in the context of racial oppression and the struggle for hope and imagination. As philosophical anthropology draws on empirical evidence and moral imagination, this dissertation uses digital archives to investigate

[2] Elise Castillo, "A Neoliberal Grammer of School? How a Progressive Charter School Moved toward Market Values," *American Journal of Education*, 2020.

how education and campus experiences helped previous generations create meaning to support future generations in their struggles against nihilism and despair. I hope that this project will lead to fieldwork on Black college campuses that documents and analyzes the philosophical underpinnings of parent-parting ceremonies, bonding rituals, and homecoming celebrations; rituals that continue to ensoul generations of African Americans who live in the shadow of what Cornel West calls 'the nihilistic threat."[3] In addition, a philosophy of historically Black education must also include the stories of the numerous schools around the South that brought meaning and hope to small rural communities but were unfortunately destroyed in the wake of the *Brown* decision.

I write for the generations of Black and Brown students who may never learn to fly because the forces of Neoliberalism make the production of test scores and docile bodies the focus of attention rather than the experience and discovery of endless possibilities. I write for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that are considered endangered and irrelevant; institutions that fight to keep their doors open while claiming their place in a society that does not recognize their worth. I write because historically and presently, Black colleges and the Black church have been the only places whereby Black people have been given space to try on their wings before flying away to save America from itself.

WHAT IS HISTORICALLY BLACK EDUCATION?

When one initially hears 'Historically Black Education,' one rightfully jumps to assume that it is synonymous with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Yes, HBCUs have been primary institutions for black education; however, the tradition is not limited to black colleges. Historically black education is a distinct tradition within the American academy that emerges from the struggles against racial oppression but refuses to be defined by such. This dissertation is an effort

[3] West, "Nihilism in Black America."

to articulate the yearnings of generations of aspiring learners who knew there was power in *the lesson*, but they did not have the words to express the deep convictions of their hearts.

Historically Black education is also a *soulful and ensouling experience*. The roots of many black colleges are traced back to The Black Church. Like a bridge over troubled waters, the school and the church were the only two institutions black people controlled and operated. Birthed out of the *dust* of slavery, black colleges and churches were created by former slaves who used their freedom, meager resources, and literacy to create the world they hoped to see. These two anchoring institutions have been central to every movement for the forward progress of people of African descent in the United States.

Historically Black Education is not, however, confined to colleges or churches. It also encompasses community-based and non-profit organizations working to dismantle systems of oppression. Teachers like Septima Clark taught literacy workshops at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee as a voter registration effort. Booksellers like Lewis H. Michaux created an intellectual epicenter for Black Nationalism from his National Memorial African Bookstore on Harlem's 125th Street. Black education is also contemporary. It continues today through initiatives like the Children's Defense Fund's Freedom School®, which trains servant leaders (college-age students) to teach youth K-12 in the summer. Freedom School is a national program modeled after the Mississippi Summer Project, which was a volunteer campaign to register as many Black voters as possible in 1964. Whether in folk schools, bookstores, summer schools, churches, or on college campuses, historically black education creates opportunities for communities to reclaim those who are at risk of being lost.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been incubators for the intellectual development of agents and movements for social change. The earliest Black colleges were birthed in the basement of churches in the Antebellum South. With the aid of northern

missionaries, philanthropists, and social aid societies like the Freedmen's Bureau, the early feeble efforts later evolved into colleges and universities. What does it mean to be a historically *Black* institution? I contend that there is more to the label of *historically Black* than history or race. A closer examination of the hidden curriculum of HBCUs—their traditions, narratives, and rituals—unearths a philosophical project that has anchored generations of Black students in the face of ontological anxiety, nihilism, despair, and undemocratic realities.

There is a wealth of research and publication on the history of HBCUs; however, I have not found a philosophical treatment of the hidden curriculum of black colleges. As a philosopher of education, it is my intention to examine the role of rituals, sites of memory, and institutional narratives in the moral, intellectual, and social formation of learners. I am particularly interested in the dialogical tension between institutions and students who challenge each other simultaneously. History bears witness to the fact that HBCUs were often hesitant in the face of racial violence because of the influence of benefactors and donors. However, during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, students challenged administrators and trustees to reconsider their positions. Student-Activists like Marian Wright Edelman and the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee (SNCC) committed the rest of their lives to social change. In turn, their activism changed the institution's narrative and ethos over time.

Student activism is not unique to HBCUs; this is correct. However, the historic dimension still informs the pedagogy and hidden curriculum of the institution. In addition to the formal curriculum offered by an institution through a body of required courses and instruction, there is the *extracurricular* and *hidden curriculum* which are not a part of the intended program of the formal educative experience.

The term, *hidden curriculum,* coined by Phillip Jackson in *Life in Clasrooms,* was used to refer to the indirect ways in which school and classroom life shapes students through ongoing social

processes. In Jackson's words, "the crowds, the praise, and the power combine to give a distinctive classroom flavor."[4] The expectations, rewards, and punishments converge to create a culture that encourages conformity to certain practices while discouraging misbehavior. In like manner on a college campus, the hidden curriculum is the learning experience that students acquire through daily interactions with classmates and teachers and is indirectly transmitted through institutional rituals, narratives, and gestures. Moreover, the students create hidden curricula themselves. Debate teams, social clubs, athletics, student government, fraternities, sororities, the campus newspaper, and other activities are examples of ways students provide peer support for intellectual, personal, and social development. *The Missions of the College Curriculum* published by the Carnegie Foundation of the Advancement highlights how the hidden curriculum provides learning activities that the college itself could not provide: "The easy tendency to dismiss all of these activities as frilly and frivolous overlooks the fact that, while many extracurricular activities might deserve such characterizations, a substantial number of them were actually extension of the educational enterprise."[5]

Historically black colleges and universities have been democratic laboratories where black students have been given the freedom to 'try on their wings' through debate, student government, etc. I want to make the claim that the history of political protest performance at historically black colleges and universities has led to the formation of self, community, and the shaping of the futurity of the collective. Student-led protests and movements have also pushed historically black colleges and universities into new roles and identities in society, forcing them to break free from the external control of white philanthropist and organizations that have long determined the trajectory of black

[4] Philip W Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 32.
[5] Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *Missions of the College Curriculum* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), 94.

institutions.[6] To explore this phenomenon, I propose examining the formation of students as learners, disrupters, and community members from these three questions:

(1) What rituals, ceremonies, or gestures have HBCUs created to initiate their students into habits of excellence and academic discipline? How do ordinary moments in campus life play a part in the educative experience?

(2) How does the hidden curriculum of protest, student leadership, and apprenticeship play a role in the formation of social disrupters?

(3) How do rituals of *play* and *joy* have in the work of creative disruption and formation?

Purpose & Central Question

The purpose of this dissertation is to lay the groundwork for a new way of thinking about the meaning and value of historically black education. What does it mean to be educated in a *historically black* way? Unfortunately, HBCUs are often the focus of deficit-laden research that tends to focus on challenges rather than strengths. This dissertation is a case study that examines how memory, protest, and imagination work together to prepare students to become moral, democratic, and creative agents. In this conceptual analysis, I draw on my previous studies in philosophy of education, spatial politics of memory and history, and Black theology to demonstrate how campus life can breathe life into students through rituals of meaning-making, hope, and joy.

Because I live between the classroom, the church, and the community, I am constantly reminded of the ontological anxiety that hounds the path of the disinherited.[7] Nihilism, or the loss of meaning, is real. The death of life chances due to police brutality, poverty, and prison eats away at one's sense of purpose and self-esteem. Yet, education has the potential to protect the soul through meaningful experiences that create a sense of belonging, pride, and agency instead of apathy and

[6] William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001).
[7] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).

despair. The central question of this dissertation is: **How can education help students learn to resist the abyss of nihilism and despair in the face of continued racial oppression and to look to the future with hope and imagination?**

The Sankofan Framework

The word *Sankofa* originates from the Akan village of Ghana, West Africa, and translates as "Go back and fetch it." The concept is depicted through the image of a bird looking to the past in order to retrieve an egg, which symbolizes the future. The symbol shows how the past and future converge in the present moment. Sankofa is not only concerned with preserving the past but reclaiming those who are at risk of being lost. African educational theorist Elleni Tedla provides this four-fold purpose of Sankofan education: (1) To empower African people; (2) To reclaim brothers and sisters who are being lost to prisons and alienating educational systems; (3) To reclaim African history, which has been omitted, hidden, distorted or suppressed; (4) To teach Africa's indigenous crafts, technologies and medicine to the young.[8] In the spirit of Sankofa, my dissertation is an attempt to *look back* to black campus traditions and rituals for ways to disrupt the no-excuses discipline culture of urban charter schools in order to inspire students to face the future with hope and imagination

THE PLACE OF RITUAL IN EDUCATION

In Book Five of *The Republic*, Socrates envisions what he believes is the most suitable education for the guardians. He tells his interlocutors that children should get first-hand experience by learning to ride horses and observing war, albeit dangerous. "We must provide the children with wings when they're small," says Socrates, "so that they can fly away and escape."[9] Socrates realizes that the future of the city is inextricably tied to the formation of emerging guardians. Rituals of

[8] Christel N. Temple, "The Emergence of Sankofa Practice in the United States: A Modern History," *Journal of Black Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 135, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934709332464.
[9] Plato and C.D.C Reeve, *The Republic*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), 467d10-e6.

initiation and apprenticeship have the potential to inform how young adults understand their identity, vocation, and self-esteem. Like Socrates' *Kallipolis*, John Dewey emphasized the relationship between democracy as a way of life and education. As a public institution, school is one of the first placed where democracy as a way of life is taught in classrooms through the daily interactions of students learning to live in community with each other. Like the *Kallipolis*, the future of society is guarded by those who have learned the basic duties and responsibilities of contributing members of society. A quick glance at America's history highlights the names of leaders, thinkers, organizations, and movements that challenged the country towards its *better angels*. American philosophers of education like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jane Addams, W.E.B DuBois, Anna Julia Cooper, and Richard Rorty emphasized in various ways that education is more than the attainment of knowledge; it is a rite of passage that ensouls and inspires us to play an active role in creating a more just and equitable society.

What is ritual?

In order to develop the skills to *fly and escape*, or *mount horses*, educators must provide wings and steeds—the tools, space, and opportunities to grow into their future roles. Philosophers of educators seem to agree that rituals are essential to the formation of moral agents, thinkers, and communities of inquiry. It is nearly impossible to provide a comprehensive definition of ritual. Like jazz, a phenomenon is best heard, felt, or experienced. It is best understood through observation or first-hand experience. Ritual theorist Ronald Grimes describes ritual as an "embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment."[10] Through ceremonies, practices, activities, movements, and gestures, ritual creates meaning, forms community, challenges the status quo, and reinvents identities. Ritual

[10] Ronald Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 196.

involves the whole person—the mind, body, and spirit. Our bodies carry beliefs and principles that can empower or disempower.

For Richard Quantz and Peter Magolda, ritual is an aspect of action that is found in the most mundane moments of school life. Building on Erving Goffman's concept of *minor ceremonies*, they contend that it is in the everyday ebbs and flows of life together in the classroom that students form community.[11] Although the curriculum or subject matter is the focus of the gathering, the campus takes on a life of itself as students and teachers live and learn together. The side conversation in the middle of a lesson, albeit disruptive, may lead to lifelong friendships. While rituals can be formal or informal, they hold the potential to shape students in significant ways.

As I work to develop a conceptual framework for historically black education, I draw on previously-published scholarship in philosophy of education, anthropology, public meetings, theatre, urban education, African American studies, and law in order to gain a more substantive sense of the place of ritual in education. The review is organized into three clusters: The first section provides a general understanding of the role of ritual in moral and social formation. The second section investigates how routines of discipline in today's urban charter schools further perpetuate social injustices. The final section explores how rituals can disrupt restrictive routines in order to create more affirming environments. These three clusters will help us track the positive, the problematic, and the possible trajectory of ritual.

Moral Formation & School Rituals

In ancient Confucian philosophy, ritual was considered a primary technique for *moral development*. According to Xunzi, humans are not born innately good but are driven by impulse and

[11] Peter M. Quantz, Richard A. and Madgolda, "Nonrational Clasroom Performance: Ritual as an Aspect of Action," *The Urban Review* 29, no. 4 (1997): 227.

approbation.[12] In order to transcend our tendency to follow our selfish instincts and our need for validation, we must submit to the discipline of a teacher and their instruction through action. Ritual, for Xunzi, is a scaffold that aids in our moral upbringing. Moreover, it is a blueprint that informs how we determine and coordinate moral responses to ethically-charged situations.[13] Eventually, the scaffold is removed, the blueprint is put away, and the moral agent is able to stand on their own.

As ritual guides our moral formation, it is also a tool for *meaning-making*. Without a sense of meaning to order our living, human beings become susceptible to what William Losito calls "ontological anxiety." While myths add meaning, ritual "translates the meaning [of those stories] into contemporary time and space."[14] Rituals of Initiation connect a myth with embodied action in order to signify a new birth, a new identity, or a new journey. One prominent example of an initiation is the baptism of a new convert to a religious community. Through immersion or sprinkling of water, one is believed to be *born again* into new life. This holds significant meaning for someone who is seeking to start life over again, although it is literally impossible to do so.

In a democratic society, schools are one of the few public institutions that can provide access to non-sectarian rituals for moral formation. Leonard Waks makes the case that the absence of initiation rituals into adulthood is one of the pressing challenges of a post-industrial democratic society. Colleges, according to Waks, are duty-bound to provide these opportunities for the sake of the future of democracy. Low-wage hourly jobs were once a way for teenagers and young adults to embrace the responsibilities of adulthood; however, many of those opportunities have been outsourced to other countries or replaced by robots. Likewise, fast food jobs are quickly being replaced by kiosks and apps. Without initiation opportunities, adults may remain in an adolescent

[12] Colin J. Lewis, "Ritual Education and Moral Development: A Comparison of Xunzi and Vygotsky," *Dao* 17, no. 1 (2018): 94, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-017-9589-z.
[13] Lewis, 94.
[14] William F. Losito, "Philosophizing about Education in a Postmodern Society: The Role of Sacred Myth and Ritual in Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 1996, 73, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00367515.

stasis well into adulthood. There are several ways colleges can initiate students into adulthood, including ceremonies (i.e., graduation rituals, honor rolls, hall of fame), work-study positions, internships, and independent projects.[15] He highlights Bryn Mawr College, an all-women's liberal arts school, and Morehouse College, a historically Black all-male school, as model institutions where students are initiated through daily chapel talks that instill lessons on life, leadership, and excellence. Martha Carey Thomas directed the women of Bryn Mawr "not merely to excel academically, but to devote themselves to leadership in all walks of life." Benjamin Elijah Mays, President of Morehouse College, told young African American men that "Morehouse holds a crown over your heads and expects you to grow into it."[16]

School rituals transfer ideologies by promoting societal values and expectations. Drew Chappell, Sharon Chappell, and Eric Margolis explore school as ceremony and ritual by analyzing school pictures and the act of picture-taking as a performance of ideological transfer. School photographs memorialize the changes in the social, economic, or identity of young people. Picture Day is considered a coming-of-age ceremony that marks change and growth over time.[17] Peter McLaren makes the same claim in his classic work, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance*, which is based on his fieldwork at a Catholic middle school in Toronto, Canada. McLaren argues that rituals of interaction can maintain cohesion and conformity and ultimately shape a student's understanding of self-identity and potential.[18]

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[15] Leonard Waks, "Education as Initiation Revisited: General Rituals and the Passage to Adulthood," *Philosophy of Education*, 2013, 136, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00367527.
[16] Waks, 136.
[17] Drew Chappell, Sharon Chappell, and Eric Margolis, "School as Ceremony and Ritual: How Photography Illuminates Performances of Ideological Transfer," *Qualitative Inquiry* 17, no. 1 (2011): 56–73, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410389444.
[18] Peter McLaren, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance: Toward a Political Economy of Educational Symbols and Gestures* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999).

In addition to formal gatherings and speeches, informal rituals of apprenticeship are opportunities for learners to *try on their wings*. The impact of formal gatherings is sustained through informal moments, such as conversations on campus, office hour discussions, preparing for commencement exercises, or taking on student leadership responsibilities. Waks poses the question, "Without general rituals responding to these needs, just who will be 'holding a crown over the heads' of their student?"[19]

Rituals not only form the moral or social development of individuals; they also form new communities around a shared narrative. In a 2008 article in the *Journal of Thought*, Alicia Collins and Branford F. Lewis explore how rituals and traditions are used as tools of socialization at Bennett College and Spelman College, the nation's only two historically Black colleges for women. Both schools accentuate sisterhood and community as important institutional values. The value of sisterhood is instilled through rituals of entering and exiting, as well as informal gestures and vocal pronouncements, such as "That's my Spelman Sister!"[20] The school creates a nonbiological family united by a shared institutional narrative. Whether the focus is moral development, initiation into adulthood, or developing bonds of sisterhood, ritual is essential to the formation of individuals and community.

Philosophers of education and researchers focus a great deal on the promise of schools. From entering the school building in the morning, calling teachers by their surnames, the ringing of the bell, the morning greeting, the control of talk, the organization of desks and chairs, and even the

[19] Waks, "Education as Initiation Revisited: General Rituals and the Passage to Adulthood," 139.
[20] Alicia C. Collins and Bradford F. Lewis, "How Rituals and Traditions Are Used as Tools of Socialization at Black Women's Colleges," *Journal of Thought* 43, no. Fall-Winter 2008 (2008): 51, https://doi.org/10.2307/jthought.43.3-4.47.

tone of voice, schools are entrenched with rituals and gestures that are rarely recognized, analyzed, or challenged.[21]

Problematic Trajectory of Miseducation in School Routines

While philosophers of education tend to focus on the positive capabilities of ritual, recent scholarship in urban education and law investigates the negative capacity of school routines. There is a legacy of African American philosophers and educators sounding the alarm that some children have not received wings; therefore, they can't fly and escape. Their capabilities have been stifled by miseducation, school crucifixions,[22] and soul murder.[23] In his seminal text, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Carter G. Woodson critiqued the common educational system that did not provide African Americans with the skills and knowledge needed to be contributing members of society. In fact, Woodson discovered that Black students were intentionally *mis-educated* with messages that perpetuated negative stereotypes toward themselves and other Blacks.

The past 400 years bear witness to the ways rituals and policies have created and maintained social inequalities and racial injustice. This history includes the Black Codes that made literacy a crime, the vicious backlash that black students, like Ruby Bridges, faced during de-segregation, and the resistance to busing. Michael Dumas shows that racialized policies and discourses in education reveal a fundamental 'cultural disregard and disgust with blackness.' Exposing this reality is one way to remember that "Black people are human beings."[24] A sober analysis of the reality of black

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[21] David T. Hansen, "Getting Down to Business: The Moral Significance of Classroom Beginnings," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1989): 259–74, https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1989.20.4.04x0454l; David T. Hansen, "The Moral Environment in an Inner-City Boy's High School," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 18, no. 2 (2022): 183–204.
[22] W.E.B. DuBois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?," *The Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3 (1935): 328, https://doi.org/10.2307/2291871.
[23] Bell Hooks refers to this toxic culture as *soul murder*, which defined as "the incapacity to give and feel love and the ensuing alienation from one's self."[2]Instilling a sense of self-esteem and pride is the only possible healing for soul murder. See Bell Hooks, *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2003), 187.
[24] Michael J. Dumas, "Against the Dark: Antiblackness in Education Policy and Discourse," *Theory into Practice* 55, no. 1 (2016): 15, https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1116852.

disregard in classrooms and schools is a starting point for locating antiblackness in everyday discourse and rituals. What may seem like a simple classroom management practice to a school administrator may prove to be evil or detrimental. Practices such as shaming, suspension, and expulsion for minor infractions or natural hairstyles tamper with the health and well-being of black and brown students. Dumas' theory of antiblackness in education is substantiated by the work of legal scholars and educational researchers who are concerned about the exclusionary and disproportionate discipline of students in no-excuses charter schools. The literature reviewed in this section highlights how antiblackness initiates students into a pipeline to prison and poverty.

The legacy of miseducation lives on through the cultural production of the school-industrial complex. Anthropologist K. Wayne Young, referring to the work of Paul Willis, defines cultural production as "the creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices, and group processes, through which people make sense and make self inside their structural locations."[25] In other words, miseducation is made possible through a web of images, narratives, and rituals that informs one's sense of self, potential, and value. Yang contemporizes Woodson's notion of miseducation by analyzing the schooling-industrial complex as the cultural producer of the ideology most commonly known as the *school-to-prison pipeline*.

The *school-to-prison pipeline* is an ideology that has given many parents, educators, and stakeholders a helpful metaphor for making sense of the interconnectedness of failing schools in urban neighborhoods and the criminal justice system. Black men and women disproportionately serve time in prison, live below the poverty line, and die early deaths due to stress and environmental factors. The schooling-industrial complex has introduced a cultural shift in education that is primarily shaped by a market-driven obsession with producing test scores, docile students, and disciplined bodies

[25] K. Wayne Yang, "Rites to Reform: The Cultural Production of the Reformer in Urban Schools," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2010): 146, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2010.01075.x.

through an overly-strict classroom approach in the name of academic success. The emphasis on production rather than transformation places a premium on managing classroom time, controlling students' gestures, and determining how bodies should move and interact. In essence, the schooling-industrial complex recreates the culture of prison within the classroom.

Lawanda Wesley and Addie Lucille Ellis's 2017 article in the *Journal of African American Education* calls for a review of disciplinary practices that disproportionately disciplined black boys as early as preschool. In a recent study, educators were given scenarios about the (mis)behavior of black girls and boys and white girls and boys, and were asked to imagine the four students in their classrooms. The study concluded that a teacher's gaze tended to focus on black boys in comparison to the other three students. Wesley and Ellis concluded that the exclusionary discipline of black boys is not a result of misbehavior but the implicit bias of the teacher. Although the harm is unintended, the unconscious presumption of misbehavior can have a detrimental effect on a student's sense of self-worth well into adulthood.[26] In essence, exclusionary discipline and implicit bias initiate black boys into a lifetime of poverty, prison, and limited possibilities.

Likewise, Mikailla Carwin's 2018 article in the *CUNY Law Review* shows that black and brown students attending charter schools are more likely to be disciplined, suspended, and expelled in comparison to white students and public school students. Carwin notes that national charter school networks, such as Achievement First and Uncommon Schools, have adopted a *broken windows* approach to classroom management—a discipline theory that reprimands minor infractions such as a hand improperly raised, a shirt untucked, or eyes drifting. The constant routines of demerits, suspensions, and expulsions eventually results in chronic absenteeism, low graduation rates, and

[26] Addie Lucille Ellis and Lawanda Wesley, "Exclusionary Discipline in Preschool in Preschool: Young Black Boys' Lives Matter," *Journal of African American Males in Education Fall* 8, no. 2 (2017): 24–25, http://journalofafricanamericanmales.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/3-Wesley-Ellis-2017-ExclusionaryDiscipline-in-PreSchool.pdf.

grade retention. The more time a student spends outside of the classroom, the more likely they are to "come in contact with the criminal justice system, and become victims and perpetrators of violence, or perpetuate a cycle of poverty."[27]

Joann W. Golann, Mira Debs, and Anna Lisa Weiss' article titled, "To Be Strict on Your Own," shows that no-excuses charter schools in urban communities across the country rely on behavioral discipline to force students into success. This educational approach is built on the belief that "poverty is no excuse for low student achievement." [28] Their work unsettles the notion of discipline in education by showing that Black and Latinx parents have a different understanding of the role of discipline in classroom management than school administrators. Parents agreed that an orderly classroom is key to managing a safe learning environment; however, they also expressed suspicion that the rigid discipline structure was driven by underlying racial power dynamics. While students at the no-excuses charter school were learning to comply, students at a nearby Montessori were learning how to think critically and work independently. This rigid environment stifles children's curiosity which leads to a loss of interest in schooling. In these militarized classrooms, discipline becomes the focus, and teaching is secondary. This ultimately sets students up to hold menial jobs where critical thinking and leadership skills are disdained. No-excuses schools are ultimately perpetuating generational poverty and early death by preparing students for menial jobs.

Building on the work of scholars like Woodson, DuBois, hooks, and many others, these contemporary scholars raise concerns about the legacy of mis-education in school discipline practices that stifles the futurity of black and brown children. Some students cannot *fly and escape* because their potential has been discouraged through shaming, degradation, and expulsion. Before

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[27] Mikailla Carwin, "The Charter School Network : The Disproportionate Discipline of Black Students," *The City University of New York Law Review* 21, no. 1 (2018): 53.
[28] Joanne W. Golann, Mira Debs, and Anna Lisa Weiss, "'To Be Strict on Your Own': Black and Latinx Parents Evaluate Discipline in Urban Choice Schools," *American Educational Research Journal* XX, no. X (2019): 6, https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219831972.

they discover their own dreams and possibilities, they become targets of the implicit bias of a teacher who presumes misbehavior as early as preschool. Others simply lose interest in learning how to soar because of the disproportionate focus on behavior discipline rather than the development of the academic discipline.[29]

The authors provide a range of recommendations to address antiblackness in education, ranging from honest dialogue about black bodies, blackness, and black historical memories within the school and larger community, to increasing legal oversight of charter school networks and bias training for teachers. However, there is an oversight on the role of ritual in school culture reform. Policy, training, and dialogue are crucial to charting a better future. Still, the schooling-industrial complex has produced a school-to-prison pipeline on the macro-level (policy) and micro-level (classroom management and routine). The only way to rewrite the story is through *disruption*.

The historical context exposes a legacy of undemocratic realities in American education to chart a more hopeful future for children whose life chances are altered and threatened by poverty, immigration, race, gender, sexual orientation, and other social factors used to marginalize and stifle life chances.

The Promise of Rituals of Affirmation

Routines of discipline are designed to control and maintain power. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Eric DeMeulenaere's 2019 article, "Disrupting School Rituals," traces the history of traditional classroom management methods to prison. The disproportionate focus on behavioral discipline comes at the expense of developing other forms of discipline. Parents are

[29] Joanne W. Golann, Mira Debs, and Anna Lisa Weiss, "'To Be Strict on Your Own': Black and Latinx Parents Evaluate Discipline in Urban Choice Schools," *American Educational Research Journal* 56, no. 5 (2019): 1896–1929, https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219831972.

concerned that their children are being trained to become "robots" or "little mindless minions" with no self-discipline, self-confidence, or self-expression.[30]

After investigating both the formative and problematic trajectory of school rituals, the final cluster examines how problematic routines of miseducation in urban education can be replaced with more formative and affirming rituals.

DeMeulenaere examines the role of disruptive rituals in challenging school rituals that are designed to create docile bodies. DeMeulenaere's analysis is drawn from the work of three teachers who sought to challenge traditional school rituals in one of the lowest-performing schools in Massachusetts. Realizing that restrictive practices were grounded in maintaining control, the teachers disrupted the old rituals by introducing new rituals they borrowed from theatre and faith communities. By abandoning traditional scripts, they discovered that they could foster a more liberating learning experience by changing the way they interacted with their students. [31] DeMeulenaere offers helpful examples of what I call disruptive imaginings—the creative work of unsettling the routines and systems of injustice in order to breathe new life and hope into the lives of those at risk of being lost.

First, disruptive rituals break open space for students to take on new identities. At the beginning of the school year, the teachers took their classes to a nearby mountain and sent them off to climb up the hill with a raw egg, an uncapped gallon of water, and a few other items. There was a student in the group who had a bad reputation among classmates and their parents. He was a child that no parent wanted their children to befriend. During this exercise, he became an encouraging leader for his teammates. Students saw him in a new light; they no longer saw him as the troublemaker but instead as a leader. Ironic moments create space to form a new way of living,

[30] Golann, Debs, and Weiss, 1914.
[31] Eric DeMeulenaere, "Disrupting School Rituals," *Urban Education*, 2019, 004208591983800, https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085919838007.

moving, and being. These ironic moments lead to the transformation of the self and classroom community.

Secondly, teachers can foster affirming environments where students respect classmates and teachers out of love rather than discipline. Weeks after returning from the field trip, the teacher discovered that a few students had written their names on a rock. Although this was a punishable offense, the teacher decided to take the class back to the park, and together, both students and the teacher, worked to scrub their names off. Instead of pointing out a few offenders, the entire class worked together with their teacher to clean the rock. As the authors put it, the teacher in this study moved away from *front-stage* relationships bent on maintaining hierarchy and chose to embrace more vulnerability through genuine and organic *backstage* relationships.

Katherine McComas, John C. Besley, and Laura W. Black verify that disruption is one way that ritual plays a critical role in society. In their research on "The Rituals of Public Meetings," they highlight refusal as a legitimate reaction to ritual practice. Rituals of dissension are carried out in a number of ways. Counter rites, such as burning draft cards and peaceful resistance, symbolize a breaking away from traditionalism and history. Individual intolerance leaves room for some to refuse to participate.[32]

Disruptive rituals empower disinherited communities to use their energy and imagination to chart a more liberatory future. Samy Azouz's 2018 article on "Amiri Baraka's Theatre of Ritual" shows how rituals of disruption (protest) enacted in stage plays were a source of strength and pride for audiences during the Black Arts Movement. The theater provides communities with a liminal space to momentarily step out of the routines of daily life in order to consider ways to challenge the

[32] Katherine McComas, John C. Besley, and Laura W. Black, "The Rituals of Public Meetings," *Public Administration Review* 70, no. 1 (2010): 122–30.

status quo. Baraka's plays allowed audience members to live vicariously through actors and to leave the theater empowered to act toward change.

Rituals hold significant social and political power with ramifications that alter the life chances of children and youth in both positive and problematic ways. Educators and administrators should consider the noninstructional aspects of classroom life. The daily discipline routines in a charter school contribute to the cultural production of the school-to-prison pipeline. Furthermore, miseducation rituals untether the fabric of democracy by reinforcing a caste system that leaves Black children unprepared and ill-equipped to become conscientious and contributing democratic citizens. By creating new rituals, the debilitating routines of discipline can be transformed into life-giving and affirmative rituals.

Discussion

The literature reviewed in this inquiry draws from a wide array of disciplines and approaches to the discussion on ritual in education and society. After reading through a collection of articles in a query on "ritual" and "education," I realize my work is entering a conversation that dates back to the beginning of civilization. This inquiry has introduced me to the work of the ancient Confucian philosopher Xunzi who proposed a moral education through ritual in 3rd Century BCE. I have become acquainted with the work of philosophers of education like Leonard Waks and Richard S. Peters on education as initiation; philosophers of religion like Mircea Eliade, who turns to ritual as a way of infusing sacred myths into secular (or civic) culture; and, theatre theorist Samy Azouz, who highlights the spiritual dimensions of theatre performances. Human beings are shaped and formed through interactions, gestures, and ceremonies. We live in a perpetual state of becoming. Our being is never fixed or finalized because the most ordinary encounters in classrooms, labs, office hours, or simply conversations on the yard can determine the future.

Secondly, educational researchers turn our attention to the negative capacity of school routines of *mis-education* that stifles children from becoming confident, independent, contributing members of a democracy. All children are not learning how to fly and escape. Literature in law and education journals investigates the data, which shows disproportionate and extreme forms of behavioral discipline in no-excuses charter schools. If students are denied space to find their voice, challenge, and question, they will become spectators rather than agents.[33]

Lastly, Eric DeMeulenaere shows us through his work as a teacher that the story can be told another way. Teachers can trouble the waters by disrupting traditional prescribed rituals grounded in control and hierarchy by creating counter-rituals rooted in love and liberatory learning. Instead of focusing on managing and controlling the classroom, teachers can choose to introduce rituals that invite students into learning environments that are more just and equitable. Old rituals that are fixed in oppressive structures and relationships must be disrupted. Introducing new practices without addressing inhumane traditions is not a responsible way of leading and teaching. Disruption creates ironic moments and liminality, whereby new roles, relationships, and identities can be created organically.

Disruption is a part of the moral fiber of a democratic society. Democracy is a way of life that relies on agents who engage in the work of social change. America's democracy is in a constant flux of formation as social movements for change continue to press and challenge society toward *Achieving our Country.* Richard Rorty emphasizes in several essays that schools have a primary function to prepare students with the intellectual tools to challenge the status quo. Universities, by design, are centers of protest: "All universities worthy of the name have always been centers of

[33] Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

social protest. If American universities ever cease to be such centers, they will lose both their self-respect and the respect of the learned world."[34] Schools create disrupters who keep democracy alive.

Oftentimes, we do not realize the significance of our actions and habits until years later. The professor does not realize how she inspired a student to change her major and follow her dreams during an office hour meeting. Students may not realize that their protest demanding a change in governance or curriculum can cause a historic shift in the school's history. The philosopher of education approaches school from a different angle than researchers focused on quantitative measures of success, enrollment, etc. The office of the philosopher of education is to remind us that life is unfolding right before our very eyes. In the face of deficits, enrollment shortages, and financial woes, students are quickly becoming what they will be, and the future of our democracy is sitting in our classrooms. The office of the scholar, according to Emerson, is to help us cheer and to celebrate what is going well amid the challenges of the moment. Schools are human institutions. Students need a sense of love, belonging, self-esteem, comfort, and joy in order to flourish and thrive. Philosophical observation of school life helps us to slow down in order to consider the meaning of our interactions. Whether the teacher realizes it or not, students are learning, adopting habits, and picking up social messages through daily encounters and observations.

METHOD OF INQUIRY

This dissertation aims to discover how education can help students learn to resist nihilism and despair and look to the future with hope and imagination. Through a Sankofan approach, I turn to the digital archives of Morehouse College to envision a philosophy of education that is mindful of the racialized history of black education in the United States and hopeful of a more just and liberatory future. Morehouse College is a historically black liberal arts college for men located in

[34] Rorty, 82.

Atlanta, Georgia. Founded in 1867 to train former slaves to serve as ministers and teachers, Morehouse holds a prominent legacy of producing leaders, visionaries, and pillars of society.

To this end, I will use the campus newspaper, *The Maroon Tiger,* to examine how campus rituals and traditions have empowered students to be agents of change. *The Maroon Tiger* is a substantive collection of student reflections, editorials, and poetry that spans nearly 100 years. The paper provides a unique vantage point for conceptualizing a philosophy of historically black education that emerges out of the students' experience. Instead of focusing on significant college leaders and faculty, this project is invested in prioritizing the voices and ideas of college students navigating the complexities of self-discovery. I propose to show that historically black education is a distinct intellectual tradition that seeks to empower disinherited communities through ensouling education grounded in affirmation, agency, and joy.

Rituals and traditions have played a critical role in reclaiming black students from the abyss of nihilism and despair. Traditions are complex and ever-changing, especially at an undergraduate institution that is constantly facing new demands with each incoming class. Traditions are created, disrupted, and replaced in order to keep the institution relevant and vibrant. Campus life is often looked over as insignificant and tertiary extra-curricular activities; however, the various facets of the residential college experience offer students opportunities to discover new relationships, identities, and passions. This project attempts to change the way we think about non-traditional classroom learning. Some of the most transformative learning experiences take place outside of the classroom and outlive classroom instruction. To highlight how rituals can ensoul, I will explore three historical periods in the College's history. Each of these three periods demonstrates the various ways students engage with tradition: The John Hope Memorial of 1936, the Trustee Board Lock-In of 1969, and the Birth of the New Student Orientation Experience in the 1990s.

Conceptualizing a Philosophy of Historically Black Education

The three historical events detailed above will explore how students were shaped or empowered by the rituals and traditions in campus life. I am interested in exploring how a black college community in the South protected students from nihilism and despair in the face of racial violence and cultural revolutions. I will explore the central question by analyzing each case study with a set of secondary questions:

1. What is the role of *history* in historically black education? How do rituals of commemoration inform identity and ideals?
2. What is the place of disruption in maintaining a dynamic tradition? How should historically minded institutions regard protest and truth-telling from students, alumni, and stakeholders?
3. As a form of creative resistance, how does ritual instill strength, agency, and hope in the face of antiblackness?

ANCHORING THE SOUL

The Soul as Ship

Black colleges and churches have worked in tandem to provide cultural armor for generations. The spiritual armor of the Black Church is evident by the nature of being a religious institution; however, black colleges have offered spiritual fortitude by training the head and heart. An ensouling education takes as its starting point the well-being, flourishing, and futurity of the learner. Instead of a hyper-focus on intelligence, productivity, or performance, this holistic vision of education is concerned with the heart, mind, body, and spirit of individuals as well as the collective. The aim of ensouling education is to provide learners with the spiritual and moral resources needed to transcend the nihilistic threat in order to become contributing democratic citizens. Traditional markers of higher education cannot define the essence of HBCUs; these institutions engage in the work of *ensouling*—breathing life and hope into dry bones that they may come alive and not die. What pedagogical tools and practices can we create or retrieve from the past to instill hope, meaning, and love in students today? In this section, I will revisit the concept of ritual in light of the

research questions touched on above. I will comment on notions of 'soul' as a path toward speaking of 'ensouling education'. This discussion will set the stage for presenting core themes I associate with the three main events just mentioned: memory, protest, and imagination.

Ever since I was a child, I have always imagined the soul as a ship. The songs, sermons, and testimonies of the Black Church speak of the soul "Like a ship tossed and driven, battered by the angry seas."[35] Congregants are often moved to tears by songs like this one that speaks of faith anchoring the soul in the middle of a raging storm:

> Though the storms keep on raging in my life
> And sometimes it's hard to tell the night from day
> Still that hope that lies ahead is reassured
> As I keep my eyes upon the distant shore
> I know He'll lead me safely to
> That blessed place He has prepared
>
> But if the storms don't cease
> And if the winds keep on blowing in my life
> My soul is anchored in the Lord.[36]

Gospel music blends the piety of the spirituals with the lament of the blues.[37] Music provides language to relieve some of the overwhelming pressure of life and encourages the community to 'run on to see what the end will be.'

I also heard metaphors of the soul as a ship in the Negro spirituals performed by the Morehouse College Glee Club for Crown Forum, the bi-weekly campus assembly. Moses Hogan's "My Soul's Been Anchored" was one of them.

> In the Lord, in the Lord,
> My soul's been anchored in the Lord.
> Before I'd stay in hell one day,
> My soul's been anchored in the Lord.
> I'd sing and pray myself away,

[35] Thomas Dorsey. "The Lord Will Make A Way Somehow." Recorded March 8, 1994. YouTube video, 4:35. https://youtu.be/oPB1sUR_yLg
[36] Douglas Miller. "My Soul Has Been Anchored." Recorded at the 1992 Stellar Awards. YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8p6yKAr4QvA
[37] James H. Cone, *The Spirituals & The Blues* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972).

My soul's been anchored in the Lord.
I'm going to pray and never stop,
My soul's been anchored in the Lord.
Until I've reached the mountaintop,
My soul's been anchored in the Lord.[38]

Hogan's arrangement sounds like an army of strong, determined freedom fighters preparing for battle. A person who is anchored has a keen sense of their purpose, identity, and power. One who wakes up with such confidence cannot "stay in hell" but works tirelessly until they [reach] the mountaintop. The gospel and spirituals of the Black Church and College pour steel into the spines of disinherited people who, for centuries, were taught to accept their lot.

Nihilism & Black Children

In contrast, a soul that is not anchored is lost in the storm and eventually falls into the abyss of nihilism and despair. In his 1993 essay, "Nihilism in Black America," Cornel West defines nihilism as "the lived experience of coping with a life of meaninglessness, hopelessness, and most importantly, lovelessness."[39] Nihilism leads to detachment, self-destruction, and a mean-spiritual outlook" that destroys the individual and community. Nihilism is the natural response of a person who wakes up every morning with nowhere to go, no one to love, with no ideal to reach or work toward. This is the case for many who suffer from racial and economic injustices. Inequality is tied to the racial caste system that inhibits well-being and becoming based on accidents of birth and geographic location.

In my work as a minister in Harlem and Brooklyn, I am often asked to talk to children who fall behind in school because of a lack of motivation and disinterest. In my conversations with students, I began to notice that their apathy was a result of the constrictive routines. It is normal to

[38] Moses Hogan. "My Soul's Been Anchored" Recorded at the 2019 Atlanta Music Festival: Bound for the Promised Land, Songs and Words of Equality and Freedom. Performed by Morehouse College Glee Club. YouTube video, 3:27. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQGHYvS_0Jo
[39] West, "Nihilism in Black America," 14.

hear children compare their schools to boot camps. Students who lack the ability to advocate for themselves or take initiative rarely grow up to become active, engaged citizens in a democratic society. This ultimately perpetuates racial disparities in every facet of culture and society. Unmotivated students never go on to hold high-ranking positions in society that require years of study, discipline, and critical thinking. The number of Black judges, lawyers, engineers, and Ph.D. students can be linked to the early educative experiences of children who are disciplined.

Today, the nihilistic threat is impacting black students as early as adolescence. The challenges that many Black students face in schools today—whether public, private, charter, failing, or high achieving—stem from the fundamental need to find sources of meaning, self-worth, and identity that seem readily unavailable in their schools. The draconian 'No-Excuses' approach to classroom management is a form of what Bell Hooks calls *soul murder*. Soul murder is "the incapacity to give and feel love and the ensuing alienation from one's self." [40]

Instilling a sense of self-esteem and pride is the only possible healing for soul murder. Without an anchor for the soul, Black children and youth will continue to drift away into meaningless and uninspired lives. "For as long as hope remains and meaning is preserved," says West, "the possibility of overcoming oppression stays alive."[41] The hope is that we will continue to create cultural armor for all children to live in a world where they can all learn, live, and thrive.

Ensouling Rituals at Black Colleges

Ensouling rituals are marked by four distinctions. Firstly, ritual is the incarnation of an idea. Ensouling ritual transmits an idea or message through physical action, movements, gestures, kinetic activity, costumes, or verbal pronouncements.[42] Secondly, ensouling rituals are *signifying practices* that work to complement myths that facilitate social engagement, promote a cultural ideal, and change

[40] Hooks, *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*, 187.
[41] West, "Nihilism in Black America," 15.
[42] Azouz, 25-26.

human consciousness. [43] Thirdly, ensouling rituals are formative tools that shape moral agents, learners, and, ultimately, communities. Finally, ensouling rituals empower individuals and communities to participate in political and social transformation directly.

When it comes to understanding the spiritual and political dimensions of ritual action, Samy Azouz shows us how Amiri Baraka used the performance of rituals of resistance in theatre to empower the Black Arts Movement. Baraka is considered the architect of the Black Arts Movement (1965-1975). Following the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968) and the Black Power Movement (1965-1985), the Black Arts Movements introduced an alternative approach to social transformation. While the preceding movements sought policy and economic changes, the Black Arts Movement turned to theatre and cultural experiences to instill messages of affirmation, determination, and beauty. Azouz draws on the work of a cadre of anthropologists and theorists who reaffirm that rituals can be a source of spiritual strength, freedom, and existential release for communities experiencing anxiety and social oppression. [44] Azouz offers three critical insights for building out our understanding of ensouling rituals.

Firstly, ensouling rituals empower communities with a spiritual current or energy that reinforces shared values, commitments, and ongoing efforts toward freedom. Rituals transport practitioners from the daily rounds of routine into an enchanted, sacred space whereby they are able to envision alternative possibilities.

Secondly, ensouling rituals invite community members to play a direct and active role in social transformation. Through protesting, canvassing, organizing, and participating in civic initiatives, people are empowered to make a difference in democracy as opposed to spectating from a difference.

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[43] Azouz, 27.
[44] Azouz, "Amiri Baraka's Theatre of Ritual: From Staging Rituals of Unfulfilment to Performing Rituals of Political Praxis."

Thirdly, ensouling rituals conflate history with the present and open new pathways for the future. For example, protesting could be considered an ensouling ritual because it instills a revolutionary spirit in a community by evoking a ritualized history of disrupting the social order. The act of marching dates back thousands of years to Israel's journey out of Egyptian bondage. In essence, when a community marches for a cause, they are reenacting the long history of protest and civil disobedience over centuries. Azouz, quoting African American theatre scholar Larry Neal, writes, "Like all good ritual, its purpose is to make the audience stronger, more sensitive, to the historical realities that have shaped our lives and the lives of our ancestors."[45] Ensouling rituals transmits the wisdom, values, and knowledge of an older generation to an emerging generation. The children of today will become tomorrow's guardians.

The *Maroon Tiger* digital collection provides retrospective entry points into campus life at critical historical moments. The paper documents articles, upcoming event announcements, and notes from chapel talks and lectures that helped to shape students' responses to racial violence and injustice. Through literary societies, debate clubs, memorials, homecoming festivities, and many other formal and informal gatherings, the college *ensouled* students through experiences that fostered belonging, joy, hope, creativity, and uncompromising demand for excellence.

The philosophy of historically black education is articulated in pragmatic ways. College presidents like Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, and Mary McCleod Bethune did not publish systematic educational philosophies, but they shared their visions and beliefs through chapel addresses, sermons, and informal conversations with students. Likewise, students engage in pragmatism by creating rituals, protesting for change, and transforming traditions in order to maintain a vibrant campus life that meets the needs of every generation. Drawing on my experience as a philosopher, pastor, and graduate of Morehouse, I propose that HBCU campus rituals and

[45] Azouz, 27.

traditions offer guidance for reclaiming black youth from nihilism and empowering them to face the future with hope and imagination. How can we breathe life and ensoul the next generation? This project will explore three core themes towards conceptualizing a philosophy of historically black education: (1) Memory, (2) Protest, and (3) Imagination and Rites of Passage.

Memory

Memory plays a crucial role in helping human beings create identity, meaning, and hope. The stories we tell about the dead shape how we live our lives. Ancient philosophers understood philosophy to be a preparation for death. Through intentional reflection upon mortality, the living draw guidance and inspiration from the dead. This was the case in Death of Socrates, captured in Plato's *Phaedo*. The pedagogical potential of memory and death is powerfully illustrated in the image of Socrates surrounded by his students as he takes his final breath. His death was the end of his life, but it was the beginning of a philosophical tradition.

For diasporic and exilic communities, the erasure of memory is a tool of conquest, and re-membering is an act of resistance. In his essay, "The Meaning of KMT," African educational psychologist Asa G. Hilliard, III writes, "No conqueror has won a final victory over any people until his or her memory of history and culture was destroyed. All wars of conquest ultimately are cultural wars. Conquerors must erase the memory of conquered people…Successful conquerors know that history and culture are the jugular vein and Achilles tendon of a people." [46] It is only through intentional work of remembering that history is preserved.

Education, in essence, is an act of remembering. Most residential college campuses are filled with monuments and statues. In unbeknownst ways, students become acquainted with these names that mark buildings, rooms, lectures, events, and other sites of memory. The dead play an

[46] Asa G. Hilliard, "The Meaning of KMT," in *The Maroon Within Us* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 212–13.

instrumental role in shaping the institution's physical landscape, rituals, and narrative. One example of such ritual is the John Hope Graveside Memorial at Morehouse, which was established by the senior class of 1936 following Hope's sudden death in February 1936.

The memorial speaks to the central role of remembering in historically black education. This ritual analysis will explore the relationship between memory and formation by analyzing the funeral orations and eulogies of students. I will draw on three philosophical texts in order to further develop an understanding of the place of memory in historically black education. These texts include Plato's *Phaedo*, which retells the scene of the Death of Socrates; W.E.B. Dubois' essay "Of Alexander Crummell," which offers a treatment of *presence* as a form of formation; and Simon Stow's *American Mourning* which examines the place of the dead in a democratic society. Some of the preliminary themes I plan to expound on are remembering as (1) community formation, (2) perpetuation of ideals, and (3) transference of power and habits.

Protest

Colleges and universities play a vital role in maintaining a vibrant democratic society. In *Achieving Our Country,* American pragmatist Richard Rorty writes, "All universities worthy of the name have always been centers of social protests. If American universities ever cease to be such centers, they will lose both their self-respect and the respect of the learned world."[47] The university, according to Rorty, is duty-bound to educate students to become active agents who question, challenge, critique, and demand change in a democracy. Moreover, the role of the university in a democratic society is to "stir things up, to make our society feel guilty, to keep it off balance."[48] The future of the university and society relies on the emerging generation of young protesters who push and prod institutions toward *Achieving our country* and our better angels. Student protests have led to

[47] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, 82.
[48] Richard Rorty, "The Humanistic Intellectual: Eleven Theses," in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin, 1999), 128.

many social movements for change, including divestment from South African apartheid, opposition to war, and global warming. In the same vein, the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th Century was birthed by black college students inspired by their mentors and the freedom of the campus.

The second case study will explore the place of protest and disruption in historically black education by analyzing the 1969 Lock-In. On April 18, 1969, a group of student activists held the Morehouse Board of Trustees hostage in an academic building following a dinner demanding changes, which included more black trustees, student representation, improving community relations, and a stronger focus on black curricula. Although the disruption involved criminal activity (taking hostages) and resulted in expulsions, the protest led to significant institutional changes during the Black Power Movement that propelled the College forward.

Using the Lock-In as a historical example, I will make the case that disruptions can be both formative and empowering. Through acts of protest and truth-telling, marginalized students are encouraged to be agents of change rather than spectators. Three of the formative functions of disruptions:

1. **Empowering Democratic Agents:** Through disruptive acts, students become acquainted with democracy as a way of life. Democratic societies depend on active agents who are able to question, analyze, challenge, protest, and demand changes through legislation and policy. Instead of becoming detached spectators, students must be empowered to find and use their voices to create the conditions they hope to see. This empowerment requires the space to practice democracy in an environment that is safe, affirming, and non-punitive.
2. **Enlivening Democratic Institutions**: Traditions are unsettled and fixed; they rely on the work of emerging generations who challenge and question their relevance, values, and commitment in light of new demands towards diversity and inclusion. In order to remain vibrant, institutions must remain open to change. As this case study will show, these demands can be disruptive, violent, and uncomfortable; however, these uncanny moments are critical to the life and future of a flourishing institution.

3. **Transforming Democratic Societies:** As the college prepares students to become critical thinkers and conscious citizens, students keep the traditions relevant and fresh through their demands and protest. This ultimate struggle or exchange ultimately transforms our democracy by nurturing the next generation of leaders, visionaries, and pillars of the community.

Rites of Passage

The college campus provides students and faculty the space to try out their wings in student government, artistic expression, and a myriad of campus organizations. Freedom of expression is the main artery of a democracy. It stretches the boundaries and allows citizens to engage in the work of self-creation and recreation, knowing that no aspect of society is fixed or settled in time. Rorty writes, "The point of non-vocational higher education is to help students realize that they can reshape themselves—that they can rework the self-image foisted on them by their past, the self-image that makes them competent citizen; into a new self-image, one that they themselves have helped to create." Self-creation requires that we come to this work with the intellectual acuity, imagination, and faith to embrace the unknown.

The third case study will examine how students used their created rituals of affirmation using Afrocentric education and culture as a springboard. Following the 1984 Nile Valley Conference, hosted at Morehouse, the College was imbibed with a newfound appreciation and pride stemming from Africa's contributions to science, math, religion, education, and philosophy. One example of the enduring impact of the gathering was the transformation of the New Student Orientation (NSO), which was redesigned by students to create a rites of passage experience for students and their families. This weeklong series of ceremonies and rituals encompass elements of Afrocentric theatre and religious expressions, including African dance and drumming, Negro spirituals, orations, and dramatization designed to foster brotherhood, academic excellence, and spiritual fortitude. The

NSO experience stands in the face of negative stereotypes of black men that often perpetuate nihilism and despair.

I will focus on the work of African-American philosophers Alain Locke and W.E.B. DuBois to examine how rituals of theatre and faith communities have helped communities to imagine themselves into freedom. My work on imagination draws heavily on themes from Alain Locke's *The New Negro* to help conceptualize this philosophical framework. Locke's anthology provided a philosophical foundation for the Harlem Renaissance and included many of the tensions that are evident in HBCU traditions. The Renaissance was birthed by historians and bibliophiles who were committed to building a new tradition, artists who refused to be limited by the critiques of a white audience, artists who were seeking to name their selves, take control of their narrative and build new traditions, and a community that was ready to experience joy unrestrained by religious doctrines and dogmas.

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

Since 1911, the Glee Club has been the leading singing organization of the College, representing the school on national and international tours. Additionally, the Glee Club is an integral part of the sonic experience of Morehouse students, frequently heard at the bi-weekly Crown Forum, and the songs often become a part of a student's personal soundtrack. The Glee Club serves as a connection between the HBCU and the Black Church, and to honor this shared legacy, each chapter is named after a Negro spiritual that corresponds with the case study's theme. In homage to DuBois' ode to Negro music at the beginning of each chapter in The Souls of Black Folk, I have chosen to invoke these spirituals.

Chapter 2. My Soul Is Witness: The John Hope Memorial

Following the sudden death of President John Hope, the graduating class of 1936 organized a graveside ritual to honor the first Black president of the College. The funeral orations and eulogies

documented in *The Maroon Tiger* elucidate the place of history in moral education. Hope was a moral exemplar who preached a gospel of excellence and high ideals to his Morehouse students. He was what many would have defined as a *Race Man*. A race man (or woman) was an honorary distinction for one who dedicated their life to ensuring the betterment of Black people through education, housing, and jobs for Black Americans. President Hope was known for his commitment to racial uplift through education. At the time of his death, his students organized a memorial as a transference of power and ideals. In this chapter, I explore the role of history and memory in black education through a case study of the evolution of the John Hope Graveside Memorial created by students in February 1936. This case study will turn to eulogies and reflections from the *Maroon Tiger* to conceptualize the pedagogical uses of history in shaping identity, values, and commitments.

Chapter 3. Listen to the Lambs: The Counter-Tradition of Protest

The Trustee Board Lock-In of 1969 was one of the most radical events in the history of the College. On April 18, a group of student activists held Morehouse Trustees hostage in an academic building. The activists presented a list of demands, which included adding more black trustees and students to the board, improving community relations, and a stronger emphasis on black history and culture in the curriculum. Administrators and key stakeholders like Hugh Gloster, the College president; Benjamin Mays, the recently retired President Emeritus; and Rev. Martin Luther King Sr, a Trustee of the College, did not look favorably upon the protest. However, the 1969 Lock-In led to several changes in governance and the curriculum that helped the College to redefine itself after the death of its most notable alumnus, Martin Luther King Jr. This analysis of the 1969 Lock-In will explore how disruptive rituals are beneficial to the health of a vibrant tradition, and the formation of democratic citizens. In this chapter, I examine the role of protest and disruption by analyzing the 1969 Morehouse Trustee Lock-In that led the College to embrace a new cultural affinity in its curriculum

and governance. This chapter is designed to reconceptualize how disruptions can be viewed as constructive for students, schools, and society rather than punitive.

Chapter 4. I'm Building Me A Home: Rites of Passage Education

The 1990s ushered in the birth of Afrocentricity in Black culture. In September 1984, Morehouse hosted the inaugural Nile Valley Conference, the first academic conference that addressed Africa's intellectual heritage. African-centered philosophers, scientists, and linguists heard presentations by Senegalese historian and scientist Cheikh Anta Diop, educational psychologist Asa G. Hilliard, and psychologist Na'im Akbar. One of the enduring impacts of the conference on black culture was a new focus on initiations and rites of passage. In the early 90s, students and faculty were studying the role of initiation in African communities and working together to recreate the New Student Orientation at Morehouse. An analysis of this cultural movement will provide insight into the role of imagination and self-fashioning as forms of creative resistance. Chapter 4 will explore the work of imagination and joy in black education. This chapter will make the case that rituals of affirmation and joy are ways that black communities have resisted despair and nihilism. This chapter will draw on the work of the American pragmatist tradition to show how the work of self-creating and self-fashioning are acts of resistance. I will argue that there is more to the narrative of black colleges than deficits and struggle; there is beauty, joy, and brilliance. This chapter will highlight how rituals of affirmation can change institutional narratives and inspire students toward a more hopeful future.

Chapter 5. I've Got A New Name: Imagination as Ethical Mindfulness

In this concluding core chapter, we will delve into imagination as the underlying theme of the dissertation, which is evident in all three case studies. By drawing connections and examples from these historic events, we will examine how various generations, from the college founders to the 21st-century students, responded to their day's challenges by imagining new ways of building on

the college's traditions and legacies. The dissertation concludes with a personal portrait of two of my mentors, Dean Lawrence Edward Carter and Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts, who have embodied ensouling leadership through a friendship forged over forty years of working together to guide generations of aspiring ministers and scholars.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORICALLY BLACK EDUCATION

In recalling the history of Morehouse College, historian Edward M. Jones iterates on the social milieu in which the College had to struggle to protect its students: "The socio-politico-economic milieu from which the College drew its sustenance was in no wise conducive to the institution's growth. In fact, the College was evolving in spite of its environment." The College was not immune from lynchings. In the early 1930s, two Morehouse students were murdered by white vigilantes. Although professors referred to their students as "Mr.," black professors were emasculated by whites who refused to call them by their titles. Faculty members, like Benjamin Mays, were pulled off Pullman trains at gunpoint by white men.

These three case studies in the history of campus life at Morehouse provide a substantive starting point for conceptualizing an educational philosophy that fortifies students in the face of nihilism and despair. As we imagine an ensouling education, it is important that educators take seriously the emotional and psychological pressure that students endure in the face of violence, poverty, and death.

How can education help students learn to resist the abyss of nihilism and despair in the face of continued racial oppression and to look to the future with hope and imagination? In spite of the degradation and dehumanization, Black colleges managed to breathe life into bones left dry and dead by racism's venom. Through high ideals, academic rigor, rituals of affirmation, festivals of

belonging and joy, loving mentorships, and words of endearment, the black colleges have ensouled generations of youth who have gone on to change the world as courageous democratic agents.

II. My Soul Is a Witness: The John Hope Memorial

Later in the van, leaving your place, of enchanted rest,
We marvel at whom life has put into our vehicle.[49]

—Alice Walker, *"We Pay a Visit to Those Who Play Dead"*

We thank Thee today, Our Father, for all the choice spirits of the past that have lived so creatively and have acted so vigorously upon the unfolding life of their day and generation that humanity can never be the same thereafter. We thank Thee for the life of him whom we honor today, whose memory we revere. We thank Thee for the sacred contagion that has been ours in our relation with him. We thank Thee that he has touched so many lives and guided the feet of youth in their upward climb, and has been the wise counselor of age. We remember with gratitude his justice and his sympathy, that he walked with men in sweet comradeship and yet convinced us all that he was walking a few steps ahead of us, challenging us and inspiring us, so that we followed him as a moving ideal, stimulating yet nigh unattainable. We pray that his life may be remembered by us who knew him best as our great inspirer. And now we seem to understand the secret of it all. He walked in comradeship with Jesus of Nazareth, in whose presence he felt no embarrassment. May we here and now rededicate ourselves anew to the task to which he gave his life, and may we swear a new hatred to those evils against which he warred and which, in a sense, have made him a martyr and a conqueror. And so "we carve not a word and we raise not a stone, but we leave him alone in his glory." The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance unto thee, and give thee peace. Amen.[50]

—Charles DuBois Hubert, *A Prayer of Benediction*
Delivered at the Memorial Service in Honor of Dr. John Hope, December 2, 1936

One of the most telling and sincere expressions of student loyalty, student vision, and student gratitude was exemplified in the memorial service for Dr. John Hope by the students of Morehouse and Spelman Colleges and Atlanta University in Sale Hall Chapel, Wednesday, February 26, at 9 AM.[51]

—Frankie B. Smith, *Spelman College*
The Campus Mirror, February 1936

[49] Alice Walker, "We Pay a Visit to Those Who Play Dead," in *Hard Times Require Furious Dancing* (Novato: New World Library, 2010), 116–23.
[50] Charles DuBois Hubert, "A Prayer of Benediction," *Spelman Messenger*, November 1936, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/sc.001.messenger:1936.04.
[51] Frankie B. Smith, "Memorial Exercises," *The Campus Mirror*, May 8, 1936, https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/sc.001.mirror%3A1936.03?search=John%2520Hope%25201936.

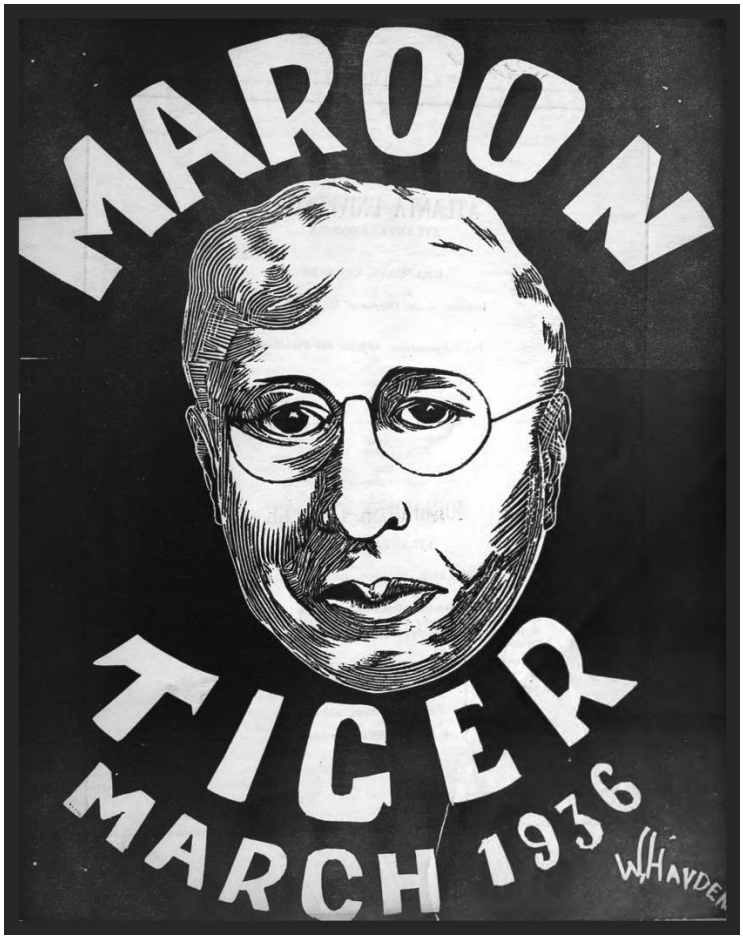

Figure 1: Maroon Tiger Cover Illustration of John Hope[52]

I first heard the name *John Hope* shortly after I arrived at Morehouse College as an incoming freshman in August 2008. It was the first day of New Student Orientation (NSO), and I was standing in line in the dining hall when an NSO leader approached me. "Excuse me, sir," he said, "Who was the first Black president of Morehouse College?" Completely caught off guard, I thought, *"How would I know, and why does it matter right now?"* I did not even pretend to know. He politely but sternly asked me to remove the maroon and white "Morehouse 1867" lanyard from my neck and put it in my pocket. According to him, I had not earned the right to wear school paraphernalia because I did not know the story. "When you learn the story, you can wear the name."

[52] "Maroon Tiger Cover Illustration of John Hope," *Maroon Tiger*, 1936, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1936_003.pdf.

The next morning, the college archivist gave a lecture on the history and traditions of the college. His lecture covered the school's founding and its presidents. It was then that I learned the answer to the question: *John Hope was the first Black President of Morehouse!* The NSO leader's question sparked an interest that has ultimately led to this chapter of the dissertation.

Names matter for historically marginalized communities that have suffered from the erasure of history and memory.[53] In comparison with the majority of vast institutions, HBCUs place emphasis on institutional knowledge and history. Students are expected to be familiar with the school's history, its presidents, and notable alumni/ae. Learning names is grounded in an African cosmology that believes that deceased ancestors still play a crucial role in defining the institution's Spirit—its mission, values, and ideals. In the words of Alice Walker, "*They play dead*" because, in many ways, they are still alive.

John Hope ascended to the presidency of Atlanta Baptist College amid the vicious Atlanta Race Riots of September 1906. The schoolmaster spent his first days in office protecting and caring for his students as blood flowed through the streets of Atlanta. With a love for people, a keen eye for detail, and a vision for Black liberal education, President Hope went to work building a sanctuary for Black students in a city burning up with racial hatred and injustice. He cultivated loving relationships grounded in sympathetic care, recruited talented professors and administrators, and designed a full democratic liberal arts experience for Black youth in the Jim Crow South. From campus beautification to extracurricular activities, Hope gave his all, even unto death by overwork and tiredness, to the pursuit of creating an ensouling institution. After a successful tenure, Hope retired from the presidency in 1929 to continue to build on his vision of making Atlanta the capital

[53] Asa G. Hilliard III, "The Meaning of KMT (Ancient Egyptian) History for Contemporary African American Experience," *Phylon (1960-)* 49, no. 1/2 (1992): 10, https://doi.org/10.2307/3132613.

of Black liberal arts education in the South—juxtaposing Booker T. Washington's vocational education model at Tuskegee University in Alabama.

John Hope died in February 1936 at 68, leaving behind a generation of students mourning his passing and motivated to keep his legacy alive. Students shared their memories with Dr. Hope in editorials and eulogies published in campus newspapers, including quotes from his famous chapel talks, conversations in passing, and gestures as simple as a smile. Students were so endeared to him that they immediately thought of a way to immortalize their leader and friend. It was out of the pain of grief that the Class of 1936 created the John Hope Memorial as a 'perpetual gift' to succeeding generations. The annual memorial would become one of the College's oldest traditions, setting a precedent for immortalizing the dead through rituals of remembering and sites of memory.

Chapter Overview & Methodology

This chapter is a philosophical case study of the John Hope Memorial initiated in February 1936 following the premature and sudden death of John Hope, the College's first African American president. For nearly 30 years, the annual memorial was arranged, conducted, and primarily attended by students who were compelled to immortalize his memory for generations to come through ritual. The history of the Hope Memorial traces the evolution of one of the College's oldest traditions from a student-led initiative to an institutionalized ritual that set a precedent for remembering and honoring the deceased as a part of the Morehouse experience.

To this end, this project draws heavily from the digital archives of student newspapers from Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Atlanta University, with a primary focus on student expressions and grief work. These publications offer manuscripts, orders of service, and editorials that are helpful for imagining the sentiments of the moment. By analyzing the eulogies and funeral orations delivered by students over the course of nearly 30 years, this chapter provides a portrait of the ways that educators' presence and care have endeared students to them, and in return, teachers

are immortalized through the testimonies and witness of their students. Drawing on the West African concept of Sankofa, this study shows that history and the present are mutually dependent on each other to survive. In essence, Sankofa is not only a matter of preserving the past, but the wisdom of the past also preserves us by providing a source of meaning, hope, and inspiration.

Building on the work of Grace C. Stanford on African American teachers and personal memories and Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's concept of *giving forward*, I make the case that Hope's leadership was inspired by personal memories of mentors and teachers, some of which were ordinary, everyday encounters that left indelible impressions. This chapter provides a philosophical conceptual analysis of the role of 'history' in *historically black education*. The driving question of this inquiry is *How might history help in ensouling students amid the threat of nihilism and despair?* I approached the archival study with three sub-questions to get to the heart of the inquiry:

1. What ensouling memories shaped Hope's educational philosophy and commitments?
2. How did Hope aspire to create similar ensouling experiences for his students?
3. What did students remember most about Hope after his death?

The first section provides a portrait of Hope's life and leadership, focusing on several of the ensouling relationships and turning points that informed his commitment and philosophy of education. The second section focuses on the death of John Hope in 1936 and how grief and memory set a precedent for immortalizing the dead in black education. The third and final section considers the ways memory can be a source of life-sustaining wisdom and hope for emerging and future generations. It is my hope that this archival work will offer a portrait of ensouling education to the end that we see that ordinary encounters have the power to create meaningful, life-sustaining memories for years to come.

THE LIFE OF JOHN HOPE

Young Hope & Providential Encounters

John Hope was born on June 2, 1868, to James and Frances (Fanny) Hope in Augusta, Georgia. Hope, the son of a mixed couple—a Scottish father and a Black mother—enjoyed a happy and comfortable childhood until his father's untimely death. James Hope, an affluent businessman, left three of his partners as co-executors of his state and charged them to ensure that this family was economically sufficient in the wake of his death. Unfortunately, they reneged on the promise and left the Hope family destitute. The financial strain made teenage John "the man of the house" at a young age with an elementary education. He took up dead-end jobs around town to support his family. As time passed, finishing school seemed unrealistic, and Hope's interest in education waned. According to biographer Ridgely Torrence, "[Hope] needed awakening, and he was to receive it from the voice of a new friend."[54]

Hope's 'providential encounter' with Rev. John Dart, a new minister in Augusta, was one of the 'great turning points' of his life. "The young minister radiated a magnetic power of leadership." After spending a little time together, Rev. Dart spotted potential in young Hope and saw that he had fallen into a rut. The mindless monotony of work and the comfort of home were no challenge or inspiration. "He was beginning to wear his world like an old shoe. He was wasting his time."[55] It was one afternoon on his way home from a shift that Hope had his 'providential encounter." Torrence captures that moment in moving detail. He writes:

> Unknown to him, Dart watched him, waiting for the right moment and the right word to rouse him. It was spoken one afternoon on the street when he had just gone off duty at Henson's [Restaurant] and was undecided about what he would do or where he would go for the remainder of the day. Rounding a corner, he came face to face with Dart, who stopped him and looked at him searchingly. The moment had arrived:
>
> "John, why don't you go to school?"
>
> The boy stared at his questioner breathless. As he himself told the story in a speech many years later: "I had been out of school for five years working for a living and not seeing how in the world I would ever get to school again and getting not particularly interested in going

[54] Ridgely Torrence, *The Story of John Hope* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969), 68.
[55] Edward A. Jones, *A Candle in the Dark: A History of Morehouse College* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1967), 81; Torrence, *The Story of John Hope*, 68.

> back. But Dart wielded such an influence that, although I was not a member of his church, when he said, "John, why don't you go to school?" it got working in mind almost like a command.[56]

Soon later, Hope left August for Worcester Academy in Massachusetts at 18 years old. There he met Dr. Daniel Webster Abercrombie, the academy's principal, who became a lifelong mentor and friend. Abercrombie's love for the classics was so infectious that Hope was never content with vocational education as espoused by Booker T. Washington. Hope had a gift for recalling what I call ensouling moments. He remembered how people made him feel and welcomed him. Like the meeting with Rev. Dart, Hope recalled his initial meeting with Dr. Abercrombie in the principal's office. Hope remembers Dr. Abercrombie recognized his name and greeted him with a handshake: "That cordial, entirely natural action deeply impressed the boy from Georgia. Decades afterward, he wrote of it to Abercrombie: "What a difference two or three steps can make in the life of a boy who enters the room!"[57]

These early ensouling encounters remained in Hope's memory long after they occurred. They lived on subconsciously and informed how he showed up as a teacher and schoolmaster many years later. Throughout his career, Hope continuously mentioned his gratitude for mentors, like Rev. Dart and Dr. Abercrombie, for their impact on his life's trajectory.[58]

1906, Niagara Movement & Atlanta Race Riot

Hope's gratitude for mentors and teachers inspired a lifelong dedication to educational leadership, a commitment that was strengthened by his relationship with friends and colleagues through the Niagara Movement. In addition to providential encounters, Hope's work was also

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[56] Torrence, *The Story of John Hope*, 69.
[57] Torrence, 74.
[58] "Five Men Helped Shape Mr. Hope's Life Through Encouragement and Understanding." Atlanta University Bulletin, July 1936; "Dr. Hope Is Awarded 1935 Spingarn Medal Posthumously as Recognition of Leadership," *The Atlanta University Bulletin*, May 8, 1936, https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/002.au.bulletin:0059.

sustained through a network of support grounded in the mutual interest of racial uplift. In August 1906, Hope attended the Niagara Movement Meeting at Storer College in Harper's Ferry. The meeting was organized by W.E.B. DuBois and included a small group of Race Men—Black men committed to building the Black community through education, advocacy, and political activism. The Niagarites discussed the future of the ongoing fight for justice and equality for African Americans on the anniversary of abolitionist John Brown's 100th birthday. It is important to note that it was more than another conference. The meeting itself was filled with historical significance as these Race Men gathered in the birthplace and on the birthday of one of the most courageous abolitionists in American history. Beyond deliberation and planning, these men also created bonds of friendship and support that would shape the future of Black people, especially in education. They did more than discuss ideas around the table. On John Brown's Day, they took a pilgrimage together at 6 AM in the morning that began at Brown's fort. They removed their shoes and socks and walked the hallowed grounds ceremonially following in his footsteps. Later that day, they were joined by Lewis Douglass, the son of Fredrick Douglass, and Reverdy Ransom, the pastor of the Charles Street African American Methodist Church, who shared moving eulogies and addresses in honor of Brown. This moment of reflection on Brown's life also strengthened the bonds between these Niagarites, who left the meeting fully committed to lifting the Black community.

John Hope boldly decided to stand in solidary with DuBois and the Niagarites. He knew that his activism could cost Atlanta Baptist College (ABC) financial support from many of its white philanthropists. The conference ended on Sunday, August 19, with the reading of "The Address to the County," a manifesto from the meeting that expressed resolve to fight for racial equality and human rights. Among the demands for an end to discrimination on public transportation and equal treatment under the law, education was the culminating focus of the address. The manifesto reads:

> And when we call for education we mean real education. We believe in work. We ourselves are workers, but work is not necessarily education. Education is the development of power

> and ideal. We want our children trained as intelligent human beings should be, and we will fight for all time against any proposal to educate black boys and girls simply as servants and underlings, or simply for the use of other people. They have a right to know, to think, to aspire. [59]

The Niagarites left Harper's Ferry emboldened by the memory and spirit of John Brown and with a "willingness to sacrifice money, reputation, and life itself" to uplift the race, especially Black youth.

The Atlanta Race Riot, 1906

The Atlanta Race Riot would test Hope's willingness to sacrifice a month after the Niagara Meeting. In September 1906, a mob of 10,000 primarily young white men ran through the streets of Atlanta, terrorizing every Black person they could find. The mob pulled Black passengers off trolleys and out of shops and chased them down in the streets. The riots lasted for almost five days, leaving twenty people dead and hundreds injured. Amid rumors that rioters planned to attack the campus, President Hope spent his first days in office patrolling the campus yard. Georgia's governor deployed soldiers to stand against the mob, but they were stretched thin and suffered from lack of sleep. In *Clashing of the Soul,* Leroy Davis tells the story of Hope's encounter with one of the soldiers:

> Hope walked briskly toward a soldier, who nervously cried out: "Stop. What do you want? Put up your hands!" The soldier raised his firearm and pointed it directly at the new president of Atlanta Baptist College. Hope slowed his pace considerably, put up his hands, and began to smile, and invited the man into the house for a cup of coffee. Disarmed by Hope's cordiality, and perhaps unsure of Hope's racial identity, the soldier lowered his weapon and accepted the invitation.[60]

The image of the schoolmaster standing guard, ready to defend his students against a mob—yet gentle enough to extend hospitality to a tired soldier—offers a powerful metaphor of the Black College as sanctuary for students in the face of fear and death. The new school year began the week

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[59] W.E.B. DuBois, "The Niagara Movement: Address to the Country," in *W.E.B. DuBois: A Reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 367–69.
[60] Leroy Davis, *A Clashing of the Soul: John Hope and the Dilemma of African American Leadership and Black Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 168.

after the riot, and gradually students returned encouraged "by the confidence and the sense of security radiated by Hope's personality."[61]

Architect of Greater Morehouse

Hope's successful presidency was a turning point in the history of Black higher education. It demonstrated to white philanthropists that Black leaders were qualified and capable of leading their own institutions. He took Atlanta Baptist College out of the hands of the American Baptist Home Mission Society and began recruiting alumni as professors, faculty, and administrators to aid him in building what would later become Morehouse College. With the support of Benjamin Brawley and Samuel Archer, the triumvirate became known as "the principal architects of Morehouse." Edward Jones writes in *Candle of the Dark: A History of Morehouse College,* "Each of these men left his mark on the College by infusing into its traditions and personality something of himself."[62] Under Hope's leadership (1906-1931), the enrollment more than doubled, the endowment increased, and new facilities were built to accommodate the growing college.

In addition to his stellar administrative leadership, Hope is credited for building *The Morehouse Spirit* by setting the tone of the College with his *presence*, *personality*, and *sympathetic care* for students. President Hope's believed Black students needed Christian leaders—leaders "whose souls could be touched by the people whom they led." When it came to students, Hope was fully present and often lost track of time listening to their concerns. Ridgely Torrence writes:

> Inevitably drawn into the external—the political affairs—of the college, Hope's real and abiding interest was in the students. His own student days—arduous and marked with tragedy among his personal friends—had made him sensitive to the possible heartbreak in the lives of the young people around him. The boys began instinctively to turn toward him rather than the white president when they found themselves in difficulties…any student could go and discuss things with him. He could be stern as Caesar and tender as a mother. He took things over whether it was his job or not. If a boy needed a dose of medicine, castor oil, or a reprimand, he gave it to him. He had no hours.[63]

[61] Ridgely Torrence, *The Story of John Hope* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969), 155.
[62] Jones, *A Candle in the Dark: A History of Morehouse College*, 88.
[63] Torrence, *The Story of John Hope*, 138.

In 1911, Howard University professor and philosopher Alain Locke spent ten days with Hope and DuBois. During his time, he noticed Hope's phenomenal care for details and his personal contact with students.

The president gave himself over to students so that they might draw strength from his soul. Such was the case for theologian and mystic Howard Thurman, who arrived at ABC in 1919. In his autobiography, *With Head and Heart*, Howard Thurman recalls admiring Hope's genteel, scholarly, decorous demeanor as he stood before the student body in chapel on Tuesday mornings. "This constituted perhaps our greatest single course of instruction in the four undergraduate years."[64] Hope was a gifted orator who spoke extemporaneously, effortlessly weaving wisdom from personal experiences with his command of the classics.[65] Years after graduation, Thurman remembered President Hope addressing the students as "young gentlemen" and the significance of Black men in Atlanta being acknowledged and affirmed against the backdrop of the Jim Crow South of the 1920s, with its lynchings, burnings, and cruelties. Thurman writes:

> Our manhood, and that of our fathers, was denied on all levels by white society, a fact insidiously expressed in the way Black men were addressed. No matter what his age, whether he was in his burgeoning twenties or full of years, the Black man was never referred to as "mister," nor even by his surname. No. To the end of his days, he had to absorb the indignity of being called "boy," or "nigger," or "uncle." No wonder then that every time Dr. Hope addressed us as "young gentlemen," the seeds of self-worth and confidence, long dormant, began to germinate and sprout. The attitudes we developed toward ourselves, as a result of this influence, set Morehouse men apart. It was not unusual, for example, to be identified as a Morehouse man by complete strangers because of this subtle but dramatic sense of self.[66]

[64] Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979), 36.
[65] Jones, *A Candle in the Dark: A History of Morehouse College*, 85.
[66] Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman*, 36.

Students drew strength and inspiration from Hope through his weekly chapel talks on Tuesday and during their encounters on the yard. He knew from his experience with Rev. John Dart that a small, ordinary conversation had the potential to change someone's life forever.

His time at Worcester and Brown University exposed him to a true sense of liberal arts education, and he wanted to create a liberating atmosphere for students. Black youth were often denied the freedoms, liberties, and joys of life in the Jim Crow South. Racial inequities robbed black students of the space to freely express themselves and try on their wings. The over-seriousness of the Baptists left no opportunities for leisure and play. Hope transformed the strict campus culture by introducing music, sports, and extracurricular activities. As president, he abolished disciplinary practices, such as the long-standing tradition of punishing students by forcing them to tend to the campus grounds. He believed students should take responsibility for their own actions, make their own mistakes, and build on their valuable traits and character.

Morehouse students enjoyed a remarkable sense of freedom that was ahead of its time for a Black college. Hope envisioned a place where Black youth were liberated from the restrictions of Negro life in the South and the space to experience freedom, joy, and beauty of life. As they walked the campus, students were inspired by the beauty of the campus. Hope sought to create this experience by tending to the details of the campus environment like an artist approaches a canvas. He took a bare red clay hill and turned it into a beautiful campus by working with the biology professor to plant flowering trees and shrubs.[67] He gave the same attention to hiring faculty members to lead new departments and programs for a liberal education. A true liberal arts experience required tending to the aesthetics of the campus, extracurricular activities, and leisure. Campus life was bustling with a robust student government association, student-led newspaper, sports teams, glee clubs, orchestras, and more. Kemper Harold, professor of music, brought new

[67] Torrence, *The Story of John Hope*, 186.

sounds to the campus, establishing the Morehouse College Glee Club, Quartet, and a string ensemble. Hope was also an advocate for athletics and organized the first football team. He frequently attended games and reviewed them with the players. "His devotion to [athletics] formed an unbreakable bond of loyalty between him and students."[68]

Hope's influence was not only a result of good leadership and decision-making. One of his greatest attributes was in the art of conversation—"the ability to unfold one's self to another." He lost track of time and unfolded himself to others: "When you sat down to talk with him about things that seemed important, you found a sort of kinship, a kinship that was more than mere words could reflect."[69] No moment or conversation was insignificant to him.

After a successful tenure at Morehouse, Hope became President of Atlanta University in July 1929. For six years, up until his death, Hope worked tirelessly toward his vision for a consortium of Black colleges and universities in Atlanta, which included the Interdenominational Theological Center, Morris Brown College, Spelman College, and Morehouse College. His vision was inspired by the historic Oxford University system. In addition to his dedication to Black youth and education, Hope was instrumental in improving the living conditions in the impoverished community surrounding the campus known as "The Beaver Slide." He was active in securing federal aid and clearing up the neighborhood. His life's work in education and housing was propelled by the pact he made at the Niagara Movement Meeting.

THE DEATH OF JOHN HOPE

Philosophy and Death

[68] Torrence, 131; 186.
[69] Torrence, 191.

Death has always been a curious subject for philosophers. As Socrates famously stated, "Philosophy is a preparation for death."[70] In ancient philosophy, remembering the dead was a philosophical habit. In *Phaedo,* Plato recalls the last hours of Socrates' life up until his death—a significant moment captured in Jacques Louis David's portrait *The Death of Socrates*. Socrates was accused of corrupting the youth and refused to acquiesce to the state in the name of truth and intellectual courage. After being forced to drink hemlock, a highly poisonous tea, Socrates uses his last hours continuing to philosophize with students and interlocutors standing around his deathbed. The dialogue begins as Echecrates asks Phaedo to review the details of Socrates' last hours. Phaedo agrees to tell him the story: "Nothing gives me more pleasure than to *call* Socrates to mind. [emphasis added]"[71]

Why do we remember or *call* the deceased to mind? *Phaedo* is not a celebration of death, but instead, it is an invitation to reflect on life with the end in view.

It was no secret that President Hope's health weathered the constant wear and tear of a demanding schedule. He confided in close friends about tiredness: "I am, may I confess it, just about tired to death—no aches, no pains, just insufferably tired."[72] In a letter to another friend, he wrote, "…I am so awfully tired that I almost fear anybody can see it in my correspondence. I have no aches or pains. I just feel as if I could knock off for the rest of my life, never striking another lick and not caring whether people called me lazy or not. Maybe I will get over it after a little rest."[73]

Unlike Socrates, Hope did not succumb to death by lethal injection, but his last days in office were eerily similar in the sense that death found him engaged in the work of his calling. Colleagues and friends remembered Hope's last week as a typical one for the President. He led a

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[70] Plato, "Phaedo," in *Five Dialogues*, ed. G.M.A Grube and John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002).
[71] Plato.
[72] Torrence, *The Story of John Hope*, 259.
[73] Torrence, 259; 252.

meeting with the faculty and a committee meeting on the housing development project. He traveled to Oklahoma to address a meeting of the Oklahoma State Teachers Association. On the train ride home from Tulsa, he began to feel pain in his hands and feet. When he arrived home in Atlanta, he took a hot bath and returned to the office. Hope spent the next morning speaking to children at the Oglethorpe School—Atlanta University's normal school for children. That evening, the physical stress was apparent, and unlike times before, Hope could not fight this one off. The next morning, he was placed under the care of his physician, who helped keep him alive after a serious illness two years prior.[74]

As Socrates gave himself to death in the name of intellectual courage, Martin Luther King, in the name of freedom and justice, Hope gave his all to Morehouse and Atlanta University. He saw no alternative: "Every man who does his work well and with enthusiasm sooner or later commits suicide…My suicide has been a sort of slow poison covering nearly thirty years of service."[75] After a short bout of pneumonia, John Hope died on February 20, 1936, at 68.

The College's Funeral

For historically marginalized communities that have struggled to maintain dignity in both life and death, funerals are important ways of honoring the dead and ensuring one's memory in the world. DuBois expressed similar concerns about the loss of memory in his eulogy of his mentor, Alexander Crummell, in *The Souls of Black Folk*: "And herein lies the tragedy of the age that men are poor, —all men know something of poverty; not that men are wicked—who is good? Not that men are ignorant —what is truth? Nay, but that men know so little of men."[76] DuBois includes this eulogy in *Souls of Black Folk* as a witness—one who encountered the transformative presence of a great soul and can now relay that experience to others through testimony. DuBois modeled

[74] Torrence, 371–72.
[75] Torrence, 247.
[76] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1903).

Crummell's example of self-discipline and commitment to the race and sought to share that same story with future generations. In a similar way, students bore witness to their ensouling experiences with Hope in their funeral orations in 1936 and the immediate years following.[77]

Figure 2: Commitment Service at Graveside for Dr. Hope

Hope was a man of *dignified simplicity*. Samuel Archer, his dean and friend, considered it his superpower: "Power was in his keen vision that cut through tinsel trappings, pomp, and pageantry to find the essentials and to discard the needless as well as the useless. Thus, he preserved the sweetness of proportion and lived a life of noble simplicity."[78]A year before his passing, Hope shared his final wishes for a short funeral service that reflected his commitment to simplicity in death as in life. The 30-minute service outline included scripture reading, prayers, congregational singing, and a spiritual from the Morehouse Quartet. By request, there was no elaborate ceremony with solos, speeches, and sermons. The pre-selected casket was a simple unpainted Georgia pine box.

The funeral took place Sunday evening, February 23, 1936, in Sale Hall Chapel, led by President Samuel Archer. Unfortunately, the 700-seat chapel could only accommodate a limited

[77] "Commitment Service at the Grave of Dr. Hope," *Maroon Tiger*, July 1, 1936, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/fa:002.
[78] Charles Lawrence Jr., "A Great Leader Is Buried," *The Maroon Tiger*, November 27, 1936, https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/mc.006.newspaper%3A1936_003.pdf.

number of family, friends, and colleagues, leaving thousands of mourners and students standing outside on the campus lawn. Following the service, Morehouse and Atlanta University students carried the casket to the grave prepared on a plot of land where the Morehouse and Atlanta University campuses meet. The burial was not a part of his pre-planned funeral arrangements but the suggestions of close friends and colleagues who thought it fitting to bury him between the two institutions he loved. In his remarks, Archer noted:

> It is meet that our friend and brother, John Hope, should lie in state in this chapel which he built and that he should be borne hence to find his resting place in sight of the institution to which he gave thirty-eight of the best years of his life. He loved Morehouse as only a father can love his child.[79]

Although President Hope's directives did not allow for an elaborate and long funeral, the burial rites and arrangements, which he did not arrange or restrict, gave friends and students the space to honor him in their own way. No one could have imagined the historical and sacred significance that Hope's grave would add to the campus landscape. Ridgely highlights the symbolism of the grave's location in the closing lines of his *The Story of John Hope*:

> The frame that held his spirit's fire lies in the red clay of the hill that he once found bare. Nearby are the roots of buildings that rose out of his dreams. Through their halls the ever-awakening generations of his race pass enriched by the eternal influences which nourished his own spirit.[80]

The grave became a site of memory, where students and the campus community were constantly reminded of Hope amid their daily rounds.

Hope's sudden passing left many students grieved but also inspired and challenged to continue his legacy. President Samuel Archer, Hope's successor, called upon colleagues and students to look to the source of Hope's power to continue his work: "His life, his success, and his noble achievements should throw out inspiration and challenge for us to carry on." Students were aware and appreciative of Hope's sacrifice and dedication to the College, and they set their minds on

[79] Lawrence Jr., 7.
[80] Torrence, *The Story of John Hope*, 374.'

keeping his memory alive. "May we take up the task of our great leader who has fallen. May we be graced with the power, vision, enthusiasm, and ideals of his noble character and forge ahead to the heights that he himself would want us to attain."[81]

The Student-Led Memorial

On Wednesday, February 26, three days after the funeral, Morehouse students gathered in Sale Hall Chapel to pay tribute to President Hope in their own way. Sale Hall Chapel was a special place for generations of students who remembered his treasured chapel talks on Tuesday mornings, where he spoke extemporaneously on matters of practical wisdom.[82] Unlike the College's official funeral service, the student-led memorial was arranged, conducted, and largely attended by students. The memorial was an indication of how much students loved and admired him. Students refused to let his transition pass without properly acknowledging their "Beloved captain" in their own way. Perhaps, it was the inability to attend the funeral in Sale Hall Chapel Sunday evening that gave birth to one of the College's earliest traditions—The John Hope Graveside Memorial.

The student-led memorial included instrumental tributes, scripture and poetry readings, congregational singing, and a eulogy delivered by the student body president, John H. Young '36, which we will analyze in the next section of this chapter. At the close of the chapel service, students gathered in a semi-circle at the grave. A wreath was placed, and a pledge of perpetuation was spoken in unison: "We, the Men of Morehouse College, do herby pledge that we shall forever hold sacred and dear the ideals of this institution as conceived and taught by our beloved leader, Dr. John Hope."[83] The memorial was to be repeated each year on February 20. The student government

[81] Jones, *A Candle in the Dark: A History of Morehouse College*, 128.
[82] "Treasured Thoughts," *The Campus Mirror*, May 8, 1936, https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/sc.001.mirror%3A1936.03?search=John%2520Hope%25201936.
[83] "Memorial Exercises," *The Campus Mirror*, March 15, 1936, RADAR: Repository of AUC Digital Collections, Archives, and Research.

president charged the junior class to carry on the ceremony the following year and to pass the charge on to the succeeding class.[84]

Boy Scouts Marching Down Morehouse Campus on Annual Pilgrimage to the Grave of John Hope. [85]

Figure 3: "Boy Scouts Marching Down Morehouse Campus on Annual Pilgrimage to the Grave of John Hope"

The John Hope Memorial

After the initial memorial service in 1936, the senior classes kept their pledge to honor the sacred ideals of the College and Hope's memory with an annual ceremony in February around the time of the anniversary of his death. The student body gathered each year in Sale Hall Chapel for a service that maintained the same outline from year to year:

I. Scripture, Prayer, Poetry Readings, Musical Expressions
II. Student Tribute (Eulogy)
III. Laying of the Wreath Ceremony
IV. Pledge of Perpetuation
V. Singing of the Morehouse Hymn

[84] "Morehouse Students in Memorial Service," *The Maroon Tiger*, November 27, 1936, 5, https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/mc.006.newspaper%3A1936_003.pdf.
[85] "'Boy Scouts Marching Down Morehouse Campus on Annual Pilgrimage to the Grave of John Hope,'" *Spelman Messenger*, 1938, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/sc.001.messenger:1938.01.

In the initial years, students like Samuel Woodrow Williams '37 shared stories of personal encounters with President Hope that left an indelible impression and *an ensouling memory* on them. In this excerpt from his tribute, Williams remembers the day Hope smiled at him:

> In the spring of the school term of 1934-1935, my first year at Morehouse, as I was leaving Sale Hall going toward the library by the way of the Science Building, I met Dr. Hope, who was taking a walk seemingly for its pleasure and at the same time getting a check on the appearance of things. As I approached him, when in speaking distance, he began to smile, tipped his hat, and spoke. He did not know who I was nor from where I came, but on me light shone forth from that noble soul of his. I can never forget that smile. It was a smile of benediction. A smile which seemed to be possessed of simplicity of something magnetic and redemptive. There I was just a sophomore in College and he, a university president, tipping his hat and speaking to me before I did to him. The force of his personality struck me—aspiration and determination to be like him engulfed me from that moment."[86]

As years went on, seniors continued to offer eulogies that inspired fellow students to develop moral and intellectual habits aligned with Hope's ideals, namely discipline, excellence, courage, and simplicity. As a new generation came along that did not Hope, these same virtues would later become synonymous with *The Morehouse Spirit.* Students like Edward E. Holt '38 and Joseph Thomas '41 reminded their classmates that Hope's success and leadership were a result of his commitment to a simple, non-materialistic life. Holt writes, "Dr. Hope's leadership would not have been as beneficial had he set his goal toward materialistic rewards that would have been buried with him."[87] Similarly, Thomas states, "Dr. Hope achieved the success that he had because he was motivated by a single idea that would not let him rest. To succeed in life, one must have one mastering purpose that is above all else."[88]

By 1938 the memorial was beginning to become a "Morehouse Tradition" after the last freshmen class to meet Hope graduated in 1939.[89] Although the new generation of students never

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[86] Samuel W Williams, "Hope Memorial: Address Delivered at Memorial Service for Dr. John Hope in Sale Hall Chapel," *The Maroon Tiger*, June 28, 1937,
[87] "Life Work of Dr. John Hope Reviewed," *The Atlanta University Bulletin*, July 1, 1938.
[88] "John Hope Memorial," *Campus Mirror*, 1941.
[89] "Morehouse College Observed Hope Memorial," *Maroon Tiger*, April 1939, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1939_003.pdf.

met Hope, they continued the memorial by sharing anecdotes that were passed down from older students. In his tribute, Charles Walton '56 told a story of Hope's decision to return to the South to educate Black students after his education in New England. Hope was once asked, "Why are you going back? Don't you know that the South is Hell for Negroes? Whereupon Dr. Hope, in his love for his fellow man and in his dreams of helping educate the Negro replied, "It might be hell, but I'm going home."[90]

The memorial service ended with a procession led by the seniors to Hope's grave, at which point a wreath was placed, and the Pledge of Perpetuation was repeated. The ceremonial wreath laying at the grave is a tradition that dates to Ancient Greece that symbolizes the circle of eternal life. A Spelman student who witnessed the memorial in 1940 described the wreath laying recalled:

> A holy sort of stillness seemed to pervade the air as tribute was paid to one who had dedicated] his life to the development of Negro education. It seemed as if the spirit of the great leader himself hovered over the crowd as the men of Morehouse solemnly pledged to hold dear and sacred the ideals of their institution as conceived and taught by Dr. John Hope.[91]

[90] "Walton, Goodman Eulogize Ceremony of Hope-Archer Day," *Maroon Tiger*, March 1956.
[91] Kathyrn Brown, "The John Hope Memorial Service," *Campus Mirror*, March 1, 1940, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/sc.001.mirror:1940.03.

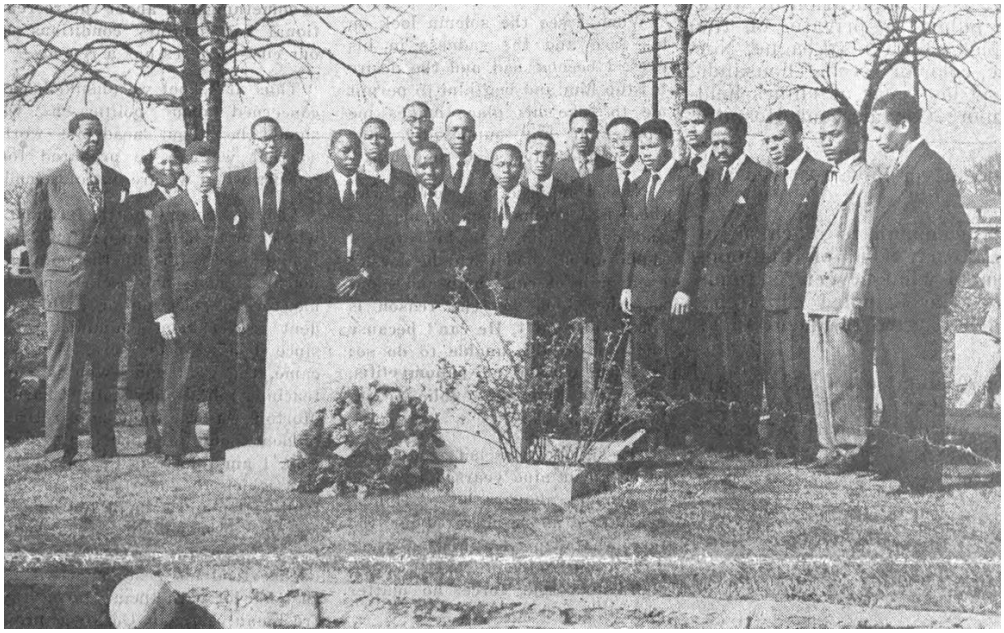

Figure 4: Hope-Archer Memorial Services, March 1950

The memorial service was led each year by seniors, who, not long after, began making their mark on the world. With the changing of time came a generation of students who had never met Hope, yet they would come to know him through this ritualized tradition. As Hope's name began to fade, his ideals continued to shape the lives of many generations of students who carried on his legacy in their own work and witness. Many of the seniors who led the memorial went on to become notable figures. Men such as Samuel Woodrow Williams '37, who later became a professor of philosophy and religion at Morehouse; Samuel DuBois Cook, the first African American faculty member at Duke University and President of Dillard University; Charles Vert Willie, sociologist, and the Charles William Elliott Professor of Education at Harvard University and most notably, Martin Luther King Jr. were among the seniors who led or participated in the memorial between 1936-1963.[92]

[92] Williams, "Hope Memorial: Address Delivered at Memorial Service for Dr. John Hope in Sale Hall Chapel"; "Morehouse Students Deliver Eulogy at Hope-Archer Memorial Service," *The Maroon Tiger*, November 27, 1948, https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/mc.006.newspaper%3A1948_002.pdf.

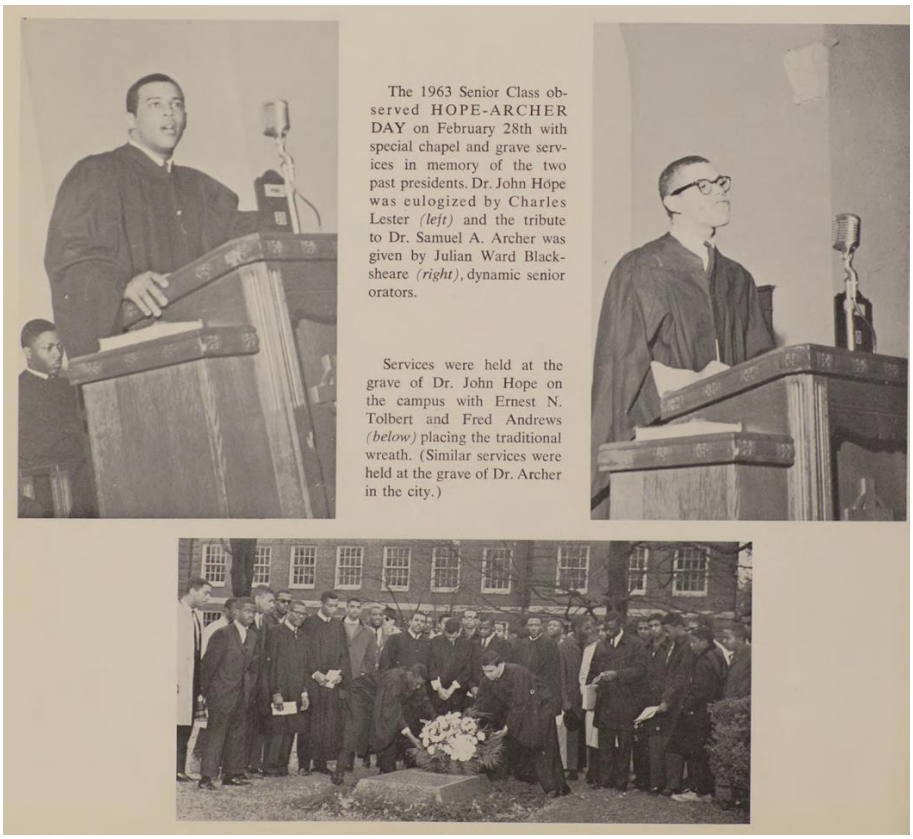

Figure 5: Hope-Archer Memorial Services, March 1950

Eighty-six years later, the John Hope Memorial has become one of the treasured traditions of the College. What began as a student-led memorial has evolved into an institutionalized ritual that honors the contributions of the ancestors who "created the value and prestige of the Morehouse degree." Today the ritual lives on as the John Hope and Benjamin Elijah Mays Graveside Ritual, which takes place during the College's Commencement Weekend in May. The graduating class is called to the Century Campus[93] by the ringing of the historic Graves Hall bell located in front of Sale

[93] The century campus or (historic quad) of Morehouse marks the site of the original campus, dating back to 1879 when the school was officially relocated from Augusta to Atlanta. The Century campus is comprised of academic building that face inward and away from the surrounding community. Graves Hall is the oldest building on the campus, erected in 1889. It was initially used as classroom space, dormitory quarters, and offices. The Century Campus lawn sits at the center of the space surrounded on both sides by academic buildings, a worship space, and monuments: Sale Hall, Robert Hall, Hope Hall, Merrill Hall, the Danforth Chapel, and the Benjamin Mays Memorial. The historic quad stands apart from the rest of the campus as a site-of-memory, indicating the early efforts to build the college. One can easily walk among the lawn and imagine the evolution of the campus from the original 14-acre campus to the present day 61-acre site. The quad's historic significance is marked by two major events in American history. Firstly, the site of the campus

Hall Chapel. The senior class gathers at the Hope graveside that includes a short homily delivered by the Dean of the Chapel, a reflection on the Morehouse tradition by an alumnus in reunion, and a necrology—a listing of alumni, students, faculty, and staff who have made their transition since the last commencement.[94] Once the class arrives at the site, Dean Lawrence Edward Carter sets the context for the ritual with these words:

> There is no such thing as a self-made person. Everybody is somebody's child. You depended on somebody to get where you are today. Hence, it is fitting that we have come to the graveyard; there lie the bones of one of the men on whose shoulders you are now standing. There is a global precedent for commencements starting in the cemetery. Joseph said to his brothers and family, "When you leave Egypt, dig up my bones and carry them with you." On commencement day, on Emancipation Day, on liberation day, on your day of going forth, remember all those persons who created the value and the prestige of the Morehouse College degree. Those people whose names you will never know are the bridges that have brought you over to the celebratory day. Remember, today is a day of bones and banners.[95] Carter frames the procession in a historical context by evoking the Old Testament narrative of Ancient Israel's duty to carry Joseph's bones into the Promise Land after the Exodus out of Egyptian bondage. In like manner, the procession out of the graveyard "on commencement day" signifies returning to the past to retrieve the bones—the essence, the Spirit, the ideals of institutional ancestors to carry them along into the future. *Re-membering* could be understood here as a three-fold process of (1) reclaiming memory from the threat of forgottenness, (2) retrieving from history, and (3) relating to the future. Although the ritual was initially intended to honor Hope, the memorial has grown over the years to include generations of faculty, staff, and alumni "who created the value and prestige of the Morehouse College degree" through their tireless efforts and sacrifices. As the Sankofa bird retrieves the unhatched egg from the past and moves toward the future, graduates begin their commencement march in the graveyard as they move out into the world.

While holding Hope's biography in one hand and the student newspapers in the other, there is a correlation between Hope's personal encounters with mentors and colleagues and his philosophy of education. Hope channeled the love and care he received from people like Rev. Dart

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was a battleground during the Civil War. Confederate soldiers staged their "most stubborn" resistance to the Union forces during the Siege of Atlanta. When the land was cleared to build the college, the skulls of soldiers were dug up. The significance of this historic event is marked by the irony that it would later become the campus of a black college.

[94] "Virtual Baccalaureate 2020 Program" (Atlanta, GA: Morehouse, 2020), https://issuu.com/morehousemagazine/docs/mh_baccalaureate_2020_vf.

[95] Lawrence Edward Carter, "Morehouse College Commencement Weekend: John Hope and Benjamin E. Mays Graveside Service Rituals" (unpublished manuscript, May 1980), Microsoft Word file.

and Dr. Abercrombie to his own students, who immortalized him by creating a ritualized tradition. Now that we have mined the digital archives on the John Hope Memorial, we now return to the question at hand: How does 'memory' function in historically black education to ensoul students amid threats of nihilism and despair?

Figure 6: John Hope Graveside Memorial

"WE HAVE COME TO THE GRAVEYARD": 'MEMORY' IN HISTORICALLY BLACK EDUCATION

Playing Dead

Trips to the graveyard help to keep history alive, and in return, history keeps us alive by providing us with the inspiration and guidance we need to navigate the world. In a poem titled "We Pay a Visit to Those Who Play Dead," Alice Walker recounts taking a trip with relatives to have lunch in the cemetery. There they are, cousins enjoying veggie salad and potato chips as they sit quietly among the graves. A granddaughter cares that her grandmother's grave is clean as she would

have liked it. In this quiet moment, Walker ponders the grief that many were soldiers who went off to fight strangers and returned home wounded or dead. The cemetery becomes a place where the family is reunited, but it also creates an opportunity to express grief and reckon with the reality of militarism. Walker breaks from eating and reflecting to ask, "But are you really dead?" The dead are "perhaps the reason [she] has no enthusiasm, patience or admiration for war." In essence, their memory shapes her values and commitments. Walker is convinced that these loved ones are engaging in a "little afterlife game of playing dead."[96] "Later in the van, leaving your place of enchanted rest, we marvel at whom life has put into our vehicle. The concept of *playing dead* opens space for us to consider the pedagogical and formative functions of remembering.

West African scholar Ayi Kwei Armah considers encounters with the past as a *dance of inspiration*. The graveyard is more than a site of memory; it is a storehouse of inspiration. Those looking for guidance, creative inspiration, and courage can find moral examples by connecting with the ancestors. Armah writes:

> The ancestors may be contacted in books, songs, prayers, music, ritual, and art. The soul which wishes to receive inspiration makes a habit of visiting these sites of ancestral existence, to ask questions, to list and to read, to analyze and to sift. After that, having nourished itself with insights from the ages, courage from beloved ancestors, and clear-eyed observation of present reality, the creative soul can go to work.[97]

Death does not separate the living from communicating with the deceased; they can be reached through the intellectual habits of visiting the storehouses of inspiration. Recalling the visions, hopes, and ideals of the deceased is one of the ways the living can improve their lives and face the future with a renewed sense of confidence and belief in the possible.

Walker, Armah, and Dean Carter issue a call to return to the past. Be it the graveyard, cemetery, or storehouses of inspiration, these periodic visits to sites of memory seem to offer more

[96] Walker, "We Pay a Visit to Those Who Play Dead," 116–22.
[97] Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Eloquence of the Scribes* (Popenguine: Per Ankh, 2006), 274.

than nostalgic bliss. On deeper consideration, they inspire the living, and they preserve the dead by keeping their memory relevant and alive. How might the John Hope Memorial help us conceptualize the role of 'history' in historically Black education?

Witnessing

Witnessing is the intellectual habit of remembering or observing the presence and actions of an elder or teacher. Through close encounters and conversations, the scholar first observes and then emulates mannerisms, comportment, and daily habits (i.e., reading the newspaper, tying a tie, etc.) In addition to finding examples, the observer draws on the strength, confidence, and character of the person. To be sure, witnessing evokes religious connotations such as a missionary or evangelist proselytizing; however, my use of the term is drawn from the message of the Negro spiritual, "My Soul is a Witness." The notion of the soul being a witness can help conceptualize a philosophy of education in two ways.

First, witnessing is an intergenerational transference of knowledge and strength. As we seek to preserve the stories and memories of ancestors, we are shaped in the process by our engagement with the past. We come to live in new ways as we remember them. Secondly, the community is empowered through storytelling and testimony. As we bear witness to history, it inspires hope for the future.

Witnessing is more than recalling or retelling the stories of the past; it is not a nostalgic activity. In its religious connotation, witnessing entails a willingness to be shaped by the stories we tell; to model our lives, habits, and commitments after the noble examples of the best of the past. The notion of witnessing in education is not limited to instruction; it challenges us to think about what it means to be human and how we are remembered as persons. While we are always bearing witness through actions and deeds, the culminating moment of learning is often death

John Young's 1936 Eulogy

Here we return to John Young's 1936 eulogy to consider the question at hand from a student's vantage point. A eulogy is a speech or a writing typically shared at funeral services. Eulogy, taken from the Classical Greek term *eu* "for well" and *logia* for "words," is translated as a *good word*. However, a eulogy is more than a word of praise about the deceased. It is my contention that the eulogy also provides wisdom and courage for the living. The students' responses to Hope's death provide a unique perspective for elucidating the ensouling elements of education. Death evokes several emotional responses that are often unexpressed or unacknowledged. Naturally, the shock of loss creates an opening for reflection that may lead to personal and social transformation.

John Young '36 delivered the student tribute in February 1936 at the first Hope Memorial. Drawing on Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain," about the death of Abraham Lincoln, Young creatively repurposes the poem to narrate the details of Hope's voyage as the captain of a "storm-tossed institution." The following excerpts capture the essence of his eulogy:

> Men would tell us that in the history of the world, greater men than Dr. Hope have lived and died. But in the hearts of the men of Morehouse, no greater man ever lived, no greater man ever died. Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, these three—while the world must shout plaudits in memory of their gifts to civilization—here in this remote corner of the cosmos, there appears one name that shall forever be carved upon the sacred scroll of this institution.
>
> We must needs be sad, men of Morehouse. We have lost our greatest mortal friend. As the child would weep for its mother, and the mother the child, so we would weep lest our hearts overflow with the memory of one so dear. We do not hear lamentation because he can no longer serve us. His is the work well done. For if he lived this life again a thousand times, he could not match this one. For in this one life, he gave us the institution upon which we have founded the ideals of noblemen. Has any man in the annals of history done more? It was he who taught us to love these halls, these sacred walls with a devotion not unlike that of the man of his religion. Can anyone boast of a greater creation of sacredness than this? And though we know those things, though we attest to his work well done, we must lament his parting life as the greatest tragedy in the annals of this great monument founded upon the principles for which he lived.
>
> On that day when our fallen Captain took command of our storm-tossed ship, the greatest loyalty between man and institution was born. It was a frail little vessel he then commanded. But the captain was proud, and the little ship courageous. On and on, they sailed against the breakers of discouragement that sought to halt the sides of the little vessel, it kept a steady keel. For the Captain knew the goal and the ship had faith in its Captain. How well the Captain commands his crew is exemplified by the men of that maiden voyage who have, in turn, become captains of others ships of Destiny. How well the Captain taught the precepts of the sea is exemplified in the noble hearts of the men of this institution today.

Here we sit in one body, bound by the destiny that makes us brothers, and pledged with an unswerving faith in the perpetuation of the ideals he sought to mold as a religion for the men of this Commonwealth.[98]

…

And though we have lost our great friend, we cannot repay that life dedicated to us and our posterity by forever bemoaning its death. In that death we must discern the resurrection of a new life—a life we must live with all of the vigor and completeness characteristic of the noblest of men.

…

We should be proud of our heritage in another sense, for our leader did not build our institution on the sandy foundation of revolution. We should be proud of the fact that our ideals are not basically embedded within the realms of revolution. As an evolutionary process, our ideals shall develop with the years, a fundamental precept of a people destined to play a wholesome part in the orchestra of life.

One of the most sacred relations is that of a man loyal to an institution: an institution loyal to a man. It is upon this one great relationship, so carefully planned by our fallen Captain, that the future history of this institution must depend. Let it not be said of any wearer of the Maroon and White that he was not loyal to this institution! Let it be said of every man who enters these portals—"Yonder is a man who the ideals of Morehouse College are sacred." For as surely as the man is loyal to the institution and the institution loyal to its people, there will be founded a chain of resistance not to be broken by the strength of injustice.

…

Can the blind forget the hand that led them to the light? No. Neither can the men of Morehouse forget Dr. John Hope. He shall be with us in our every undertaking. When the Maroon and White clad gridiron warrior trots on the field of play, he shall do so with the courage of this man in the heart. Small chance that he will play the game unfair, for his sportsmanship shall be cleaner and greater than he is.

As we see the fields of business and industry, or other enterprises guided by this great heritage, ours will be the spirit of righteous and the will of the determined. Men shall say to us, "There goes a man who carries the heart of a great man within his own."

Men of Morehouse! Can you feel within you the great sacrifice this man made for us and our people? The best years of his life were spent in the life of the institution. Days, weeks, months, years, he toiled without ceasing, without even stopping to live his own life. But he was human, the days that he spent toiling on our behalf were slowly wearing him away like so much water beating against a stone. His heart, such a great heart it was, weary with the weight of worry and overtime duty, became powerless to go on. And yet when he should have been resting and living a life of ease, he was still making long and tiresome journeys on our behalf. It was on one of these journeys that he contracted the illness that was to rob us of our most cherished friend. Then on that fatal day, February, the 20th, just preceding the setting sun, we were plunged into sadness when we knew that our brave leader had fallen. But he was a great man even in death. With a weakened heart, it is said that he fought the ravages of the disease with the courage of two men of normal heart. Men of

[98] "Morehouse Students in Memorial Service," 6.

> Morehouse! I am sure that you will be proud to know that your leader fought to the very last. And I know that you realize the loss. For on that fatal day. I saw mists in the eyes of men. Then I knew that there was something amiss deeper than words could express.
> …
>
> Somehow, I feel that if Dr. Hope could speak to us this morning: he would say: "Young men, this institution, Morehouse College, has a history. It is not an accident, but a seat of humanity of men of principle, obeying a sentiment and marching loyally whiter that sentiment should lead them; so that its annals are part of the history of the liberation of the man of color."
> Somehow, I feel he would say, "Young men, be brave. Do not be disheartened or discouraged. Go ye into all the walks of life. "Lift every voice and sing!"[99]

Young's eulogy performs several functions that are helpful in building a conceptual framework for formative possibilities of history in Black education.

1. The **eulogy conscientizes students about the value of life by reckoning with morality** by acknowledging the cause or contributors to death.
2. The eulogy **cultivates belonging** by invoking brotherhood, heritage, and shared institutional inheritance.
3. The eulogy **empowers students with meaning and hope** by reframing death as a moment of transference of power and ideals.

Reckoning with Black Mortality

Firstly, the eulogy conscientizes students about the value of life by reckoning with morality by acknowledging the contributors to death. Young summons the Men of Morehouse to ponder Hope's 'great sacrifice' for the institution. Hope is portrayed as a martyr whose death and suffering are redemptive for the remaining community or society. Hope, according to Young, gave the best years of his life to Morehouse. He toiled for long periods of time without ceasing. The constant stress and strain of overworking wore him down like water beating upon a stone. Hope often complained about being 'tired to death.' The long and tiresome journeys without rest led to what

[99] John Young, "A Tribute to Dr. Hope," *Maroon Tiger*, March 1, 1936, https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/mc.006.newspaper%3A1936_003.pdf.

would later be termed burned out. It is possible here that John Young honors Hope while calling attention to the causes of his death to raise awareness about the dangers of overwork, anxiety, lack of sleep, and rest. By reckoning with morality and death, the eulogy opens space for a teachable moment in the importance of a balanced life, a subject that Hope addressed in several chapel talks.

While the questions around the cause of death may seem initially insensitive, the cause of death is often a point of curiosity. Understanding the cause of death may, perhaps, aids survivors in preventative measures and serve as a teachable moment to avoid premature death. As philosophy is preparation for death, according to Socrates, conversations around health and mortality are another way of giving forward. Honest reflections on health can help communities discern healthier lifestyles and practices.

W.E.B. DuBois courageously addressed the crisis of Black mortality and overworking when he wrote about the death of young Black classical composer Samuel Coleridge Taylor in 1912 at the age of 37. DuBois writes prophetically:

> "When such a man dies, it must bring pause to a reasoning world. We may call his death-sickness pneumonia, but we all know that it was *sheer overwork*—the using of a delicately-tuned instrument too commonly and continuously and carelessly to let it last its normal life. We may well talk of the waste of wood and water, of food and fire, but the real and unforgivable waste of modern civilization is the waste of ability and genius—the killing of useful, indispensable men who have no right to die; who deserve, nor for themselves, but for the world, leisure, freedom from distraction, expert medical advice, and intelligent sympathy.[100]

It is not hard to imagine that Hope and DuBois must have talked about this strain and stress of work on their daily walks around the Westend community surrounding their campuses. Hope was aware of his declining health and the need to slow down and rest. As he reflected on the fragility of his mortality, he was open and frank with his students about the importance of living a healthy and balanced life. Health became a focus of his chapel talks and conversations with students.

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[100] W.E.B. DuBois, "Immortal Child," in *Dark Water: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 154.

How can we look back and remember our ancestors while learning to take better care of our bodies to avoid premature death, so we can move forward in healthier ways? How can we disrupt the pattern of premature death that continues to affect black communities because of racism and poverty that continues to cause health disparities, overwork, lack of sleep, poor diets, and little to no access to preventative care? Although the work and activism are noble, they should not continue to cost us our lives. Moving beyond the sanctimonious adages that often resign the mystery of death to God, DuBois dares to name the cause of death and boldly asserts that the young 'have no right to die.'

Ensouling through Pride & Belonging

Secondly, Young uses the metaphor of the captain and the storm-tossed ship to describe the loyalty between President Hope and Morehouse, a loyalty developed through the captain's vision and the institution's faith in its captain. The eulogist recalls history to ensoul students with a sense of belonging and community on a personal and institutional level. Young calls for *brotherhood* amongst students, *pride* in heritage, and *loyalty* to the institution. In this sense, history is evoked as a tie that binds communities together across generations. This sense of belonging is crucial for helping students resist nihilism and despair. Through community, students develop a sense of belonging that is crucial to a meaningful and purposeful life.

Transference of Power and Ideal for New Life

Finally, the eulogy empowers students with meaning and hope by reframing death as a transference of power and ideal. The eulogy performs a transfer of *power* and *ideals* (1) by evoking Hope's memory as a source of physical strength and moral fortitude and (2) by reminding students of the ideals and expectations set by their leader. Young encouraged students to move from bemoaning Hope's death to discerning the possibilities of 'the resurrection of a new life. First, discerning new possibilities would require an open and creative interpretation of ideals. Young

states, "Our ideals are not basically embedded within the realms of revolution. As an evolutionary process, our ideals shall develop with the years, a fundamental precept of a people destined to play a wholesome part in the orchestra of life." Secondly, Young sees Hope as an immortal teacher whose Spirit now lives on in their everyday lives. As the football team takes the field to play, they do so with Hope's courage in their heart. Men of business and industry execute their work with a sense of integrity and discipline because he "carries the heart of a great man within his own." Thirdly, we can discern the possibilities of a new life by learning how to live from past lives. The wisdom of the past serves as a guide on how we might live happier and more holistic lives. In this sense, he reframes Hope's death from an end of life to the beginning of a *new* life, by which his spirit now becomes power and vigor for a new generation.

Young's eulogy provides several examples of the ways history can be engaged in relevant ways to ensoul and educate emerging generations of students. Historically Black education is not limited or confined to the past but refers to the past as inspiration to handle present problems. Each trip to the storehouse of inspiration, cemetery, or graveyard is unique; every memorial service is different in light of the social milieu of the day.

The annual student tributes, much like John Young's 1936 tribute, were one of the ways Hope became an *immortal teacher*. While there are many names that are lost in the sea of forgottenness due to human nature, there are others who rise to become *immortal teachers*. It leads us to ask, *what makes some teachers immortal*? It is my contention that teachers who go beyond their subject matter and touch the souls of students are remembered because they created ensouling memories through care; therefore, their students, in return, continue to carry their names on for generations to come. Beyond an investment in campus life and aesthetics, Hope's greatest attribute was his *sympathetic care* and *presence* for students.

In February 1937, Samuel Woodrow Williams '37, a graduating senior, delivered the memorial address on the question, "What is your belief in immortality?" Williams calls fellow students to ponder the idea of goodness as an indestructible force in the world. "The role of God in the universe," says Williams, "is not to destroy but to conserve." Building on religious experience, Williams makes the argument that God conserves and ensures the growth of good in the world. This goodness is not destroyed but is transformed and flows back into the world to make it better. He goes on to state: "The work of Dr. Hope has become a part of the All-Conserving Consciousness and is in the world working for good. The Spirit of Dr. Hope's work is all about us. It hovers over this campus, challenging our better selves to noble resolves. He lives here."[101]

ENSOULING AT THE ABYSS

Sankofa: Looking Back, Giving Forward

Grace C. Stanford's work with African American teachers shows that former teachers play a crucial role in shaping how teachers approach their work, especially the *soulful* dynamics of teaching. Many of the teachers remembered their former teachers for how they cared deeply for students by spending countless hours building relationships with them, their families, and the community; taking an interest in their academic and personal growth; being sensitive to their impoverishment and sympathetic to socio-economic conditions; demanding excellence with consideration for individual differences and creating a sanctuary where students could find material and emotional comfort. In the same way that former teachers cared for them, these same teachers approached their work as a way of repaying by giving forward. As Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot suggests, "I grew up receiving the gifts of neighbors, friends, teachers whom you can never repay. *All you can do is give forward."*[102]

[101] Williams, "Hope Memorial: Address Delivered at Memorial Service for Dr. John Hope in Sale Hall Chapel."
[102] Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot, from Stanford article

The Sankofa bird is an accurate illustration of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's concept of *Looking Back and Giving Forward*. The Adinkra symbol depicts a bird looking back to retrieve the unhatched egg to bring it into the future. The work of retrieving and relaying requires a healthy and useful relationship with the past. As Elleni Tedla reminds us, Sankofan education is not about returning to the past to relive the life of ancestors. They lived and shaped their own life, and contemporary thinkers must do the same for their generation. Giving forward entails discerning and developing the best ways to use the knowledge of the past to point toward the future. Unlike nostalgia, which is an unhealthy obsession with the past, giving forward entails a future-oriented engagement with history. Like a driver referring to a map or GPS, inheritors look to the past periodically for direction but never too long that it becomes a distraction from the road. Inheritors must hold the past in balance with their contemporary contexts and present-day problems while continuously envisioning a future where the contribution can make a difference.[103]

In her book, *The Third Chapter*, Lightfoot explores the dynamic of "looking backward into the future" by interviewing retirees who felt a need to 'give back' after long, successful careers and years of experience in community engagement and activism. Firstly, the nudge to give back came out of a deep appreciation for the political, historical, and cultural settings of their upbringing and formation. As Lightfoot clarifies, we cannot 'give back' for many of the people and places of our upbringing may no longer be around; however, we can *give forward* by reawakening our energies, repurposing our experiences, and reinvesting our passions by working with emerging generations to create the future we wish to see. Secondly, giving forward is not only a matter of service to others, as in a one-way exchange from an elder to a younger person. In fact, *giving forward* also entails a level of openness and willingness on the part of mentors and elders to learn and be shaped by mentees and a

[103] Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, *The Third Chapter: Passion, Risk, and Adventure in the 25 Years After 50* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2009), 113.

younger generation. The aim of education, in this sense, is not simply knowledge production but meaningful and life-giving relationships.

John Hope's Sankofan Sensibilities

Four years before his sudden death at the age of 68, Hope told his students that if he had to live all over again, he would have made his health habits a top priority. His sincere interest in Black youth was evident in the time he dedicated to instilling lessons from his own life on health, rest, and leisure, and he treasured them for years to come. Hope understood that Black college students were under immense pressure to defy the odds, but he warned about the dangers of taking themselves too seriously and encouraged students not to limit their education to answering the most pressing problems of the present day but to think far into the future. "One should get rid of the narrow, short-sighted thinking; have the courage to think far away."[104]

Death is more than the end of a life; it also marks a new beginning. Grieving is the process of separating from the loss and readjusting to a new way of life. We find meaning and hope amid death by reflecting on ways to carry forth the memory and legacy of the deceased. Giving forward is not always positive or beautiful; it may also require honest reflection and deep questioning. There are elements of the past that we should not carry into the future. Perhaps, we can move forward in healthier and more just ways by learning from blunders and missteps of our ancestors. In this section, we examine ways Hope looked back and gave forward by creating an ensouling environment for students.

Hope looked back to his personal experiences with William Jefferson White, Rev. Dart, and Dr. Abercrombie and used his memories as a point of reference as a teacher, President, and race man. While he could not repay them, he spent a lifetime paying forward by inspiring students with

[104] "Treasured Thoughts," *The Campus Mirror*, March 15, 1936, RADAR: Repository of AUC Digital Collections, Archives, and Research.

visions, hopes, and dreams, especially for a generation living through the threats of Jim Crow violence in the South.

Hope did not hold back on emphasizing the importance of health and self-care. He was transparent about his health challenges and often used his chapel talks as opportunities to share hard-earned wisdom. His own health took a toll from years of overworking, stress, and lack of care. Hope also *gave forward* by creating an environment for leisure and joy amid the racial violence and anti-blackness of Atlanta in the early 1900s. Hope's emphasis on the importance of leisure and joy points us to themes and elements that have long been overshadowed in the history of black education. So much of the history and culture of black colleges have focused on racial oppression and injustice that it has left little room to explore the *good* and the *beautiful*. Very few scholars have explored the role of leisure, recreation, health, and joy in black education. Racism has not only stolen black lives through death, but it also assaults our flourishing and well-being by disrupting and destroying opportunities to experience the sheer joy that comes from recreation, fellowship, and play.

Hope understood the importance of leisure and joy in the development of youth from his own experience at Worcester Academy and Brown University, as well as his own health challenges, which helped him to put his proper perspective. Yet as he was known to do, Hope continuously translated his lived experiences to his students through transparent and candid chapel talks, where no subject was off-limits for him. The intimate campus community setting allowed Hope to build deep, sincere connections with his students as he opened himself before them as a book. His personal regrets, observations, and hard-earned insight became practical wisdom for generations of students.

In December 1932, Hope warned students against the danger of taking themselves too seriously. Aware of the pressures of poverty, unemployment, and social dislocation, Negro youth,

according to Hope, were probably the most seriously educated young people in the country; yet he admonished them "not to let the concerns of these existential crises to 'spoil [their] mental, intellectual, and spiritual processes." Hope challenged them to think, for the job of the student is to transform the disorder into order, but this could only be achieved through divesting of "ordinary rewards and emoluments" and focusing on a good (or ideal) they believed was possible.[105]

Hope instills a sense of hope in youth by continuously pushing them to look beyond the present moment: "I know you can't do anything about it now…but don't let your inability to do anything about it now worry you. Do not let it dictate to you too much what kind of courses you are electing…Get all the advantages and enrichment you can. When the time comes for you to get your diploma, be physically and intellectually strong…be fine and spiritual so that your intellectual processes will get the urge they ought to have."[106]

On another occasion, Hope spoke on "How to Plan for a Happy Life," in which he offered these words: "The greatest value of life in a million years long would lie in the opportunity to enjoy a good long time of happy work toward a good which will carry you into eternity." He encouraged students not to lose faith in the presence and reality of God because he cannot be found in a test tube or microscope, to give up minor conflicts that stand in the way of something worthwhile, and to find a great ideal that would make it impossible to meddle in juvenile mischiefs such as cheating and bluffing.[107]

In October 1932, Hope spoke to students on "How I would order my life differently if I had to do it over again, so that fifty years I would be able to enjoy life richly." On that occasion, he pointedly told students, in retrospect, that he would commit to healthier habits, spend more time getting to know and appreciating others, and traveling. On traveling, Hope is not referring to

[105] "Treasured Thoughts."
[106] "Treasured Thoughts."
[107] "Treasured Thoughts."

moving from place to place but wondering about the world with *fresh eyes* that "can really see what is to be seen around then, and an eagerness to learn and to know, and an attentive memory within which to store all experiences."

CONCLUSION: HOPE FOR YEARS TO COME

Over the years, John Hope became synonymous with high principles and ideals. One of the enduring testaments of his influence was John Hope Franklin, the noted historian and scholar who was named after Hope. Franklin's parents credited Dr. Hope for the principles that guided their lives: racial equity, high standards of scholarship, academic excellence, public and private morality, and friendship, which Hope modeled through his commitment to his close friend, W.E.B. DuBois.[108]

Hope's leadership in the face of anti-black violence in the American South in the early 1900s portrays an educator's ability to create an ensouling experience for students amid the threat of nihilism and despair due to racial violence. This chapter invites us to consider the *ensouling* elements of historically black education by examining the impact of Hope's leadership through the memories and testimonies of students following his death. The best way for us to understand the impact of *ensouling education* is to listen to the testimonies of those who have been ensouled.

John Hope's journey from Augusta to Worcester, to Brown, and ultimately the presidency of Morehouse, is a true story of a *homecoming*. Fate would have it that a young boy born and raised in a community surrounded by the early founders of the College would return home to become its primary architect decades later. Looking backward into the future, Hope approached his work with an unmatched passion and interest in students modeled after the love and care of his early mentors.

[108] Davis, *A Clashing of the Soul: John Hope and the Dilemma of African American Leadership and Black Higher Education in the Early Twentieth Century*, ix.

Hope knew first-hand that the most mundane interaction in passing with a student could become an ensouling memory for a lifetime.

As the first *Negro* president of a Black college, John Hope's presidency was bookended by the Atlanta Race Riot of 1906 and the unsettled case of the Scottsboro Boys—nine teenage boys accused of rape in Alabama. In a cold and cruel world, where many doors were shut to black people, especially in Jim Crow South, the black College was a place where black folk created an alternative world through love, care, and hospitality. Hospitality was one way that black folk ensouled themselves from the harsh winds of anti-blackness. Hope passed on the love, care, and concern of his mentors to his students with a sympathetic touch amid the racial violence of the Jim Crow South.

Amid racial violence and injustice, President Hope embodied the prophetic pragmatism of the College's founders by building a home, an institution for the souls of young Black men coming of age in the Jim Crown South. He provided shelter from the stormy winds of racism and hatred with his own presence. Students were empowered, encouraged, and affirmed in a world of anti-black violence. In his honor, his students gave him forward to the future by creating a simple graveside ritual as a perpetual gift for generations to come.

For 86 years, generations of Morehouse students have made the transition from student to graduate, from *Man of Morehouse* to *Morehouse Men,* by walking through the graveyard to carry the bones of institutional ancestors into the future. Although I did not learn much about John Hope in my courses, I encountered his memory while sitting in front of his picture in the study hall, seeing his name in John Hope Hall, or walking by his grave while making my daily rounds on the campus. Through these markers and images, Hope was a part of the present *past* that continues to live on through sites-of-memory. Recalling and relaying names from the past is one way that institutions engage history in relevant ways, for even in death, the memory of the deceased continues to shape

the future of institutions. John Hope's immortal influence on Morehouse College is a vivid example of the power of *presence* and *memory* in education. It is my hope that this chapter demonstrates that memory can be used in a meaningful way to help students resist the nihilism and despair and look to the future with Hope.

III. Listen to the Lambs: The Counter-Tradition of Protest[109]

> Black students were "in full *spiritual revolt* against all discriminations and the invidious distinctions under which they suffer severe limitations… [The Negro Student] is standing with his eyes alight with a great race pride and race hope, and he refuses to be any longer considered in any category other than that of his fellow white man.[110]
> —Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro Campus*

> Old grads were stunned—aghast at the site of Morehouse men making nuisances of themselves and a public spectacle of the 102-year-old school.
> —*Jet Magazine*, April 1969[111]

> "Anything less is inadequate for the perilous times. Anything less would be unworthy of the memory of our brother [Martin Luther King Jr.], the needs of our children, or the magnificent, untapped capacities of our own selves."[112]
> —Vincent Harding

Unlike the John Hope Memorial, I did not learn about the Morehouse Trustee Board Lock-In of April 1969 during New Student Orientation (NSO), nor did I see pictures from the protest hanging in the dining hall or study center like other historical moments. I first heard of the infamous Lock-In from an interview with Samuel L. Jackson on the popular daytime talk show, *The View*. At the time, Jackson was co-starring, along with Angela Bassett, in Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop*, which premiered on Broadway in the Fall of 2011. Jackson portrayed Martin Luther King Jr. in the figurative depiction of King entertaining a mysterious housekeeper as he grapples with his impending assassination in the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

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[109] In 1981, the Morehouse College Glee Club recorded and performed on tour R. Nathaniel Dett's "Listen To The Lambs" as a protest song in memory of the missing children murdered in Atlanta. This dirge was performed with the intention to remember the children and as a "pungent plea to the perpetrator (or perpetrators) of these heinously inhuman crimes, to face the nation and repent now!" Dean Robert L. Nolan, "Dean Nolan's Music And Musicians," *Michigan Chronicle*, March 28, 1981, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/dean-nolans-music-musicians/docview/2405005475/se-2?accountid=10226.

[110] Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 340.

[111] John H. Britton, "Freshmen Rebels Take Proud Morehouse Through Changes: Rattling of Chains Announced Beginning," *Jet Magazine: A Johnson Publication* (Chicago, 1969).

[112] Derrick White, Walter Rodney, and Derrick E White, "Audacious Visions : The Intellectual-Activist Legacies of W . E . B . DuBois , the Institute of the Black World , and Walter Rodney Audacious Visions :" 1, no. 1 (2015).

During the interview, Jackson mentioned his personal connection to Dr. King. As a student at Morehouse in the late 1960s and early 70s, Jackson heard Dr. King deliver speeches, he traveled to Memphis for the Memphis Sanitation Workers' strike, he was a student usher at King's funeral on the campus, and later that year was part of a group that locked Daddy King (Martin Luther King Sr.) in an administration building. Commenting on the protest, Jackson sarcastically states, "We let him out because he was having chest pains, so we put him on a ladder and got him out of the building."[113] By this time, I was in my senior year at Morehouse and had never heard of the event. Through archival research and conversations with alumni, I later discovered that Jackson was referring to the April 1969 Trustee Board Lock-In, in which a group of militant students seized Harkness Hall for 29 hours, holding the trustees hostage in hopes that they would agree to significant curriculum and governance changes.

As the previous chapter explored how rituals can preserve the past through relevant and ensouling ritualized experiences, this chapter focuses on the second element of the three Sankofan movements: tackling present-day political, economic, and education problems, which requires relying on the legacy of ancestors and borrowing prudently from new ideas and technologies. In other words, to limit the concept of Sankofa to preserving history is a misreading and an injustice to those who have gone before. This study will show that Sankofan education requires the intellectual courage to grapple with present-day problems that may stand in the way of liberation. Sankofa is generally referenced for its connection to the past. Elleni Tedla argues that Sankofan education is not an attempt to relive the lives of the ancestors but to look back to build forward. Sankofan education is oriented toward liberation and expanding the worldview of the African learner. Sankofa is not only concerned with preserving the past, but the bird returns to the past for inspiration while grounded in the present and facing the future.

[113] "The View: Interview with Samuel L. Jackson" (ABC, 2011).

The 1969 Lock-In is a vivid portrait of student activists addressing the issues of their day. Their courage to disrupt seemingly fixed traditions and to step out of the lines of respectability was denounced by both administration and most of their fellow students; however, it conjures up a silenced secret. Black colleges only achieved independence from white philanthropists through activism and protests. Moreover, such student-led rituals of disruption made HBCU campuses the incubators for many political and cultural revolutionaries. This chapter will explore the complexity of navigating between tradition and change through a philosophical analysis of the Lock-In.

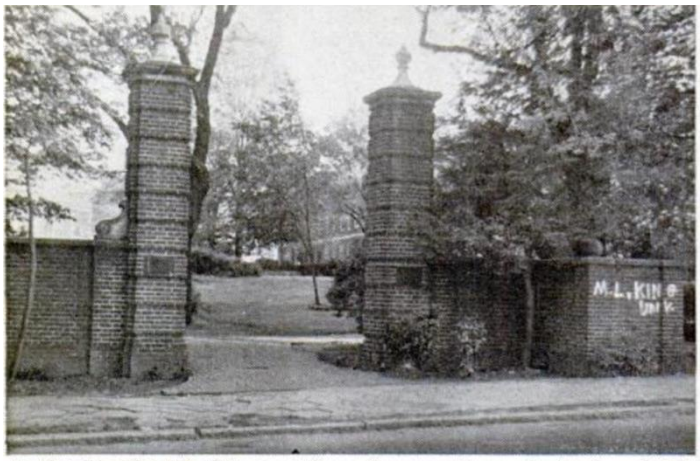
Chapter Methodology & Purpose

This chapter reclaims a microhistory in the Morehouse story that emerges from the work of students who courageously disrupted a tradition by breaking the rules and agitating for change. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: (1) Firstly, to *reclaim* a microhistory at risk of being lost within the dominant institutional history. To excavate the Lock-In is to lift up the long history of Black college campus rebellions, which dates to the 1920s, a tradition upheld and inspired by W.E.B. DuBois. (2) Secondly, this chapter aims to philosophically *reframe* the Lock-In. In this chapter, I propose a philosophical re-reading that considers the protest 53 years later, informed by history, moral philosophy, and pragmatism.

The history of the '69 Lock-In has primarily been preserved through casual conversations between Morehouse alumni and the Institute of the Black World. Like most student-led protests, the Lock-In is noticeably erased from the institutional narrative; thus, this chapter draws heavily on regional and national newspapers and magazines, as well as secondary texts, to provide a full narrative of the events of April 17-18, 1969.

How might a study of microhistories and counternarratives of protests inform our understanding of historically Black education? This chapter explores the pedagogical possibilities and virtues of the prophetic tradition within historically black education. By analyzing the counter-

tradition of protest, I hope this work will help foster future generations of responsible bearers of traditions who prophetically disrupt institutions so that they may remain life-giving spaces for generations to come.



As the dissident build-up gathered momentum, students painted signs proclaiming A. U. as "Martin Luther King University."

Figure 7: MLK Spraypainted at Entrance

King's death in April 1968 left America questioning *Where do we go from here?* His assassination sent shockwaves across the world, but nowhere was it felt more than in his beloved hometown of Atlanta and on the campus of his alma mater. In April 1968, King's casket was carried from the Ebenezer Baptist Church to Morehouse College by a horse-drawn carriage surrounded by thousands of mourners wishing to pay their last respects. The final memorial service for Dr. King took place on the Century Campus, the historic center of the campus, in front of Harkness Hall. The steps of Harkness Hall served as the platform for a rostrum of dignitaries, which included Benjamin Elijah Mays, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Mahalia Jackson. King's farewell at Morehouse marked the end of an era for the College. With its most notable alumnus dead at 39 and the retirement of the Schoolmaster of the Movement, there was a new generation of students who were coming of age, disenchanted by nonviolent tactics and discontent with assimilationist politics. The fiery, confrontational message of Stokely Carmichael appealed to their radical sensibilities. This shift in the political climate was evident right at Morehouse. By April 1969, a year later, Harkness Hall was the site of one of the most controversial student protests in the history of Morehouse.

1969 TRUSTEE LOCK-IN AT MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

On April 17, 1969, a group of militant students, with the support of two professors, Vincent Harding and Abdul Alkalimat (formerly Gerald McWhorter), seized Harkness Hall during a meeting of the Morehouse Trustee Board. The group presented the following three demands and threatened that the trustees "would be held indefinitely until all three were met:" [114]

1. The name of The Atlanta University Center (AUC) be changed to Martin Luther King University.
2. Black control of the colleges in the Atlanta University Center
3. Trustees of Morehouse support the idea of merging all six institutions in the AUC into one single university and assume responsibility for persuading the other five institutions to accept the plan of merger[115]

The students presented the Board with a prepared letter for signature which read:

> We, the undersigned, resign from the Board of Trustees of the schools within the Atlanta University Center. Our purpose in resigning is to enable the Black community to control their own education and toward this end, an entirely new process of control must be established. We recognize and support the necessity of Black Power in education, and so we step aside. This act will release us from all responsibility and leaves the school in the hands of an interim committee of Alumni, faculty, and students to be elected from those respective groups.[116]

When the trustees unanimously refused to sign the drafted letter, the doors were chained and locked. Fifty to seventy-five students guarded the hallways to ensure that trustees did not try to leave the building during restroom breaks. Their meals were sent up through the window by a rope from outside. Prominent and wealthy members of the board, including President Hugh Morris Gloster, the immediate past President Benjamin Elijah Mays, and Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. (Daddy King), were held against their will and forced to sleep on tables, in chairs, and on the floor. Students and trustees took turns ignoring one another, shouting at each other, pointing fingers, insulting one

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[114] Benjamin Elijah Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1971), 312.
[115] Mays, 313.
[116] Benjamin E Mays, "Prisoner In Harkness Hall," *New Pittsburgh Courier (1966-1981)*, May 3, 1969, City Editi edition, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/prisoner-harkness-hall/docview/202472286/se-2?accountid=10226.

another, lapsing into profane hysterics, and coming just short of physical confrontation."[117] Over the course of those 29 hours, President Hugh Morris Gloster resigned, refusing to concede under duress; Board Chair Charles Merrill relinquished his control; Judge Elbert Tuttle took the gavel, and the board dissolved itself into an *ad hoc* committee to hear grievances. The board members pretended to agree to the demands and were finally released on Saturday afternoon. However, these demands did not stay in place for long.

Dr. McWhorter (l) addresses students below balcony, as does SGA's Taylor. President Gloster (in tie) stands in background.

Figure 8: Abdul Alkalimat (Gerald McWhorter) with SGA President Taylor

Immediately after their release, SGA President Nelson Taylor called a meeting of 1,000 students in Sale Hall Chapel, in which the SGA President won a vote to reject all the agreements made by the trustees under duress, even the demands offered by the SGA. Taylor was unrelenting in his rebuke of the protest:

> There are those involved whose primary purpose is destruction and the building of confusion…These are people who are trying to fan the embers of strife and confusion. These are the people who are making bomb threats. These are the people who are attempting arson on our campus. These are the people who are taking advantage of the

[117] Britton, "Freshmen Rebels Take Proud Morehouse Through Changes: Rattling of Chains Announced Beginning," 52.

> openness of our campus in order to intimidate and threaten students. These are the people who are bitter because of the constructive stand of a majority of our student body. To all of those with these unjust motives in mind; who are within the sound of my voice: we oppose you. We will oppose you and let God decide the consequences.[118]

Taylor repudiated the actions of the militant band of students and charged the protest to a few students with the support of outsiders whose primary purpose was destruction, strife, and confusion.[119] The President of the Morehouse National Alumni Association, Dr. Calvin Brown, also condemned the tactics used and "strongly recommended some form of discipline for the dissident students. Merrill, speaking on behalf of the Board, stated, "Since the concessions were made under duress while the trustees were illegally held and forcibly detained, the majority now considers that those concessions are null and void."[120] Although the nullification did not apply to the agreements made between the Board and the SGA, the SGA rejected the consensuses.

In the weeks following, five students were suspended for a year, five were suspended for one semester, three were placed on probation, and two were cleared of charges. While the Academic Dean sympathized with their original intentions, he did not condone their actions. In the end, the militant students were where they started. Weeks later, the dean announced the expulsion of the students for kidnapping, which was deemed a criminal offense: "They held the college board members against their will and for ransom...Kidnapping is beyond the pale in college protest movements. If anything, the students got less punishment than they deserved."[121]

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[118] "Uprisings At Morehouse, Hampton," *New Journal and Guide (1916-2003)*, May 3, 1969, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/uprisings-at-morehouse-hampton/docview/569041028/se-2?accountid=10226.
[119] "Uprising At Morehouse, Hampton," *New Journal and Guide (1916-2003)*, May 3, 1969, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/uprising-at-morehouse-hampton/docview/569043246/se-2?accountid=10226.
[120] "Uprising At Morehouse, Hampton."
[121] "Negro College Expels Radicals," *Chicago Tribune (1963-1996)*, July 10, 1969, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/guest-editorials-negro-college-expels-radicals/docview/168941037/se-2?accountid=10226.

Most of the student body, alumni, and administration denounced the actions of the militant students. Gloster, King Sr., and Mays were among many who vocally expressed their disappointment in the spectacle. In his resignation later, President Gloster wrote, "This has been the most ignominious day in the history of Morehouse."[122] Daddy King thought the renaming was a "fine suggestion" but denounced the demonstration because he "felt that his son's name was being exploited."[123]

Benjamin Elijah Mays: Prisoner in Harkness Hall

Benjamin Elijah Mays was, perhaps, the most vocal 'prisoner in Harkness Hall' to comment on his experience during the 29-hour period. Mays penned an editorial for the *New Pittsburgh Courier* while held hostage. He wrote:

> So here we are, locked in the Board room of Harkness Hall. (We will remain imprisoned for a total of 28 ½ hours. Some of the groups of students are most insulting; they curse and use vulgar language. We were permitted to go to the restroom one at a time: after midnight, the trustees were not allowed to go to the restroom at all. If the methods and demands of this group are implemented, the black colleges will soon pass away. I have never met a more insulting group in all of my years.[124]

In his autobiography, *Born to Rebel,* Mays notes that it was not within the Board's jurisdiction to decide on a name change or control of neighboring institutions; only the council of presidents representing the six respective schools could determine the renaming of the school and the control of their respective boards. These demands were fueled by the social milieu of the Black Power Movement, in which Black people demanded control of their institutions. In that same spirit, these

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[122] "College President Defies His Captors," *Newsday (1940-1992)*, April 19, 1969, Nassau ed. edition, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/college-president-defies-his-captors/docview/916043612/se-2?accountid=10226.
[123] "Majority Of Morehouse Students Back Head: 'Agitators' Hold President Trustees 24 Hours 'Outsiders' Blamed For Disorder 'I Am Prouc To Be Morehouse Man,' Says Dr. Gloster: 'Agitators' Hold President Trustees 24 Hours 'Outsiders' Blamed For Disorder 'I Am P," *New Journal and Guide (1916-2003)*, April 26, 1969, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/majority-morehouse-students-back-head-agitators/docview/569042056/se-2?accountid=10226; Mays, "Prisoner In Harkness Hall."
[124] Mays, "Prisoner In Harkness Hall."

militant student activists were fighting for Black control of Morehouse, which they understood as white trustees resigning to make way for a majority Black Board of Trustees.

In retrospect, the Lock-In was not simply a student-led protest; it brought to the surface questions about Black educational leadership and institutional control. Mays recalled hearing arguments amongst students that "Black people must control their own destiny [and] the self-perpetuating boards of trustees must go."[125] In an effort to force their resignation, students humiliated and embarrassed the white trustees. The white trustee who had given the most to the College in recent years was insulted more viciously than anyone. Dr. Mays was not exempt from the verbal attacks. He recalled being tongue-lashed and called an "Uncle Tom" for an Honors Day address he gave at Spelman College. In his talk, he stated, "If we expected to get $100 million from Negroes (the conservative estimate to build a university for ten thousand black students), we might as well forget it because Negroes did not have the economic resources to put up that much money—and if they had it, I doubted they would give it."[126]

The tension between the students and Mays pointed to ideological differences between Black nationalism and Black power. Mays agreed that Black power was a good thing because it introduced a Black consciousness: "It is a blessing if it convinces Black people that their strength lies in solidarity and that Black men can never get political and economic power if they are divided and fighting among themselves."[127] Yet, Mays' experience as Morehouse's President made him think pragmatically about philanthropy and Black Power: "…The phrase "Black power," accompanied by the "clenched fist," is nothing more than a futile gesture unless it is filled with meaning and designed

[125] Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography*, 313.
[126] Mays, 314.
[127] Mays, 315.

to develop a program to achieve for the Black man that economic, political, and educational power which will enable him to bargain from a position of strength."[128]

Dr. Mays said that he would not choose to be locked up and chained in again, but he was glad he had the experience: "Only in this way could I understand what kinds of demands a few students in the Center were making, and realize how insulting and vulgar some of our black students can be. Had I not experienced it firsthand, I could hardly have believed it."[129]

MICROHISTORIES & COUNTERMEMORIES

Institutions hold multiple narratives and traditions at once. Institutional narratives are often told in a way that centers the perspectives of those in leadership or influential positions. Institutional narratives are not monolithic, but there are always multiple narratives and stories underway simultaneously. The dominant narratives rarely consider the *microhistories* that also play a significant role in shaping the soul of a place. In the case of a college, the history is narrated from the administrative building rather than the student center or campus yard. While the institutional history is narrated from the presidential suite or administration, there is also a counternarrative that emerges from the campus yard, where students engage in the daily rounds of dialogue, debate, and imagining. A philosophy of education that emerges from the yard highlights the ways student activism has contributed to historically black education as an intellectual tradition. A framing of the 1969 Lock-In as an episode within a tradition of campus rebellions demonstrates the historical precedent of student protests and how they have contributed to the vitality of the tradition.

Emilie Townes on Microhistories and Countermemories

In her book *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* Emilie Townes uses countermemory as a tool for ethical reflection, not as a rejection of history but as a correction of

[128] Mays, 315.
[129] Mays, 312–13.

earlier patterns of essentialism. Drawing on the work of historian George Lipsitz, Townes characterizes countermemory as a way to disrupt ignorance and invisibility—a way to remember and forget—that starts with the particularity of the local, immediate, and the personal; it looks to the past for microhistories to force a *reconsideration* of flawed (incomplete or vastly circumscribed histories). By focusing on the localized experiences of oppression, countermemory allows us to *refocus* on dominant narratives touting narrow lenses into a *reframing* of what constitutes the universal. Countermemory opens a "subversive space within dominant discourses that expand our sense of who we are and, possibly, create a more whole and just society in defiance of structural evil." Townes also states:

> Learning, appreciating, and respecting the microhistories of any society demands…a 'complex negation between the legacy of historical events that affect everyone and the partial and limited accounts of those events that make up the historical record as authored by the dominant groups.[130]

Countermemory is the work of reclaiming and excavating microhistories that are at risk of being erased or forgotten. Townes' work on countermemory is a helpful framework for reclaiming and reconsidering the ethical and pedagogical dimensions of the '69 Lock-In.

On the contrary to countermemory, Townes defines *forgottenness* as both a serious medical condition and an astute strategy of domination. To forget is to fail to remember the various histories simultaneously at play within an institution. Histories are strategically erased to disempower and to enable the production of produced images that express what we thought was the case rather than to take the time and effort to show genuine respect and come to know the whole story in new and authentic ways.[131] In the face of forgottenness, Townes argues, erased microhistories must be reclaimed through the work of countermemory.

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[130] Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 22–24.
[131] Townes, 26–27.

Lock-In as Countermemory

The Lock-In has noticeably been erased from the College's institutional history. Unlike institutional ceremonies or events (i.e., Commencements, Founders Days, the John Hope Memorial), there are no photographs posted in the dining hall or public areas on the campus, nor is it mentioned in the history of the college or orientation lectures. In intentional ways, it has been erased from the College's history public memory because it does not fit into the ideal frame of the Morehouse Tradition. There are no plaques or historical markers to commemorate the site; however, stories of the protest are primarily preserved through casual conversations between Morehouse alumni and the history of neighboring institutions, like The Institute of the Black World). The blatant absence from the narrative begs the question of why this event was intentionally erased or *forgotten* from the institutional narrative.

The Sankofa bird turns to the past to fetch and reclaim the pieces of history that are at risk of being lost to the seas of time. It is often the history that was destroyed that has the power to ensoul the next generation. In the powerful words of African educational psychologist Asa Hillard:

> No conqueror has won a final victory over any people until his or her memory of history and culture was destroyed. All wars of conquest ultimately are cultural wars. Conquerors must erase the memory of conquered people…Successful conquerors know that history and culture is the jugular vein and Achilles tendon of a people.[132]

Memory plays a crucial role in helping human beings create identity, meaning, and hope. For communities historically disenfranchised and oppressed, the erasure of memory is a tool of conquest, and re-membering is an act of resistance. It is only through the intentional work of remembering that history is preserved.

Townes and Lipsitz help us to see that there are histories made up of microhistories that are often intentionally erased to suppress memory in the name of power and domination. With

[132] Hilliard, "The Meaning of KMT," 212–13.

this in mind, it is easy to imagine that the Lock-In is intentionally forgotten because it does not fit nicely into the College's dominant image of respectability. Just as certain events are recalled in lectures, photos, and promotional materials, there are those that are not mentioned and are eventually *forgotten* from public memory.

As responsible students of history, the countermemories of protest and disruption are very much a part of the history of Black education, and to feign ignorance on such an important part of the puzzle does the entire tradition a disservice. To ignore the Lock-In is to forget the long history of student activism, subversive mentoring, and a longstanding tradition of prophetic imaginings that have been birthed in historically Black colleges and universities, especially the Atlanta University Center. *How might a study of microhistory and counternarratives inform our understanding of historically Black education?*

Reframing

"Life must be understood backwards but must be lived forwards."
—*Soren Kierkegaard*

While the archives preserve the details of past events, those who return to the storehouse of history must engage in the work of reclaiming and *reframing*. The gift of time affords us the privilege of seeing history from a distance. From our vantage point, we can make sense of the past with a greater awareness of what came before, what happened after, and how its memory may serve to be helpful for addressing present-day issues. The editorials and newspaper articles published in the wake of Lock-In vividly captured the immediate anger and frustration of the administration, alumni, and student body. Constrained by space and time, the Lock-In was perceived as a crime, and the militant students were labeled as rabble-rousers. Neither Taylor, the administration, nor the alumni were able to comprehend the intentions of these militant students. As MacIntyre argues, behavior can only be understood in relation to intentions, and intentions cannot be understood apart from

settings. A social and historical setting helps us to make sense of an actor's intentions. A social setting may be an institution, a practice, or a milieu. A setting "has a history, a history within which the histories of individual agents not only are, but have to be, situated, just because without the setting and its changes through time the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible."[133] The intentions should be understood within a stretch of time. We can only judge short-term intentions when we know the long and longest-term intentions. Life is more than a sequence of individual actions or events, but it constitutes a narrative that is still underway. As Macintyre states, "There is no such thing as 'behavior,' to be identified prior to and independently of intentions, beliefs, and settings."[134]

In many ways, the focus was on the vices of *militancy* rather than the *virtues* of the protest. Immediately, they were no longer students but criminals. There was no consideration for their intentions, motives, passions, or fidelity to their beloved institution. Now that we have reclaimed the Lock-In from the sea of *forgottenness,* we now turn to the work of reframing. In the Spirit of Sankofa, this project not only seeks to reclaim a microhistory but also reclaim a sympathetic understanding that was denied to the student activists in 1969. It is my hope that this work will recast the militant students—not as rabble-rousers— but as responsible bearers of a living tradition, whereby they did not see themselves as passive inheritors of an institutional legacy but as co-authors who sought to determine its future by agitating and demanding change.

The Art of Philosophically Reframing

As in art, a well-selected frame can enhance a painting and present the work in a more effective way, highlighting subtleties that might otherwise go unnoticed. To be sure, there is never one perfect frame for a piece of art; there is always a myriad of ways to frame a work. In that spirit,

[133] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1981), 240.

[134] MacIntyre, 258, 237–38, 239, 241.

this second movement of the chapter considers the Lock-In from three frames of reference, following the Sankofan education model. In the (1) first section, we consider the student-activists as *Inheritors of Tradition*, exploring the history of Black College Rebellions passed down from as far back as the New Negro Movement of the 1920s; the (2) second section will consider students as *Bearers of tradition*, highlighting the intellectual virtues at play in navigating the social milieu of 1969 Atlanta and maintaining a living tradition; and the (3) third and final section considers students as *Bequeathers of Tradition,* highlighting the futuristic elements of protesting. To help guide this philosophical reframing, we turn to moral philosopher Alasdair Macintyre, whose work on the virtues of maintaining a living tradition provides a fitting framework for re-reading the Lock-In for its pedagogical possibilities.

In *After Virtue*, moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre provides three helpful considerations for re-reading particular episodes within a context of a tradition: (1) Behavior and intentions cannot be characterized apart from social settings (i.e., institutions, practices, or social milieu; historical narratives provide long-term contexts for short-term intentions; (2) the health of a living tradition is constituted by continuities of conflict and argument; (3) traditions—though grounded in history—are informed by some image of future possibilities, which keeps it vibrant and alive. These three settings offer unique vantage points that highlight the virtues hidden behind the vices of the protest.

I. THE HISTORICAL FRAME– STUDENTS AS INHERITORS

Placing the Lock In within a longer narrative shows that the protest was a *Sankofa Moment.* The militant students who organized the Lock In were inspired by generations of student activists who came before them, even if they did not recognize it. The tradition of student-led activism at Black colleges dates back the campus rebellions of the 1920s as students demanded the resignation of white college presidents, but it reached new level of intensity in the 50s and 60s during the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Era. Student activism changed not only campuses but also the

larger society. Ironically, this tradition of resistance and disruption grew as an offshoot of what many early founders had in mind for Black education. The early white architects seeking to use segregated schools to maintain racial subjugation never imagined that these institutions would become the incubators for some of American history's most consequential social movements. While the contributions of student activism are underappreciated, it is important to note that HBCUs emerged as bastions of racial pride and hope out of the embers of prophetic disruption.

The Spirit of the New Negro

The precedent for intellectual and cultural resistance on Black campuses can be traced back to the New Negro Movement. The New Negro Movement was a social and cultural revolution during the 1920s, in which Black communities began embracing freedom in artistic expression, institution building, and in political and economic aspirations. This newfound self-respect, independence, and pride were evident in the music, poetry, and artistic expressions of the Harlem Renaissance. Philosopher Alain Locke described the New Negro Movement as "[the] fresh and cultural focusing" of one "finding a new soul." The spirit of the times empowered Blacks to demand control of their institutions and full citizenship in society. Many also challenged the restrictions of conservative religion, the oversight of the white gaze, heteronormativity, and respectability.

The revolutionary spirit of the New Negro was primarily carried out by teenagers and young adults coming of age. The emerging generation of writers and creatives were discontent with the ways and thinking of the *Old Negro*. Locke captures the energy of the younger generation in these words:

> The Younger Generation comes, bringing its gifts. They are the first fruits of the Negro Renaissance. Youth speaks, and the voice of the New Negro is heard. What stirs inarticulately in the masses is already vocal upon the lips of the talented few, and the future listens; however, the present may shut its ears. Here we have Negro youth, with arresting visions and vibrant prophecies; forecasting in the mirror of art what we must see and recognize in the streets of

> reality tomorrow, foretelling in new notes and accents the maturing speech of full racial utterance.[135]

These arresting visions and vibrant prophecies were not limited to art and culture; the same energy was evident on Black college campuses across the South as a new generation was ready to take their institutions through the winds of change.

DuBois and The New Negro on Campus

The New Negro Movement unfolded in a different way from the cultural elements of the Harlem Renaissance. When the Spirit of New Negro arrived on college campuses, it shook up the Black college education as it had been known for the first half-century. In the first fifty years, HBCUs were under the influence of white philanthropists and missionaries, who not only provided funding to keep schools afloat but fashioned Black education to reflect their morals and values. The purse strings of philanthropy became the puppet strings that controlled and ultimately suffocated the freedom of liberal education. It would take a younger generation of students, with the support of faculty and alumni, to fight against the overbearing Christian values and Victorian culture that prevented students from experiencing the joys and freedom of education.

One of the most prominent supporters of the campus rebellions was W.E.B. DuBois, who not only supported but provided an example of truth-telling in action. As a pioneering voice in Black education, DuBois' contributions to African American thought are without question; however, one of his greatest contributions, perhaps, was his work as a concerned alumnus and vocal critic of his own Alma Mater, Fisk University. On at least three occasions, DuBois addressed Fisk as an alumnus and a parent of a student.[136] DuBois was an unrelenting critic of Fisk, especially upon his return in

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[135] Alain Locke, "The New Negro," in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Touchstone, 1925), 47.

[136] These addresses are published in *Education for Black People: Ten Critiques (1906-1960)*, along with lectures presented at other HBCUs on a number of issues related to the aims and ends of Black Education.

1908, when the University forfeited its liberal education curriculum in pursuit of the industrial model for the sake of funding.

In 1924, DuBois returned at the height of a heated moment in Fisk's history. This time, DuBois was made aware of the overly strict discipline culture by his daughter, who was a student at the time. DuBois openly criticized the administration for its medieval and discredited discipline policy. DuBois reminds the administration that their "problems, in the long run, are no greater than the problems presented everywhere in the training of youth throughout the colleges of the United States and the world…the method of piling rule on rule and threat on threat is the worst and most ineffective and make not men but hypocrites." Not only was the discipline stifling students, but it also would not make for a great university. According to DuBois, a great university is defined by three attributes: the spirit of freedom, self-knowledge, and truth. For DuBois, students must be able to form organizations, express their opinion in speech and print, participate in athletics, speak out for truth, and challenge the unjust laws of society instead of acquiescing to evils of injustice. This was one of several public rebukes DuBois offered his alma mater. While the students appreciated and celebrated his address, the citizens of Nashville threatened to physically attack him; the President of the University was angered, and many alumni thought DuBois had done a "cruel and unnecessary thing." Yet, in his deep love and concern, DuBois chose truth over popularity. His love for the institution is captured in these closing lines:

> We love Fisk. We are its children. We believe eternally in its undying spirit, but we cannot sacrifice the ideals of the Negro race and the democracy of the world to our personal selfishness. The Negro race needs colleges. We need them today as never before, but we do not need colleges so much that we can sacrifice the manhood and womanhood of our children to the Thoughtlessness of the North or the Prejudice of the South. Ultimately Fisk will and must survive. The spirit of its great founders will renew itself, and it is that Spirit alone, reborn, which calls us tonight. … Oh, be swift my soul, to answer Him, be jubilant, my feet! Our God is marching on![137]

[137] W.E.B. DuBois and Herbert Aphtheker, *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques (1906-1960)* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 83.

Although his critique was direct and sharp, DuBois closes his address with a call to action to the Fisk community, a clarion call that is grounded in a love for the University and a commitment to its future. DuBois continuously demarcates the Spirit from the institution. Keeping the spirit of a tradition alive is different from maintaining the institution. DuBois can love the tradition and critique the institution because his ultimate allegiance is to its principles and ideals rather than its success or prosperity. Over and again, DuBois urged students and alumni to the work of truth-telling. The work of truth-telling involves agitating, questioning, challenging, and unsettling norms to make way for something new to be born. The search for truth requires reclaiming and highlighting the microhistories at risk of being lost. As DuBois states, "…We must remember that in every age while institutions of learning have accepted and taught certain parts of the truth, there are other parts about which they have hesitated."[138]

One year after delivering the speech, President McKenzie resigned after students held a 10-week boycott. The students made it clear that the boycott was not "disloyalty to the institution, but a protest against the autocratic methods of President McKenzie." In his book, *The New Negro on Campus*, Raymond Wolters highlights the significance of a student strike organized among Black elite youth during the Roaring Twenties. It was no small feat that Black students who sought a degree as a passport to success would risk their opportunities by boycotting the University. Students could have easily settled with being grateful for the chance to receive an education and remained silent in the face of a campus culture that denied them freedom. DuBois was elated that students were agitating against the powers. "They have the power, they have the wealth," says DuBois, "But Glory to God we still own our own souls and led by young men like these as Fisk, let us neither flinch nor falter but fight and fight and fight and fight again. Let us never forget that the arch enemy of the

[138] DuBois and Aphtheker, 70.

Negro race is the false philanthropist who kicks us in the mouth when we cry out in honest and justifiable protest."[139]

Yet, the success of the protest was not only in ousting the president but in setting a precedent for future generations of student activists. The campus rebellions like the one at Fisk became the inspiration for succeeding generations that followed. The students of the 50s and 60s looked to their example as they challenged segregation and discrimination in American society. Campus protests became a way not only to demand institutional change but a ritual of formation for nurturing generations of civil rights activists and leaders. As one article in *The Christian Century* stated:

> Black students were "in full spiritual revolt against all discriminations and the invidious distinctions under which they suffer severe limitations… [The Negro Student] is standing with his eyes alight with a great race pride and race hope, and he refuses to be any longer considered in any category other than that of his fellow white man.[140]

As students developed the skills to organize against the powers—whether white control of the College or sit-ins in the city—they were also developing the spiritual equipment to become democratic agents. Pride and hope became a part of the spiritual armor needed to stand in the face of nihilism and despair. They did not give up or fall into despair because they believed they met power with power. DuBois was proud of the students who hit "power in high places, white power, power backed by unlimited wealth; hit it openly and between the eyes; talk[ed] faced to face and not down at 'at the big gate." [141]

II. THE PRESENT FRAME—STUDENTS AS AGITATORS

By 1969, the Civil Rights Movement, which began with the work of student organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Atlanta, had reached several milestones, among them were the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, signed by

[139] Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s*, 62–63.
[140] Wolters, 340.
[141] Wolters, 62.

President Lyndon Baines Johnson. These legislative victories were the culmination of the work of students who began organizing as students in the late 40s and 50s. As with every generation, today's radicals are tomorrow's moderates. By 1969, there was a new generation of students who arrived on campus, coming of age in a time of rage, urgency, and disappointment. King did not appeal to a younger generation of radicals like Kwame Toure (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) of the Black Power Movement, the nationalist movement founded on values of pride and self-determination. Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated in 1968, and the Civil Rights Movement, in many ways, dissolved. The peaceful, nonviolent leadership of King was succeeded by a generation inspired by the energy of the Black Power and Black Arts Movement that emerged out of the North. College campuses across the nation erupted in student-led protests demanding diversity in the curriculum and leadership and a heightened sense of responsibility to society. Protests were unique to each institution. The same was true of Morehouse College.

The grief and anger in the wake of King's death energized students who demanded immediate changes, even if those demands were channeled toward the wrong people. Yet, there were many people and organizations who gathered to create new organizations and living memorials to continue King's work in his absence.

The Institute of the Black World

The Institute of the Black World (IBW) was one of the earliest organizations founded in Atlanta to honor and continue the legacy of Dr. King. Historian Derrick White's work highlights the IBWs contributions to national and international movements of liberation. White describes the IBW as the most consequential organization for local and international visions of liberation: "No organization…shaped the local and international visions of liberation more than the Institute for the

Black World."[142] IBW was a space for intellectual activists to convene around "complex realities facing the African diaspora caused by structural racism." The organization was founded in 1969 in Atlanta by Spelman College professor, historian, and theologian Vincent Harding and Morehouse College professor Stephen Henderson. Harding and Henderson met to discuss the meaning of Black Studies and Black Power after King's assassination. The two then called colleagues and scholars from the Atlanta University Center to join them in a new organization "dedicated to using their minds in the service of the Black community." The Institute was to be a part of the Martin Luther King Center founded by Mrs. Coretta Scott King; however, the two organizations separated over analytical, financial, and ideological differences. While there were many who sought to carry King's legacy forward, their approaches and emphases did not always align. Harding sought to develop new political strategies that would carry the Black Freedom Struggle forward. The Statement of Purpose of IBW read:

> The Institute of the Black World is an experiment in Black responsibility for that intellectual work which defines and directs the Black community…We dare to experiment partly because we remember the words spoken by Martin Luther King Jr., one year before his assassination, as he memorialized W.E.B. DuBois, he said then: 'It was never possible to know where the scholar DuBois ended, and the organizer DuBois began. The two qualities in him were a single united force.[143]

The IBW organizers looked backward and drew inspiration from DuBois' scholar-activism to address structural racism and to "dismantle a system of knowledge that marginalized Black and working people." DuBois left a footprint in Atlanta, where he worked on several social experiments at Atlanta University in social science research. The IBW organizers used the Atlanta University publications as a model for the Institute. AUC faculty members like historian Lerone Bennett, Howard Dodson, sociologist Joyce Ladner, and others created a collective, and they sought to

[142] White, Rodney, and White, "Audacious Visions : The Intellectual-Activist Legacies of W . E . B . DuBois , the Institute of the Black World , and Walter Rodney Audacious Visions :"
[143] White, Rodney, and White.

introduce a curriculum change at the neighboring institutions. As this collective of AUC faculty members worked together to collectively publish timely and relevant scholarship, they also argued that the AUC curriculum did not offer Black Studies classes and recommended the hiring of additional professors for additional courses. Considering the history of Atlanta University Center as a place of experiment and innovation in Black education, they believed that AUC was an excellent place "to institutionalize the present surge of interest in the Black world." The IBW-affiliated professors were in the process of working with their respective schools to create a Black Studies program by the time of the 1969 Lock-In. Several of the professors, including Gerald McWhorter, participated in the protest, which led the school to sever its relationships with the IBW.

Derrick White's work on the formation of the Institute of the Black World provides an insightful alternative viewpoint for considering the virtues of the Lock-In. While the immediate reactions from the faculty, alumni, and students focused on the mischievous aspects of the Lock-In and the desecration of the Morehouse tradition, it also the case that the militant students were inspired by the work of Institute of the Black World and a collective of professors following in DuBois' example of scholar-activism. It is not farfetched to imagine that the militant students were inspired and mentored by their professors to demand the changes that they wished to see at their school.

The Institute of the Black World emerged as an alternative space for AUC professors to collectively organize and mentor students apart from their institutional affiliations. Standing in the tradition of DuBois' scholar-activists, their commitment was not to maintaining institutional reputations but to the liberation of Black people across the diaspora. In essence, DuBois stood in the Socratic tradition as a gadfly. He was never a college president or the head of a major organization but continuously agitated and instigated as an outsider (in the sense of positional

leadership). Their radical approach was not new but a part of the microhistory of Black education that has been continuously silenced or forgotten within the larger dominant narrative.

While some would later attribute the Lock-In to be a part of the Morehouse legacy of developing leaders, the truth is the institution did not appreciate or nurture these students toward militant action. The protest was largely inspired by a small cadre of faculty members who worked with students away from campus and empowered them toward action. This observation speaks to a larger history of administrators and faculty members who were in the basement, after hours, or off-campus mentoring students in a tradition of activism apart from the institution. Throughout the history of Black education, professors have been forced to creatively navigate the complex terrain of institution allegiance and their commitments to the liberation of Black people.

While looking to the past for inspiration is one element of a Sankofan education, *Sankofa* also requires an acknowledgment of present-day issues. As Tedla states, "Sankofan education is not about returning to the past to relive the life of the ancestors. They lived and shaped their own life, and contemporary Africans must also do the same for themselves." In this respect, Sankofa requires (1) relying on the legacy of the ancestors and (2) borrowing *prudently* new ideas and technologies from the vast knowledge, accomplishments, and experiences of people throughout the world. While grounded in the past, Sankofan education continues to expand its interests to consider the issues and histories of people of diverse backgrounds. This second framing examines the Lock-In within the social milieu of the 1960s. This section will explore how students critically and creatively navigated the dialectic tension of maintaining allegiance to a tradition while agitating for institutional change. *What was the social milieu of 1969 that led the students to protest?* Placing the Lock-In within a larger social setting will help us to better understand the intentions of the activists and to appreciate the intellectual virtues required to maintain and challenge beloved institutions for the better.

Bearers of living tradition navigate the dialogical complexity of the past and the present. Like the Sankofa bird—which carries an egg in its mouth symbolizing the future—tradition bearers must discern which elements of the past are beneficial and what aspects of the past should be buried behind. Imprudent retrieval from the past leads to an unhealthy case of hoarding. Institutions become overly concerned with maintaining history to the expense that they suffocate in irrelevance and ultimately die. Traditions decay, disintegrate, and disappear when they are not maintained morally through justice-seeking and truth-telling.[144] Like graveyards and cemeteries, living traditions require constant pruning, tending, and caring engagement to remain meaningful and beautiful sites of memory. Traditions are maintained by individuals who challenge and agitate for change by asking critical questions, raising critiques about unjust practices, and speaking truth (or *telling it like it is).* MacIntyre distinguishes a "living tradition" as a "historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition." MacIntyre makes the distinction of a 'living' tradition, recognizing that some traditions "decay, disintegrate, and disappear." MacIntyre offers insights on what sustains and strengthens traditions: "Lack of justice, lack of truthfulness, and lack of courage, lack of the relevant intellectual virtues—these corrupt traditions, just as they do those institutions and practices which derive their life from the traditions of which they are the contemporary embodiments."[145]

Traditions and individuals are tied up in a mutual relationship; both need each other to survive. As individuals challenge and agitate, they also gain a sense of meaning, identity, and belonging from those same traditions that can cause great frustration and angst. Yet, one is only frustrated by that which they love or care for on a deeper level. In this exchange, the tradition gets

[144] MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 258.
[145] MacIntyre, 258.

the necessary intellectual and moral attention it needs to remain relevant, and the bearers with ensouling elements such as purpose, hope, and imagination.

Militant Students as Responsible Bearers of a Living Tradition

Now we re-cast the militant students as responsible bearers of a living tradition to open space to explore how faithful acts of disruption contribute to maintaining vibrant traditions. McIntyre's *After Virtue* helps us to highlight some of the intellectual virtues that were hidden or overshadowed by the vices of the Lock-In. These students demonstrate three virtues that are central to maintaining a living tradition:

1. Critical and Creative Engagement with History (and microhistories)
2. Courage to address present-day problems and agitate for change
3. Commitment to the future

Critical and Creative Engagement with History

The militant students who took over Harkness Hall in April 1969 stepped into the footprints of generations of students who came before them and protested in their own times toward the liberation of the true Black university. Although there is a long history of student activism at universities across the nation, campus rebellions at Black colleges are unique in the sense that Black institutions of higher learning share a complicated nuance between white philanthropy and control.

The Lock-In is a reminder that there are multiple narratives simultaneously at play within the larger history of Historically Black Education. The student-activist modeled a critical and creative engagement with history by choosing to reclaim a micro-history that is often hidden or silenced in the dominant narrative of historically Black education. The revolutionary underside of Black education is one that has been forgotten and silenced, considering a long and complicated history of white control of Black colleges and universities. Yet, protesting is a microhistory within Historically Black Education that should be reclaimed through countermemory.

Courage to Agitate

Secondly, the militant students not only critically and creatively used history as a guide for addressing present-day issues, but they also exemplified intellectual courage by willingly challenging the school's administration to move toward the liberation of the Black university. Their actions were misunderstood as brash and disrespectful; however, through re-reading, we see that there was a courage that was grounded in history, the conscience of the present moment, and committed to the future. In reading the Lock-In with MacIntyre, we learn that such agitation is necessary for maintaining a living tradition. Such engagement is not only essential to maintaining universities but also central to the health of our democracy. The university is a microcosm of society. Richard Rorty was concerned with the growing detached spectatorship among the Left on university campuses and society at large. Richard Rorty raised concerns in *Achieving Our Country* that much of the nation's *Left* was becoming a band of detached spectators that lost faith in the country's ability to rise to its better angels. Instead of engagement, many of the Left's scholars and thought leaders have settled on theorizing instead of practice. Rorty warns, "Disengagement from practice produces hallucinations."[146] Instead, he challenges the Left to push beyond disengaged spectatorship and face up to the unpleasant truths about our nation and remember that the character of the nation is still in the making. When it comes to *Achieving Our Country,* student activism and campus rebellions play a central role in maintaining a living democracy. Rorty raises concerns about the impact of spectatorship among the Left in the American academy: "All universities worthy of the name have always been centers of social protest. If American universities ever cease to be such centers, they will lose both their self-respect and the respect of the learned world."[147]

[146] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, 94.
[147] Rorty, 82.

Both MacIntyre and Rorty help us to see the courage at play in the militant students' actions during the Lock-In. Historic institutions and traditions, however great or old they may be, cannot survive on their own. The site of abandoned campuses and school buildings are haunting reminders of places that were once great and vibrant but, for one reason or another, now remain memories of what once was. While history must be preserved and carried into the future, traditions cannot be stifled by nostalgia or an unhealthy obsession with the past.

Lastly, if it is the case that living traditions are maintained by a sense of future possibilities, the Lock-In could be read as a necessary disruptive act intended to carry the institution toward a future that constituted the good of the College as well individual agents. By demanding Black leadership, a Black Studies curriculum, and student participation in government, student activists demonstrated a fidelity and concern for the institution by choosing to engage in protest rather than 'detached spectatorship.' If it is the case that living traditions hold an image of the future, it is also the case that the Lock-In can also be read as an act toward future possibilities.

Finally, the third virtue hidden in the protest is a commitment to the future. The militant students exemplified a faith in the future. In re-reading the stated demands of the protest as a list of intentions, we see that the students were inspired by the past and by the need to address present-day issues, but they were also seeking to carry their beloved institution into the future. In this sense, protesting becomes a faithful act of *disruptive imagining.* Unsatisfied with simply reliving history, they sought to contribute to the tradition they inherited. These militant students were forward-thinking agents and co-authors of an unfolding narrative. As MacIntyre reminds us, history is not static but dynamic; it is a narrative that is still underway. "What I have called history," writes MacIntyre, "is enacted dramatic narrative in which the characters are also the authors."

While tradition is often correlated with the past, a tradition anchored in history with no present-day relevance or imaginative possibilities becomes *traditionalism*—a dead relic of what was

rather than what shall be. "An adequate sense of tradition," writes MacIntyre, "manifests itself in a grasp of those future possibilities which the past has made available to the present. Living traditions, just because they continue a not-yet-completed narrative, confront a future whose determinate and determinable character, so far as it possesses any, derives from the past."[148]

In light of this analysis, we can view the protesters' demands as attemps to contribute to the 'narrative of Morehouse'. Here again, as a reminder, are their demands:

I. The name of The Atlanta University Center (AUC) be changed to Martin Luther King University.
II. Black control of the colleges in the Atlanta University Center
III. Trustees of Morehouse support the idea of merging all six institutions in the AUC into one single university and assume responsibility for persuading the other five institutions to accept the plan of merger[149]

III. THE FUTURE FRAME— STUDENTS AS BEQUEATHERS

Traditions are comprised of histories and practices yet to remain alive. They also constitute an understanding of future possibilities. Living traditions are a continuation of a 'not-yet-completed narrative' that looks to the future for its "determinate and determinable character." MacIntyre writes, "There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future and an image of the future which always presents itself in the form of *telos*—of a variety of ends or goals—towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present."[150].

We see that they were motivated to act to remember Dr. King, secure the Black leadership of their colleges, and promote a stronger unity among the six schools. While the first two actions were misguided toward the Morehouse Trustees instead of the AUC Council of Presidents, what is worth noting here is the motivation and imagination behind their intentions. Here is an example of agitation and imagination.

[148] MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 258.
[149] Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography*, 313.
[150] MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 250.

While protests and demonstrations are political events, they are also counter-traditions inspired by the past and projected toward the future. In other words, to engage in agitation, one must have a faith or belief in the possibilities of the future. As MacIntyre suggests, "There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future and an image of the future which always presents itself in the form of a *telos*—or of a variety of ends or goals—towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present."[151] To protest is to turn our dreams into action; to act today for the world, we hope for tomorrow.[152] This is what Historian Robin D.G. Kelley calls "Freedom Dreams," or the different cognitive maps of the future produced by activists and social movements. Dreams of the future are forged through action and political engagement. Social movements (i.e., the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, the Antiwar Movement of the 1960s, and more recently, the Black Lives Matter Movement) ignite a sense of hope for students, which in turns inspires them to engage in democratic engagement and activism with an expansive vision with new ideas, theories, and questions.

Morehouse & The Sexuality Debate

In surveying the *Maroon Tiger* from 1917 thru 2019, it is evident that sexuality has been a controversial topic in the Atlanta University Center across the years, with a hyperfocus on Morehouse and its neighboring sister school, Spelman College. Although rarely mentioned until the 1970s, the college community served as a microcosm of the larger Black community, which has suffered from homophobia and resistance toward the diversity of gender expression. Given the nature of same-sex education, gay students in the 1970s and 80s faced harassment from classmates who did not agree with homosexuality. Some refused to room with gay classmates in residents' hall and made their resentment public in comments and gestures in passing on the campus. However,

[151] MacIntyre, 250.
[152] The Ethics of Advent, Peter Gomes (check this)

there were also students who were outspoken in their call for tolerance and empathy, like Charles Mapson, who wrote in one of the earliest articles on sexuality, "I do not think that homosexuality is right, nor do I think it should be allowed to spread, but it does not help the alcoholic if you chastise and ridicule him. You must help him, but first, you must accept him. Remember, someone you love may be gay."[153]

To be sure, some of the articles include comments and terminology that was nomenclature of the times and would be considered highly offensive today. Yet, it is also true that the students of the early 90s witnessed the devastating HIV/AIDS crisis, which affected Black communities with young, premature, sudden deaths at an alarming rate. The fear fueled stigmas and stereotypes, which created a hostile environment for phobias to arise. The AUC campus was a microcosm of the Black communities around the country and the world. It affected students who received a diagnosis or knew family and friends who were infected. The unknown left students to speculate on the cause of the virus. One even suggested that it was a "comment by God on the act of homosexuality" to bring about a maturing in society.[154] Although there are several ways to contract HIV/AIDS, the face of the virus quickly was gay/bisexual men who became a pariah. Heterosexual students were more inclined to accept those who were more discreet and conservative and less flamboyant and ostentatious in their presentation. To be sure, the views and ideologies of the times were debilitating and harmful; however, over time, through community discussion and education, the stigmas, stereotypes, and phobias inflicted on the Black gay community waned over time. Yet, each generation had its own set of traditions and customs that needed disruption.

In October 1992, the Student Government Association hosted a symposium to discuss sexuality in the AUC. The symposium was designed to create a space to address homophobia and

[153] Charles Mapson, "The Gay Population," *The Maroon Tiger*, May 4, 1978.
[154] Gregory Powell, "The Confession of a Homosexual," *The Maroon Tiger*, May 7, 1985.

foster tolerance and hospitality.[155] In 1997, at a time when conversations on Black manhood and identity were a focal point in Black America, a contributing writer cited effeminate men as a threat to Black manhood and a liability on the race.[156] Some students said they did not have anything against gay men; they wanted discretion. Yet, while there were those who argued for discretion, others like Obinna Eze Lewis celebrated the positive impact of gay/bisexual men on Black masculinity by citing writers and thinkers like James Baldwin, E. Lynn Harris, and Peter Gomes, who demonstrate the diversity of Black male expressions. Quoting Black scholar Haki Madhubuti, Lewis closes with a poignant question that captures the tension around sexuality at Morehouse: "Black homosexuality is on the rise, and the question becomes do we enlist them in our struggle, or do we continue to alienate and make enemies of them?"[157]

In reading student op-eds, it is important to note three considerations. First, like all thinkers—especially for those learning to think critically for themselves, students reflect the social surroundings of their upbringing, albeit family, religious, or cultural. Without critically reflecting on their own personal convictions, they often rely on embedded theologies and philosophies to shape their worldview. Secondly, students are a product of their culture. In many ways, their writings are a sample of the range of views and perspectives of the campus community of their times. No community is ever a monolith. Articles on sexuality range from homophobic ideologies that considered gay men as an attack on Black manhood to students calling for greater awareness and acceptance. Thirdly, as much as student-writers are a reflection of their upbringing and their times, it should also be noted that their views of us may sound offensive looking back, but they were trying to push the institution and peers to a more diverse and just future that was strange and unknown.

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[155] "Gay, Black, Male... Is Morehouse Ready for Them?," *The Maroon Tiger*, October 8, 1992, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1992_002.pdf.
[156] Robert Andrew May II, "Homosexual Assault on Black Manhood," *Maroon Tiger*, May 18, 1997.
[157] Obinna Eze Lewis, "(Homo)Sexuality & Black Masculinity," *The Maroon Tiger*, May 18, 1997, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1997_005.pdf.

The difficulty of disrupting old traditions and charting a course into an unknown future is evident as we trace the conversation on sexuality.

The Year of the Appropriate Attire Policy (2009)

My freshman year at Morehouse coincided with the beginning of two major beginnings for both the college and the country. We were the first incoming class of the newly inaugurated 10th President of Morehouse, Dr. Robert Michael Franklin, an ordained minister and trained Social Ethicist from the University of Chicago. My first semester of college was marked by the election of President Barack Obama, a historic watershed moment for the country. The advent of a new college president and US president created a new wave of energy on the campus. In the recent weeks after the election, President Franklin led the campus in a No-Excuses campaign, which challenged students to rise to a new level of responsibility and agency. The election of the first Black president signified the shattering of a glass ceiling; if he could do it, then anybody could. However, along with the challenge of great responsibility also came the ugly ghost of respectability politics, which has long overshadowed the cultural mores of Black campus life since the 1920s. A 1975 alumnus of Morehouse, Franklin's vision of the Renaissance envisioned a revival of the classic Morehouse Man. Drawing on tradition and a model for 21st Century education, Franklin introduced an educational program for the campus known as the *Five Wells*. Morehouse Men are defined as well-read, well-dressed, well-spoken, well-traveled, and well-balanced. The five wells served as a blueprint for the college and as a guidepost for students. In an effort to help students reach their sartorial excellence, the administration released an Appropriate Attire Policy that created a firestorm of media coverage in November 2009.

The appropriate dress code stated that students could not wear caps (hats), du-rags, or hoods in class; sagging jeans or pants below the waist to reveal undergarments; nor grillz—jewelry covering

the teeth. The most controversial part of the policy was the ban on women's clothing. The policy banned the wearing of clothes associated with women's garments, such as dresses, tops, tunics, purses, and pumps, on campus and at school-sponsored events. Students who did not follow the policy could be instructed to leave the class or other campus functions.[158] The appropriate dress code was a response to a growing concern that younger students and alumni were moving away from the traditional image of the Morehouse man as a clean-cut gentleman with a tailored suit, white shirt, shined shoes, and a clean haircut. The campus fashion was slowly beginning to reflect hip-hop and urban styles. Concerned alumni and administrators saw cross-dressing and sagging as an attack on the college's tradition and brand, which many worried would jeopardize Morehouse's reputation as a top feeder school for Fortune 500 companies and lose the favor of longstanding and potential donors. According to the Vice President of Student Affairs, William Bynum, the policy was an "effort to get back to the legacy of Morehouse leaders." Students like Cameron Thomas-Shah believed it "upheld the image of the strong black man."[159]

The appropriate dress code created a firestorm of opinions from many who were passionately for and against the policy. English professor Stephane Dunn considered it "a starting point for a provoking serious dialogue about the politics of dress and style in a learning environment." Dunn suggested that the code needed some adjusting as students and administration, and faculty worked together to figure out a balance. "Deciding the boundaries that should govern what's worn on the body and personal style in a shared community like a college," says Dunn, "is not a simple matter of merely listing some don'ts and then writing them into the official laws of the

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158 "Morehouse Implements Stricter Dress Code," *New Pittsburgh Courier (1981-)*, October 21, 2009, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/morehouse-implements-stricter-dress-code/docview/2538709482/se-2?accountid=10226.

159 Mashaun D Simon, "Dress Code to Make a Definitive Statement," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, October 17, 2009, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/dress-code-make-definitive-statement/docview/337564805/se-2?accountid=10226.

institution. Extremes are as faulty as a policy of anything goes. [160] President Franklin stated in an interview, "Each student must promote and portray a positive image and properly present themselves and the college."[161] The image of young Black men walking the campus in suits and bowties always conveyed a powerful statement and impression, and one admired and emulated by all-boys K-12 schools across the country, like Excellence Boys Charter School in Brooklyn. Bynum echoed that some students said the policy was necessary given the social challenges Black men face: "We know that how a student dresses has nothing to do with what is in their head, but first impressions mean everything." There was a similar policy enforced at Hampton University's School of Business in the Fall of 2009 that required students with dreadlocks and braids to cut them out in order to stay in school.[162]

Many alumni welcomed the policy as a long overdue solution to a seemingly troubled institutional reputation. There were many reasons given in support of the dress code. For professors like Dunn, the dress code could help with policing behavior, given the fact that research shows that dress is connected to behavior. For concerned alumni, it protected the school's reputation by enforcing the classic aesthetic of the Morehouse Man. According to Vice President Bynum, "it addresses a small group of 5 out of 2000 students who are "living a gay lifestyle that is leading them to dress a way that we do not accept in Morehouse Men. Some emphasized that appearance counts for everything because people are gauged by appearance. When asked about the concerns that the code impeded self-expression, Kevin Johnson, a Morehouse alumnus, stated, "It's not your right but a privilege to be a Morehouse student and graduate. While there may be controversy, this is not just

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[160] Stephane Dunn, "Psst! Morehouse Men --- Pull Your Pants Up!," *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution*, November 12, 2009, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/psst-morehouse-men-pull-your-pants-up/docview/337647872/se-2?accountid=10226.
[161] "Morehouse Implements Stricter Dress Code."
[162] Simon, "Dress Code to Make a Definitive Statement."

any school. This is the school that produced Dr. Martin Luther King, Maynard Jackson, Julian Bond, Spike Lee, and Calvin Butts. If you want to be a Morehouse man, you have to look like a Morehouse man and walk like a Morehouse man." In that same *Philadelphia Tribune* article, Michael Coard, a local attorney, weighed in to emphasize that the dress code was a good idea. As an HBCU alumnus, Coard expressed disappointment from visiting Black campuses and seeing students dressed in baggy pants and oversized T-Shirts. Coard goes on to highlight that unprofessional dress is not only a disservice to individuals but a betrayal to Black people. He states: "Not only do you do yourself a disservice individually by looking like a thug or hood rat, but you are there to represent our people…You are being a traitor to Black people because you are supposed to be what W.E.B. DuBois talked about. 'The Talented Tenth.'[163]

While there were some who were outspokenly supportive of the dress code, the policy was publicly resisted by alumni like Saul Williams and journalists like Ta-Nehisi Coates, who considered it an assault on self-expression and creativity. Reflecting on his college days at Howard Thurman, Coates shared that his college days were a time to figure out who he was and what he wanted: "The last thing I needed was someone else trying to dictate that to me." Considering Morehouse's new dress code policy, Coates asked, "Is the literal quality of Morehouse graduates declining? Are they less successful now than they were thirty years ago? How specifically will a dress code change that?[164]

Perhaps, no one was as loud in their dissent of the change as the poet, musician, writer, and actor Saul Williams. As a poet and alumnus, Williams had experienced his own share of Morehouse's conservative and traditional ideology as an art student who did not quite fit the image of the

[163] Robert Hightower, "Morehouse Dress Code Draws Mostly Praise," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 23, 2009, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/morehouse-dress-code-draws-mostly-praise/docview/337802333/se-2?accountid=10226.
[164] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Morehouse's New Dress-Code," The Atlantic, 2009, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2009/11/morehouses-new-dress-code/30654/.

Morehouse Man aesthetic. In an essay published in *Essence* magazine, Williams highlights the importance of self-expression and creativity in democracy. He writes:

> Freedom of expression is Art Appreciation 101 and a tenant deeply rooted in American democracy. The fight for those freedoms has placed American arts and artists in a category all their own…So what happens when prestigious institutions, like Morehouse, overlook the value of expression and instead choose to align themselves with the merits of an elite business school? And what do cross-dressing students that were recently made to change clothes by Morehouse's administration have to do with my wild hair and me? *Everything.* Until these institutions acknowledge the inseparable links between freedom and expression, the same forces that suppress free thought and progressive change will suppress art and the evolving consciousness surrounding it. And when our universities align themselves with forces that suppress free thought and progressive change, they are more like churches and less like schools.[165]

The Mean Girls of Morehouse (2010)

A year later, the infamous appropriate attire policy was the focus of a cover story of the music and entertainment *Vibe* magazine in its October 2010 issue. The piece titled "The Mean Girls of Morehouse," written by Aliya King, sparked outrage within the Morehouse community for its hyperfocus on a small group of students classified as gender benders. The subhead of the piece read: "Within the openly gay community at Atlanta's Morehouse College, there's a subgroup: gender benders who rock makeup, Marc Jacobs tote bags, sky-high heels, and Beyonce-style hair weaves. Can a man of Morehouse be gay? Absolutely. But can he be a woman?"[166] In a 2010 interview on NPR's *Tell Me More,* King explained that after reading the policy's addendum on "no heels, no makeup, and no dress befitting a woman," that she was fascinated by the four students known as The Plastics. The title of the article was inspired by the 2004 movie "Mean Girls," and there is a group in the movie called the Plastics. The four students at Morehouse were given the name the Plastics by heterosexual classmates.

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[165] Saul Williams, "Poet Saul Williams on the Morehouse Dress Code," Essence, 2009, https://www.essence.com/news/the-morehouse-dress-code/.
[166] Aliya S. King, "The Mean Girls of Morehouse," *Vibe Magazine*, October 11, 2010, https://www.vibe.com/features/editorial/mean-girls-morehouse-40456/.

Beyond the controversial title, King's article attempted to highlight the stories of four androgynous, or gender-bending, students who were the target of a campus-wide dress code policy. Brian Alston, one of the four, expressed concerns about the policy's focus on policing gender expression. For Alston, it was less about sexuality and more about feminine expression. While there were many who were outraged by the piece and others who dismissed it as propaganda, the article created the dialogue which Professor Dunn said was necessary for determining the politics of identity for an all-male school. On a deeper note, King's piece gave voice to the students who were silenced and marginalized because their expression did not fit into the notion of black male identity. Diamond Poulin, another student featured in the piece, came to Morehouse inspired by its legacy of producing social change agents committed to freedom: "I'm about freedom of expression. I'm about being whomever you truly are inside. I came to Morehouse because of all the historical leaders that attended and impacted the world so heavily. I wanted to follow in their footsteps. I don't think Morehouse believes that someone like me—someone who wears heels and dresses—can uphold that reputation. But they're wrong."[167] Diamond's understanding of Morehouse's legacy of freedom and justice was in direct tension with the institution's image of Man of Morehouse. Vice President Bynum reiterated, "We respect the identity and choices of all young men at Morehouse…However, the Morehouse leadership development model sets a certain standard of how we expect young men to dress, and this attire does not fit within the model. Our proper attire policy expresses that standard."[168] Although these students fought to make their case for freedom of expression, many of them ended up transferring to other schools because of the pressure and stress following the media outrage. While they did not graduate from Morehouse, they challenged traditions, questioned norms, and provoked the college to rethink its image and definition of the Morehouse Man.

[167] King.
[168] King.

In revisiting the 2010 article, I was most intrigued by the questions and visions shared by gay students at Morehouse who wondered about the school's future. When asked about his identity, Diamond said, "Yes, I am a man. I like women's clothes. And yeah, I'm gay. But I don't want that to define me. How come people can't see me as a person?" But he also shared this vision: "I think as time goes on, the administration will have to accept the different types of men enrolled. They need to look to the future. It didn't work for me, but I put in the work for people like me to come to Morehouse." Michael Leonard similarly expressed a sort of confusion about the limitations on gender expression: "I don't see why a man of Morehouse can't wear makeup…and I don't see why a man of Morehouse can't wear pumps and a purse…and I don't know why a Morehouse man can't become a woman. Kevin Brewer, a recent Morehouse graduate, was not as "eccentric, ostentatious, and flamboyant" as other members of the gay community at Morehouse; however, they shared a common goal. Looking to the future, Brewer commented, "My hope is that Morehouse can step into the space of the most progressive colleges in the nation. Morehouse can be a beacon of light. Morehouse can find a place for the LGBT community. Even the ones transitioning to the opposite gender…If a student comes to Morehouse as a man and plans to transition to a woman, yes, there should still be a space for that student. It may sound radical. But that's what Morehouse has always stood for—a radical change in the face of injustice…There's a motto at Morehouse it says, 'Above her son's head, Morehouse holds a crown which she challenges her students to grow tall enough to wear. As long as a person is holding to that ideal, it shouldn't matter how they identify."[169]

Like Saul Williams' public denouncement of the dress code policy in 2009, L'Heureux Lewis, a Sociology professor at City College and Morehouse alum, offered commentary on the media fallout from the article. Lewis emphasized that Black men are not homogenous: "We don't all think the same, we don't all dress the same, we don't wall want to say or talk the same." Lewis saw this

[169] King.

moment as an opportunity for Morehouse to consider the full spectrum of students who identify as male and of African descent and to continue to develop strong character. Lewis embraced the challenge to see how this conversation on gender expression at Morehouse could be a deeper contribution to the Morehouse legacy.[170]

In the years following, the conversation on sexuality began to bear fruit across the campus. In 2010, Morehouse held its first Gay Pride celebration. In 2013, the college offered its first course on Bayard Rustin and started a scholars program in honor of him. Rustin, a civil and human rights activist, was an instrumental organizer and strategist for the Civil Rights Movement but was unfortunately relegated to the shadows of leadership because of his sexuality. The advent of these new events, courses, and initiatives was indicative of changing campus culture and discourse that was willing to embrace the diversity of identity and break new ground to consider the complexity of sexuality.

Gender Identity Admissions and Matriculation Policy (2019)

At the Spring 2019 meeting, the Morehouse Board of Trustees formally approved a proposal to admit transgender students beginning in the Fall of 2020. The policy required all students to self-identify as men. If a student transitioned from a man to a woman during their matriculation, they would no longer be eligible to continue their studies at Morehouse. The change came as a response to the growing LGBT equality. By 2019, more than 1,000 colleges and universities across the nation had already adopted similar policies welcoming transgender students. Morehouse was the first of the nation's three all-male colleges to adopt a transgender policy, the other two being Wabash College in Indiana and Hampden-Sydney in Virginia. Morehouse's transgender policy was considered such a radical move given the long history of objections to LGBT rights in the Black community, especially

[170] "Is Morehouse Ready For The 'Mean Girls'?," *Tell Me More* (Washington, D.C.: NPR PP - Washington, D.C., October 21, 2010), http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/other-sources/is-morehouse-ready-mean-girls/docview/1016060378/se-2?accountid=10226.

in the historic Black church denominations. To date, none of the major Black denominations have openly affirmed same-sex marriage or same-gender loving unions. Morehouse President David Thomas noted that HBCUs founded after the Civil War with the help of religious organizations like the Baptists and Methodists were tethered to gender and sexual politics. While the history of private HBCUs and the Black Church are intertwined together, the college cannot be stifled by outdated and constrictive theology. Unlike Black Churches that have refused to affirm diverse gender expression, the college must lead society forward. Thomas states, "I can't speak to all HBCUs, but we know in Black Church there has been silence on this issue…I can imagine there may be people who would say, 'Why would you even raise this?' I say to those people, "we live in an era now where silence on these issues is actually not helpful."[171]

Although Morehouse took a courageous step forward in adopting the policy, it was not without opposition and further critique. Titi Naomi Tukes '17 disapproved of the policy because of its hostility and exclusion of transgender women and non-binary students: "The College fails at addressing and understanding the gender journey that one undergoes during their college experience, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and psychologically. [172]

LISTEN TO THE LAMBS: LOCKE'S COSMOPOLITAN FUTURE

At the beginning of this chapter, we explored W.E.B. DuBois' role as a provocateur of Black campus protests of the 1920s. DuBois' contribution to the development of Black education is undisputed. As a pioneering Black intellectual, he was a model for what many would deem "Black Excellence." He set the standard and ideal of what Black life ought to be. His intellectual ability and wide-ranging knowledge in arts and letters were a portrait for the 'Talented Tenth.' The Talented

[171] Errin Haines Whack, "Morehouse College to Admit Transgender Men Starting in 2020," *South Florida Times*, 2019, http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/morehouse-college-admit-transgender-men-starting/docview/2574810375/se-2?accountid=10226.
[172] Whack.

Tenth was DuBois' signature vision of the highest hopes of Black education—distinguished men who returned to their communities to lift the Black race as they sought to climb out of the pits of poverty and racial discrimination. Yet, for all his work in uplifting the race, DuBois' vision of the ideal was conservative and restrictive. Although he advocated for free expression for students at schools like Fisk during the 20s, his own politics were informed by his upbringing and experiences. While DuBois was a leading figure of the New Negro on campus, it is also true that movements are never defined by thinkers but by a cadre of voices that are motivated by the *zeitgeist*.

Alain Locke & The New Negro

Alain Locke was another voice whose work energized the New Negro Movement. As another pioneering Black philosopher, Locke was the chair of the Philosophy department at Howard University, a major contributor to the Committee on Adult Education, and a major voice of the Harlem Renaissance. Locke sought to make room for pluralism in a world straitjacketed by convention. His classic anthology, *The New Negro,* which sparked the Harlem Renaissance, pushed the boundaries of Black art by incorporating a wide range of voices across generations, styles, disciplines, and approaches. Locke strategically embraced the voices of "Negro Youth" like Claude McKay, whose work reflected the life he witnessed in Harlem rather than a depiction of the ideal. Locke and DuBois differed on the meaning and purpose of art. In fact, DuBois was vocally critical of the Renaissance in the immediate years following.

Philosopher Leonard Harris explores "The Great Debate" between DuBois and Locke by highlighting their varying positions on art and aesthetics. DuBois was part of a group of leaders in the 1920s who wanted to promote a "metanarrative of heroic uplift" that was shaped by values such as thrift, frugality, Christian piety, and Victorian sexual fidelity.[173] DuBois critiqued Locke and

[173] Leonard Harris, "The Great Debate: W.E.B. DuBois vs. Alain Locke on the Aesthetic," *Philosophia Africana* 7, no. 1 (2004): 22.

writers like Claude McKay because their work did not fit into this metanarrative that he believed would ultimately lift the race. Today, we would frame DuBois' position along the lines of Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's *Politics of Respectability*. Respectability politics reinforces a hierarchy between an individual deemed respectable and another as shameful. Behavior or identities that are deemed 'unworthy of respect' within a group are condemned and considered inferior compared to ideal, respectable behavior. Black respectability politics is used as an attempt to distance oneself from the seemingly shameful aspects of a culture. This played out in the language of the day: it was hoped that one would be a credit to the race. DuBois' metanarrative of heroic uplift was portrayed in the image of the Race Man—a male leader whose work sought to lift Blacks through social advancement. However, the Race Man image was limited to Black, Christian, heterosexual, cisgender, college-educated, and usually ivy-league e tableommen. This image was reflected in the social leaders of the next 100 years, such as DuBois, Adam Clayton Powell Sr., Adam Clayton Powell Jr, Martin Luther King Jr. Women like Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker, gay men like Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin, and non-binary individuals like Pauli Murray, Muslims like Malcolm X, and Baha'i followers like Alain Locke were pushed to the margins of society because they did not fit within the metanarrative.

Alain Locke's resistance to the myth of the whole, the parochialism of absolutism, certainty, and convention made room for those who did not fit neatly into the metanarrative. In many ways, Locke's work is a philosophical embodiment of James Weldon Johnson and Rosamond John's "Lift Every Voice and Sing," also known as the Black National Anthem. Locke's pluralist vision disrupted the metanarrative and created a Welcome Table for a chorus of diverse voices. In considering the role of disruption in historically Black education, Locke offers several thoughts and ideas to help us appreciate the contributions of resistance and protest in maintaining living traditions.

Moving Away from Convention

First, social protest movements like the three discussed in this chapter move the community away from convention and conformity and closer to liberated selfhood. Whether it was challenging Victorian sensibilities in the 20s, demanding Black representation in the curriculum, or challenging notions of masculinity at Morehouse, these movements unsettled the parameters of the metanarratives. As a Howard University professor in the early 1920s, Locke admonished his students in similar acts when he challenged them to be different. "Dare to be different—stand out! I know how difficult this advice will be to carry out: America's chief social crime, in spite of her boasted freedoms, is the psychology of the herd, the tyranny of the average and mediocre; in other words, the limitations upon cultural personality."[174] His was a philosophy grounded in a commitment to pluralism, the notion that we should hold our beliefs and values temperately in order to make room for new views that may be different from our own. Locke rejected absolutist thinking in exchange for pluralistic open-mindedness. "We can build not vital tolerance and mutual understanding," says Locke, "on such relics of absolutistic thinking. Pluralism cultivates a sympathetic and mutual understanding that keeps us open and welcoming of views and expressions other than our own." Locke's aesthetic pluralism opens space to acknowledge the humanity and dignity of all people. Pluralism unhinges the fixed forms and makes room for new voices. It is noteworthy that Locke's pluralism represents a departure from the narrow-mindedness of the metanarrative that failed to recognize the intricacies of individual experiences and diverse narratives.

Moving Toward the Future

Secondly, resistance toward the future is another common element in these three student-led social protest movements. Traditions are often shaped and identified by their past. MacIntyre reminds us that many traditions die because of a lack of relevant engagement. Two movements mark

[174] Alain Locke, "The Ethics of Culture," in *The Works of Alain Locke*, n.d., 438.

Locke's philosophy: moving away from convention and *toward* the future. Locke invites us to embrace *unpredictable imagination* and *unimagined possibilities*. Locke was driven by a cosmopolitan ideal, an idea ahead of its time. As an openly gay man in the 1920s, Locke did not fit into the metanarrative of racial uplift. Yet, with every subsequent movement, the circle widens to include those previously marginalized. His ideal lives on in the recent Black Lives Matter Movement that emerged in August 2012 following the death of Trayvon Martin. The three co-creators of the hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, were all women, and two identified as queer women. People took to the streets protesting racial violence against Black men and boys, they also made space to remember women, girls, and trans folk killed by police officers. The Black Lives Matter mantra challenged folks to understand that we can never cherry-pick which lives matter. Locke's ideal is evident in this forward march toward a more cosmopolitan and just future. As the movement took to the streets, the names of Black LGBT elders long relegated to the shadows of history also came to the forefront. Pauli Murray, Bayard Rustin, Alain Locke, James Baldwin, and many whose wisdom, gifts, and contributions loom large in documentaries, new editions, and public art.

IV. I'm Building Me a Home: On Rites of Passage

The Nineties, The Nihilistic Threat & Afrocentric Rites of Passage at Morehouse

Figure 9: New Student Orientation 2012

I'm building me a home
This earthly house is gonna soon decay
And my soul's gotta have somewhere to stay
—Uzee Brown, "I'm Building Me A Home
Recorded by *the Morehouse College Glee Club*

"There's been an attack on young Black males."
—Spike Lee, *The Morehouse Man* (PBS)

"Education is the means by which society shapes itself in the direction it wants to move."
—John Dewey[175]

In the previous chapter, I advocated for a re-reading of the 1969 Trustee Lock-In that reconsiders the contributions of student activism to keeping historically Black education alive and relevant. The health of tradition is primarily determined by its ability to address the needs of the

[175] Linda Nowell, "Education as Meaning-Making and the Development of Critical Thinking," *Analytic Teaching* 15, no. 2 (n.d.): 19–24, https://journal.viterbo.edu/index.php/at/article/view/619/406.

present age. In a similar vein, this chapter explores *creative resistance* as another expression of student agency that leads to ensouling experiences in Black education. As the Civil Rights Era of the 1950s and 60s gave way to the Black Power and Black Arts movements of the late 60s and 70s, racial consciousness among Black Americans did not decline but expanded to a great consideration of the contributions of Africa. Harding and the Institute of the Black World envisioned African Americans building relationships and networks with communities in Africa, a relationship long severed by the disruptive history of the Atlantic Slave Trade.[176] As millions of Africans were snatched from the villages of Africa, cultures, families, religions, and languages were disrupted, and the concept of *home* was lost. Through the Middle Passage and upon arrival in the United States, enslaved Africans learned to communicate across language and cultural barriers to create a sense of home in a strange land. There have been several cultural and social movements to encourage either a return to Africa or a greater awareness of the linkages between Blacks in the Diaspora and the Continent. Reaching as far back as abolitionists like Paul Cuffe, and leaders such as Martin Delaney and Marcus Garvey, there has been the call to return *home* to Africa. However, there were many who refused to return to Africa but instead sought to imagine ways to live in the suspension of the hyphen as being both *African* and *American* amid racial animosity that claimed their space as American citizens while looking back to Africa for spiritual, cultural, and intellectual resources. It is in this warring—what DuBois refers to as *double-consciousness*—that African Americans have created a home.

Chapter Methodology & Purpose

This chapter will explore *rites of passage* as another element of ensouling education by examining the ways the Nile Valley Conference and the Afrocentric Movement equipped and inspired students in the early 1990s to create a much-needed rite-of-passage experience for incoming students and their

[176] White, Rodney, and White, "Audacious Visions : The Intellectual-Activist Legacies of W . E . B . DuBois , the Institute of the Black World , and Walter Rodney Audacious Visions :"

families. Drawing on voices in philosophy of education, Afrocentric theatre, ritual studies, and psychology, this study highlights the power of rites of passage experiences to provide those most at risk of being lost with a healthy sense of meaning, hope, and joy. This case study highlights the creative agency of a generation of Morehouse students who drew on their own education to transform 'Freshmen Week' into an ensouling experience for the generations following.

This case study is organized in three movements: The first section will examine the nihilistic threat of the 1990s, pinpointing the ontological pressure points that affected students during this period. The second section traces the birth of the Afrocentric Movement in the United States with emphasis on the 1984 Nile Valley Conference at Morehouse as its starting point. The final section will show how the need for meaning and the resources of Afrocentrism led to the rebirth of NSO as an ensouling experience in Black education.

This chapter is particularly helpful as we continue to conceptualize a philosophy of historically Black education because it demonstrates the pragmatic dimensions of education in three ways. (1) First, it shows how students of the 90s resisted the abyss of nihilism and despair by engaging in *meaning-making education*. They responded to the existential crisis of their day, like so many generations of students before—head on; they addressed threat without succumbing to despair. (2) Secondly, this study also demonstrates the role of *place-based grounding* in historically Black education. The physical grounds of black campuses serve a key function in providing dedicated space for preserving history through sites of memory, as well as creating liberatory space to dream and imagine. The Morehouse campus provided a 'home' or a hosting site for conferences, monuments, and rituals that may have never existed without a dedicated space. (3) Thirdly, this study highlights the promise of rituals that empower students, families, and communities with an ensouling education grounded in meaning, hope, love, and joy.

It is my hope that this work will help to shift how we understand the meaning and value of historically Black education in the American academy. HBCUs have often been underfunded and underappreciated as second-class institutions to majority-serving colleges and universities. Some still question its relevance and purpose post-segregation. While HBCUs continue to beat the odds by producing successful graduates in every field of endeavor, I hope to show that the value of historically black colleges should not be measured by performance according to typical quantitative metrics. Since their inception, HBCUs have provided the liberatory space for generations of students to imagine way over the abyss by providing a truer-to-life outlook through ensouling experiences like the New Student Orientation at Morehouse College.

The Nineties

By the 1980s, a small group of African scholars was engaging in what Jacob Carruthers called intellectual warfare by producing scholarship that highlighted Africa's contribution to human civilization in math, science, philosophy, religion, and more. The first major conference for African-centered intellectuals was held at Morehouse College in September 1984. The Nile Valley Conference, organized by the Dean of the Chapel, Lawrence Edward Carter, left an indelible impression on the College that reshaped the physical landscape and laid the groundwork for the Afrocentric Movement of the 1990s. As African-centered intellectuals corrected centuries of miseducation about Africa's contributions to the world, these new discoveries from ages past became a new source of pride for the diaspora. In essence, the Nile Valley Conference and the subsequent Afrocentric Movement of the 90s offer another example of Sankofan education—looking back to make sense of the present while moving forward.

A generation of poets, artists, movie producers, and community directors used their imagination to find meaning, build community, and create new expressions of identity by connecting their work to the rich heritage of Africa. The Afrocentric movement found its way into Nineties

fashion filled with Kente cloth from Ghana, mud cloth for Mali, along with kufis and dashikis; Hip-Hop edutainment (a mixture of education and entertainment) with groups like X-Clan, and the rise of the Rites of Passage community-based programs. Yet, amid the growing Afrocentric movement, African Americans were painfully reminded of the legacy of racial injustice after an 81-second videotape captured the beating of Rodney King, a Black man, by four white police officers in Los Angeles, California.

Nihilism in Black America in the 1990s

The future of Black America at the beginning of the 1990s was bleak. With the Civil Rights Movement now 20 years behind, the rising rates of drug use, unemployment, infant mortality, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, and violence were all indications that things could only get worse. The existential angst of the late 80s and early 90s was not confined to that period, of course, but it speaks to the underside of a community that was historically marginalized and fighting against the vestiges of poverty and inequality. Social commentators attributed the decline in Black America to the personal choices and behavior of the poor, who were admonished to work harder and be more responsible. However, few went as far as to acknowledge poverty and rising inequality as the cause of social decay. Behavior and personal choices were not the cause of decay but the result thereof.

No one, perhaps, spoke out as boldly against the social causes of the existential crisis in Black America as Cornel West. In 1993, West published an essay titled "Nihilism in Black America" in *Race Matters,* a popular text of the time, where he argues that the heightened presence of violence and drug abuse in Black communities came as a result of *the nihilistic threat.* He defines nihilism as "the profound sense of depression, worthlessness, and social despair caused by the unprecedented collapse of meaning, and the incredible disregard for human (especially Black) life and property…" The landscape of Black urban centers in the late 80s and 90s was largely categorized by the crack and HIV/AIDS epidemic, when thousands of teenagers and young adults succumbed to premature

death. The constant trauma of death weighed on families and communities who lost a sense of meaning, hope, and love, which eventually gave way to violent forms of self-violence and neglect. West writes, "If we delve…into the murky waters of dread and despair that now flood the streets," we find many whose lived experiences are one of "horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and lovelessness.[177]

Campus Unrest: Rodney King Acquittal (Spring 1992)

In addition to the rising death rates due to crack and HIV/AIDS, Black America still faced the threat of death at the hands of police officers. This was evident in the Spring of 1922 when four cops accused of beating Rodney King in Los Angeles, California, were acquitted. On Wednesday, April 29, 1992, an all-white jury in neighboring Ventura County, California, found the officers not guilty of assault with a weapon, excessive use of force as a police officer, filing a false report, and acting as an accessory after the fact.[178] The acquittal was a brutal blow to the community. The Atlanta University Center (AUC) erupted in rage as students held demonstrations on campus and in Downtown Atlanta, which led to confrontations with Atlanta Police officers. In the wake of the verdict, public figures expressed their outrage and disappointment with the justice system. *The Maroon Tiger* quoted LA mayor Tom Brady stating, "Today, this jury told the world [that] that was we saw with our eyes wasn't a crime. Today, the jury asked us to accept the senseless and brutal beating of a helpless man. Today, the system failed us." The student protest near the neighboring Clark Atlanta University campus became a vicious battle with the Atlanta Police Department, in which two cars were overturned, one burned, and the Clark Atlanta/Morris Brown bookstore and a Korean-owned liquor and grocery store were looted.[179]

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[177] West, "Nihilism in Black America," 12–15.
[178] "Cops Who Beat Rodney King Acquitted: Nation, AU Center React in Firestorm Protest," *The Maroon Tiger*, May 15, 1992.
[179] "Cops Who Beat Rodney King Acquitted: Nation, AU Center React in Firestorm Protest."

Black Men Searching for Meaning, Belonging & Identity

The acquittal was one more element contributing to the growing angst among Black America, especially Black men. What happened in Los Angeles reverberated across the country to cities like Atlanta, where local instances of police brutality came to the forefront. The existential blow came from the attack as much as the acquittal, which was just the most recent reminder of the nation's legacy of state-sanctioned violence and the inability to protect the rights of Black folk. The student body of Morehouse experienced the same angst of Black men across the country in search of security and safety of home in a 'strange land.' Students were searching for that *something*; a higher power—meaning, purpose, self-esteem, discipline, confidence. There were several tributaries that helped students in their search for meaning and purpose. One of the major voices that helped African American men find meaning and hope was Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam.

Farrakhan became a leading voice in a national movement empowering Black Men with a healthy sense of purpose, power, and identity. Farrakhan's influence was most evident at the Million Man March in October of 1995, where more than a million Black men gathered in Washington, D.C. "to atone for their failure as men and to accept responsibility as the family head." Black men traveled in busses from across the country and stood for more than 10 hours on the Washington Mall, "sharing, learning, listening, fasting, hugging, crying, laughing, and praying." The gathering created a spirit of brotherhood and love among men across religions, creeds, socioeconomic classes, and all walks of life. The march changed the lives of many Black men who returned to their families and communities with a new sense of responsibility; some would go on to start businesses and community organizations. Although I was only five years old at the time, I remember the night my father left home to travel with the Eldad Medad Men's Ministry of the St. Paul Community Baptist Church in East New York in Brooklyn. Among the hundreds of men who left that night, several

returned from the march motivated to found the Mo Better Jaguars, a youth football league in Brownsville, Brooklyn. My father was among the many men inspired to give back by dedicated years as a coach.

Although Farrakhan had accomplished a great feat for Black men, he was considered a controversial personality. *The Morehouse Men* documentary captures a scene where students are gathered in front of King Chapel, protesting the administration's ban prohibiting Farrakhan from speaking on campus. Students argued that this was the most recent example of white philanthropists maintaining control over Black colleges. With politics notwithstanding, the breach between students rallying for Farrakhan and the administration's ban unveiled a louder cry—the spiritual lives of Black students searching for meaning and hope amid nihilism and despair. Although Farrakhan was banned from speaking at the College, his messages on the importance of self-esteem, spiritual discipline, community, and family responsibility took over the campus giving rise to a new culture that empowered students who saw education as a journey of self-transformation and the toolbox for creating the world they wished to see.

Afrocentric Education at Morehouse

As aforementioned, there were many tributaries that led to the increased focus on the existential needs of Black male students in the nineties. It would be unfair to attribute the cause to one leader or movement. It was more so a fusion of energies—from the rage against police brutality and the spiritual disciplines of the Nation's teaching to the creativity of Hip-Hop. Student-led campus newspapers, like Morehouse College's *Maroon Tiger,* offer a moving timeline of cultural revolutions over time. While reviewing the *Maroon Tiger* digital collection from 1917-2012, I noticed that a new cultural phenomenon around African identity and rituals began in the middle 1980s thru the 90s. I paid close attention to campus events, editorials, entertainment features, and advertisements to get a sense of the cultural Sitz Im Leben. It is from this research that I argue that

between 1984 and the mid-1990s, there was a cultural movement that created a new chapter in historically Black education—The Age of Afrocentricity. This cultural revolution, perhaps, was the offspring of the seeds planted 16 years ago by the student activists in Harkness Hall, demanding increased Black representation at the College. The earliest hint of the Age of Afrocentricity was the Nile Valley Conference held at Morehouse in September 1984.

The Nile Valley Conference at Morehouse

The Nile Valley Conference of 1984 signified a new chapter in the College's history. Up until 1981, the College could not host large gatherings of this size because of limited seating in Sale Hall Chapel. Twelve years after Dr. King's assassination, the campus was expanded to include the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel—a 2,501-seat auditorium that was built as a living memorial in honor of the College's most distinguished alumnus. With space to hold significant meetings and events, Morehouse hosted the Nile Valley Conference on Wednesday-Sunday, September 26-30. The conference was dedicated to the life and work of Benjamin Elijah Mays and in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of Sale Hall Chapel by John Hope in 1910. The purpose of the conference to was to shed light on the rich contributions of Ancient Africa, especially Egypt, and Ethiopia, to human civilization in every field of endeavor. Given the long history of attacks on Africa, this initial gathering of African-centered scholars lifted unearthed the hidden brilliance of the continent and gave the Diaspora a new sense of pride and heritage. In a recap of the conference, student writers reporting the *Maroon Tiger* recorded this comment from Ivan Van Sertima, which highlights the significance of the meeting:

> Within the last decade alone, evidence has been unearthed in the fields of agricultural and pastoral science, architecture, aeronautics, engineering, mathematics, mining, metallurgy and medicine, navigation, and physics, that has made the whole ground upon which conventional studies of Africa have been built rock violently with the shock of astonishing discoveries.

> These are astonishing only because the nerve of the world has been deadened for centuries to the vibrations of African genius.[180]

The conference was one of the vehicles that reawakened the world to "African genius." Students were introduced (many for the first time) to Ancient Africa's influence on Christianity, philosophy, as well as education.

Not only was it significant that the conference took place, but the location as well. This, again, speaks to the importance of *place* in historically black education, the space that HBCUs provide for folks to gather, think, and imagine as a community. In his introduction to the volume, from the proceedings of the Nile Valley Conference, Ivan Van Sertima writes:

> What happened in Atlanta must rank as one of the turning points in the great struggle to revise the early history of the world in general and the history of Africa's classical civilizations in particular. It is the first conference on African history that drew as many as two thousand five hundred people to one of its sessions, witness to a new and profound interest in Africa's past, a new and profound effort to illuminate the dark and forgotten rooms in which the mummies of our ancestors lie.[181]

The campus and the city of Atlanta held great significance for the conference, given its history as the epicenter of Southern Black political power and economic mobility. In the 1980s, Atlanta was positioned as the Black capital of the South for transportation, finance, and media; the home of the largest concentration of Black students and scholars in private institutions anywhere in the world, as well as its place in political and cultural developments of African American people.[182] It was not lost on Mayor Andrew Young that the conference took place in Atlanta "as a continuation of a hallowed tradition." In addition to the location, the nature of the gathering of African scholars in a public setting was monumental. Dean Carter writes, "It is generally felt that the conference was on the same

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[180] Oscar Jerkins and Emanuel McGirt, "African Civilization Comes to Morehouse," *The Maroon Tiger*, October 25, 1984, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1984_003.pdf.
[181] Ivan Van Sertima, ed., *Nile Valley Civilizations: Proceedings of the Nile Valley Conference, Atlanta, September 26-30, 1984* (Atlanta, GA: Journal of African Civilizations, Ltd., Inc., 1989), 16.
[182] Charles S. Finch, "The Nile Valley Conference: New Light on Kemetic Studies," in *Nile Valley Civilizations*, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (Atlanta, GA: Journal of African Civilizations, Ltd., Inc., 1989).

historical continuum as the Niagara Conference, the first Black Power Conference in its significance for African American people."[183]

Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop was the scheduled keynote speaker but was not able to attend. Later that academic year, in April 1985, Diop made his first pilgrimage to the United States as a guest and honoree of Morehouse College, which awarded him an honorary degree at the time of his visit.[184] This was Dr. Diop's first contact with the Black community in the United States. He considered his visit a 'pilgrimage' to reunite with his family of the diaspora. In a 1985 interview with scholar Charles S. Finch, he stated:

> I was very much impressed by my contact with the Black American community and with Americans in general. I discovered many things of which I was totally ignorant. As I said in the United States, I feel very strongly that this was a sort of pilgrimage for me. I think of all thinking Africans who go to America are, in one way or another, on a pilgrimage. I said before I left that I was going to find half of my family in America. It was just that. We are beginning to feel in a most vital way this biological kinship which ties us to America, the umbilical cord has not been cut. And this is very important. These relations must become much closer in the future. I believe that all of what lies in our common future is in this perspective. America is uniquely brought close to Africa by historical ties. I was especially aware of this on American soil.[185]

Diop dedicated his scholarly career to unearthing Ancient Egypt's contributions to human civilization to restore the historical awareness of the African peoples and African Americans. This restoration was particularly focused on Egypt as the first manifestation of culture in Africa. Through historical research, Diop sought to correct centuries of miseducation about Egypt's lack of intellectual heritage by providing evidence of its intellectual accomplishments. He states:

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[183] Lawrence Edward Carter, "African Civilizations as Cornerstone for the Oikoumene and the Pulpit," *The Maroon Tiger*, January 31, 1985, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1985_002.pdf.
[184] Jerkins and McGirt, "African Civilization Comes to Morehouse"; "Morehouse To Host Nile Valley Conference September 26-30," *Atlanta Daily World (1932-)*, July 29, 1984, https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/morehouse-host-nile-valley-conference-september/docview/491618272/se-2?accountid=10226; Oscar Jenkins, "Nile Valley Conference Focuses on Ancient African Civilizations," *The Maroon Tiger*, September 26, 1984; Charles S. Finch and Cheikah Anta Diop, "Interview With Cheikh Anta Diop," *Présence Africaine* 149–150, no. 1 (1989): 361, https://doi.org/10.3917/presa.149.0361.
[185] Finch and Diop, "Interview With Cheikh Anta Diop," 362.

> The historic consciousness of African peoples has dimmed, and we have become progressively an amnesic people, cut off from our history. We must restore the historical awareness of African peoples and Afro-Americans and this restoration will come through a knowledge of Egyptian history which is the first manifestation of culture in Africa. The first African experience was that of Egypt. That is why, if we are to return to the source culturally, it must be at the foundation of our humanities. We must teach it systematically and show *all* that our people contributed to other peoples of the world before passing the torch.[186]

Diop's 1985 pilgrimage to the United States, at the invitation of Morehouse, marked the budding of a new generation's interest in strengthening the sites between Black America and the continent. There was a longing on the part of Black Americans to return 'home' to the cultures and traditions that were lost long ago during the Middle Passage.

Hilliard & The Use of History in Black Education & Culture

The interdisciplinary focus of the conference opened new dialogues in various fields—from science to religion—but the most consequential arena was, perhaps, in education and culture. Students, faculty, and community stakeholders began turning to Africa's rich history of education for helpful models for addressing the needs of Black children and adolescents coming of age in the United States. The work of Afrocentric psychologists Asa Hilliard III and Na'im Akbar was particularly helpful in breaking new ground in the study of Black education. Inspired by works such as George G.M. James' *Stolen Legacy*, Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*, and Chancellor Williams' *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, Hilliard created a philosophy of education that put the findings of archaeologists and historians to relevant use for those who needed it most. Much of this work was grounded in the urgent desire to preserve and reclaim a history at risk of being destroyed. In his 1992 essay, "The Meaning of KMT History," Hilliard reiterates the significance of history as a source of power for historically marginalized communities and cultural destruction as a tool of domination. He writes:

[186] Finch and Diop, 368.

> All wars of conquest ultimately are cultural wars. Conquerors must erase the memory of conquered people. They prevent the practice of indigenous culture. They change names of conquered peoples and places. They destroy or stigmatize the symbols of conquered people. As Fanon has observed, these actions are not accidental. They are the outcome of careful study of human group dynamics. Successful conquerors know that history and culture is the jugular vein and Achilles' tendon of a people.[187]

Nowhere do we find evidence of the attempt to destroy, erase, rename, and stigmatize history and culture as much as the attempt to pull Egypt away from Africa. "Unfortunately, even in the 1980s," Hilliard writes, "it is necessary to deal with the fact that supposedly enlightened people are hardly aware of the physical presence of KMT on the African continent...Many people see KMT as alien to the rest of Africa"[188] The Nile Valley Conference was part of an intellectual movement that refuted such notions and sought to historically bind Egypt with East Africa. The reunification of Egypt with Africa was also an important step in helping African Americans and Africans of the diaspora build a connection to the continent.

Hilliard provides a helpful framework for translating the scholarship on Ancient Kemet into a relevant and useful pedagogy for African Americans. While conquerors must destroy history and culture in order to subjugate a people, it is also true that "history and culture are ongoing processes that arise in any group's struggle to survive."[189] Hilliard suggests that Kemetic history can be useful in helping African American communities continue to struggle toward freedom in five ways. (1) First, Kemetic history can provide *paths of truth that guide the mental and spiritual life* of individuals and institutions. There is evidence of Kemetic traditions in the institutional life of churches as well as Masonic life. (2) Secondly, Kemetic history is *the foundation for group unity and identity.* This shared culture creates group cohesion, the prerequisite to effective action. (3) Kemetic history *provides the*

[187] Hilliard III, "The Meaning of KMT (Ancient Egyptian) History for Contemporary African American Experience," 15.
[188] Hilliard III, 16.
[189] Hilliard III, 212–13.

foundation for independent visions toward freedom, thus empowering communities to resist organized, systematic domination. (4) Fourthly, Kemetic history provides *a clear sense of identity, purpose, and direction* to maintain freedom. (5) Fifth and finally, *history provides the material for building the future*. Unlike nostalgia, history does not stifle creative engagement in the present nor neglects the future, but it utilizes new technologies to create a better, more hopeful future. In the words of Hilliard, "The past contains the seeds for the future."[190]

Hilliard's framework on the relevant and practical use of history in education was complimented by the work of Na'im Akbar, a clinical psychologist, who argued that the humanity of Black Americans could only be reaffirmed by turning back to Africa's ancestry and history. By the early 1990s, Akbar was teaching at Morehouse and was frequently asked to speak at large gatherings, including New Student Orientation. Akbar inspired a wave of interest in rites of pilgrimage as a tool of identity and cultural formation.

Campus Culture in the Age of Afrocentricity

The 1984 Nile Valley Conference at Morehouse College set off a new cultural phenomenon that started at Morehouse but reverberated across the country. As the first gathering of its kind, students and faculty—inspired by the likes of Diop, Hilliard, and Akbar—began translating what they learned in creative ways to inspire a new generation. What took place in King Chapel gave rise to the Age of Afrocentricity—a cultural revolution that turned Black America's attention to Africa as a source of inspiration in the search of meaning, hope, and community. A generation of poets, artists, and creatives infused African history and culture in their work to invoke a new spirit of pride and consciousness across the diaspora.

[190] Hilliard III, 20–21.

By 1988, Spike Lee's classic *School Daze* introduced to the world the rich Black College campus life in the fictional depiction of Mission College. Lee tapped into his college days issues of race, class, and colorism, among several socially-conscious subjects of the day. The January 1988 *Maroon Tiger* review of School Daze states, "The film is about romance and relationships, rituals and rivalries; it's about rites of passage and coming of age during one unforgettable weekend at fictional Mission College in the South."[191] It is worth noting that the student reporter refers to *rituals, rites of passage,* and *coming of age* when describing the movie's message, which is further evidence that rituals and rites of passage were a part of the campus lingo of the day. The movie, though a fictional depiction, was filmed on Morehouse's Century Campus and reflected the school's culture and tradition.

The Age of Afrocentricity was also evident in the music of socially-conscious groups like X-Clan, a New York-based rap group that merged the rhythms of Hip Hop with "a powerful Afrocentric theme," which served as a cursory history lesson for their listeners. In the April 1991 issue of the *Maroon Tiger*, Ogbonna Ogumba (Jeffrey A. Green) published an analysis of the group's


Photo by Andre Bertrand

music that focused on topics related to Kemetic history and philosophy in relation to current political events. X-Clan's catalog included songs that explained the Kemetic process of death and rebirth, as well as honoring those "killed in the struggle to liberate African people, including Malcolm X, Patrice Lumumba, Martin Luther King Jr., Nat Turner…Huey Newton, Yusef Hawkins, Jesus, and the Kemetic deity

[191] "Meet Spike Lee," *The Maroon Tiger*, January 1, 1988, 6, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1988_001.pdf.

Osar (Osirus). X-Clan offered political commentary that promoted Black Nationalism that boldly fought back against Eurocentric history.[192]

As X-Clan was playing through the stereos of the campus, Psychologist Na'im Akbar spoke to a packed King Chapel, although he was one of the most controversial faculty members. Akbar was a controversial figure in the early 90s because of his vocal and unapologetic critique that pushed back against Western psychology which was inadequate for addressing the psychological damage as a result of systemic racism and the legacy of slavery. On March 21, 1991, Akbar lectured on "Restoration of the African Self," where he emphasized the importance of self-affirmation and self-sufficiency among African Americans, the need to create a balance between Afrocentricity and Eurocentric perspectives, and he discouraged the spirit of competition among Black organizations. Akbar continuously emphasized that a person's humanity can be restored through a healthy sense of self, which was destroyed in 400 years of slavery.

Later that year, Akbar offered another address during Freshmen Week on August 20, 1991, where he focused on the importance of rituals and rites of passage in reclaiming humanity and identity for Black men. According to a substantive summary of the lecture by John D. Smith, Akbar emphasizes the role of the African rite of passage as a sacred event that moves a boy into manhood. These customary traditions serve as guides moving the young to their eventual goal, symbolizing advancement in lineage from one point to another. Akbar began his address by invoking the African ancestral spirits to serve as guides for the men and women in the audience. He stressed the need for a new definition of self for Black people, one not built on the premise of crime and destruction. Akbar emphasized the importance of intellectual power and a holistic approach to education. John D. Smith, a student writer for *The Maroon Tiger*, captured three tenets Akbar shared with students:

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[192] Ogbonna Ogumba, "They Have Come: X-Clan Professors of African History," *The Maroon Tiger*, April 2, 1991.

"(1) Teach yourself, (2) work on your attitude, and (3) commit yourself to service." Smith closes with this line from Akbar's address: "We are all on a plantation. Head for the North country (a place of mental liberation) and set yourself free."[193]At the close of the lecture, Akbar led the incoming class of 1995 in an honorary march from boyhood to manhood to mark the beginning of their journey from home to Morehouse College.

In April 1997, *The Maroon Tiger* published a special issue on the theme "African American Self-Sufficiency." The issue featured essays and commentaries highlighting the work of student groups creatively fostering empowerment through skills training, rites of passage programs for youth, and community development. The special issue captures the ethos of the college generation committed to moving beyond the rhetoric of dissatisfaction and complaining to build and create new possibilities. Editor-in-chief Ndugu Bamuthi writes in his introduction:

> "Instead of spouting rhetoric about tearing America down, it might be wise to initiate the building process from within our communities. In essence, call this *Maroon* a journalistic crash course in the concept of African American self-sufficiency, the precept which initially inspired us to create this supplement…. It is a forum to force the reader to ask what YOU have contributed to the upliftment of your people. It is a place to end the monotony of complaining about trifling Negroes, so that we might focus instead on the people, organizations, theories, and strategies for building a stronger African America."[194]

The work of Hilliard and Akbar, along with the examples of artists like Spike Lee and X-Clan, and the spiritual message of Louis Farrakhan, a generation of Morehouse students came together and put their education to work in imaginative ways to create a new experience—The New Student Orientation. This next session will explore the ways students modeled Hilliard's framework for using history in using ways in their re-invention of the New Student Orientation as a ritualized experience.

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[193] John D. Smith, "Speak, Brother, Speak," *The Maroon Tiger1*, September 24, 1991, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1991_004.pdf.
[194] Ndugu (Marc Joseph) Bamuthi, "Self-Sufficiency: Beyond the Cover," *Maroon Tiger*, April 1997, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1997_003.pdf.

NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION (NSO) AT MOREHOUSE

New Student Orientation (NSO) Morehouse College is one of the hallmark moments of the Morehouse College Experience. The week-long celebration comprised of rituals, ceremonies, and pomp and circumstance was primarily left as a surprise to incoming students and their families, and a secret to the world, until Samuel G. Freedman's *New York Times* article on the "Morehouse Gospel" published in August 2015. Freedman, a veteran journalist in religion and Black institutional life, offers an inside look at Morehouse's Parents' Parting Ceremony by providing snapshots of various aspects of the ceremony, including the artifacts, rituals, and preaching that create a deeply transformative experience. The Parent Parting Ceremony was created in 1996, during a period when young Black men were in search of much-needed meaning and purpose. As administrators began studying African rites of passage, students and faculty began creating ritualized experiences using what they had in hand to create meaning, including artifacts, sites of memory, practices from Afrocentric theatre and the Black Church, and rituals from Black fraternity life. The New Student Orientation at Morehouse offers an insightful case study of the pragmatic dimensions of historically Black education, particularly the work of curating ensouling experiences through the use of history, space, and imagination.

Over the past 30 years, the New Student Orientation (NSO) at Morehouse has become one of the most memorable experiences for students. The Orientation developed into a transformative rite-of-passage experience for incoming students and their families because of the social and cultural movements of the 1980s. Amid the ontological anxiety of the 90s, the campus community was inspired to imagine ways to chart a new course for Black men coming of age. Faculty members like Lawrence Edward Carter, the Dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel, spearheaded the campaign to build a massive Egyptian statue in honor of Howard Thurman '23, the world-renowned theologian whose 1936 trip to India marked the connection between the fight for human

rights in India with the struggle for Civil Rights in the United States. Professors like Na'im Akbar in Psychology lectured on the importance of affirmation and rites of passage in the Black Man's search for identity and purpose. Between a changing campus landscape, African-centered education, and the socially conscious Hip-Hop phenomenon, students were using their education pragmatically to create a new experience for incoming students. NSO offers a vivid portrait of the pragmatic dimensions of historically black education, namely the ability to respond to social problems in creative and hopeful ways by using the tools and knowledge at hand to chart a new course. This ritual case study examines the work of *imagination* at play to transform a basic orientation into a transformative rite-of-passage for young Black men coming of age at a historically Black college.

Every summer in the middle of August, the newest members of the Morehouse begin arriving with parents and extended family ready to settle into their new home for the next four years. Like a standard orientation, the schedule of events is designed to acclimate first-year students into the life of the college with informational sessions on topics including course registration, financial aid, placement exams, and counseling resources. As the sun goes down in the evening, the campus is transformed into an enchanted village that resembles the rich traditions of West Africa, the spirituality of the Black Church, and the high culture of Europe's academic ceremony. Faculty members officiate ceremonies as upper-class students serve as elders who support and guide initiates through a week-long process. NSO comprises several ceremonies and rituals open to the public, while others are reserved for students only. The most recent schedule provides a sense of the movements of the week:

Day 1	6:35 PM -6:45 PM	**The New Student Gathering**
		Student Procession on Brown Street
	7:30 PM – 9:00 PM	**"Welcome to the House"**
		Parents and Students

Day 2	7:00 PM – 7:30 PM	**The New Student Gathering**
		Student Procession on Brown Street
	7:30-9:30 PM	**Parent Parting Ceremony**
		The end of the Parents' Orientation Program
Day 3	5:00 AM – 6:30 AM	**"For Whom the Bell Tolls"**
	6:15 PM – 10:00 PM	**Operation Olive Branch**
Day 4	9:00 PM – 10:30 PM	**Spirit Night**

While the NSO schedule has changed to meet new demands, the signature events have become a part of the school's traditions. The ritual analysis will focus on the five (5) staple programs of the week: (1) Welcome to the House, (2) Parent Parting Ceremony, (3) "For Whom the Bell Tolls," (4) Operation Olive Branch, (5) and Spirit Night. As we consider the role of rituals in providing an ensouling experience, this study highlights three ritual functions of NSO: *Celebration*, *Orientation*, and *Initiation*. These three elements will be helpful as we continue to build a conceptual understanding of the philosophy of historically black education.

Welcome to the House

Figure 10: The New Student Gathering on Brown Street, NSO 2012

The first night features the opening ceremony, "Welcome to the House," the student-led production that marks the official beginning of the journey through Morehouse. The joy and pride radiating from the audience as their sons process into the chapel with their iniscent of a Sunday morning service at a Black church, with exuberant call and response bouncing back in forth between the students and the

audience. The ceremony begins with an opening prayer that sets the tone for the evening by evoking the spirit of God and the ancestors. At the 2008 Welcome to House, Tamarkus Cook '09 sets the tone of the room by creating a moment of anticipatory silence that calls the audience, especially the incoming students, to acknowledge the weight of the moment. He states:

> This time last year, there was someone sitting in the very seats you occupy who is no longer with us. This time last year, there was someone standing on the outside of this chapel who is no longer sitting here. Before we invoke the presence of God in this place, let us bow our heads in a moment of silence.

Cook, a native of Newnan, Georgia, ends by sharing a personal memory of a childhood friend who shared the dream of attending Morehouse but passed away prematurely. He goes on to say:

> As I go back to my seat, God, I would be remised if I didn't let these brothers know the severity of where they sit. There was a young man who went to high school with me. We both said we would be here today, but Father, you found it necessary to take him away from this earth. ["Think about it"] But it's alright, God, because I'm going to stand in those shoes for him, and I hope that each and every one of the individuals standing in this room will as well.

After the frustration and weariness of traveling and unpacking, the prayer provides a moment to clear the mind and catch one's breath.

Following the prayer, the ceremony begins with opening remarks from Dr. Anne Wimbush Watts as she takes the stage. Dr. Watts is a longtime faculty staple and is affectionately called "Mother Morehouse." Dr. Watts introduces the program with a statement of purpose:

> One of the hallmarks of this great institution is its emphasis on student leadership. You will be pleased to know that tonight's program was designed, developed, and executed by Morehouse students, some whom were freshmen only a year or two ago, and many of them were sitting out there where you are sitting tonight. As you view this magnificent presentation, you will become more passionately and more acutely aware of what it means to be a part of this great institution. So now, ladies and gentlemen, witness The Birth!

The student production begins with a dance presentation inspired by Alvin Ailey's signature, *Revelation,* followed by a performance of African dance accompanied by a troop of ceremonial African drummers. The African drummers are a staple in the ritual life of the college, leading the student into the College their first year, and will lead them out into the world at commencement in four years. A classic dramatization of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 follows the musical performance: "To everything, there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Students take turns reading verses from the Biblical text and break out into a rhythmic litany of the names of prominent Morehouse alumni and their class years. The cadence picks up gradually as the students choreographically pace across, the stage coming to an abrupt climax with "Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Class of 1948!"

Figure 11: African Dance performance, NSO 2012

The ceremony continues with several creative performances that bring the College's history to life through preaching and music. Another signature moment in *Welcome to the House* is a dramatic procession of students carrying bricks spraypainted with the school's initials, "MC," with a recording of Uzee Brown's spiritual "I'm Building Me a Home" performed by Morehouse Glee Club playing in the background:

> *I'm building me a home*
> *This early house is gonna soon decay*
> *And my soul's gotta have*
> *Somewhere to stay*

Brown's "I'm Building Me a Home, reached a new fame in Spike Lee's 1988 *School Daze,* but Brown clarified in a 2020 interview that the song was not written for the movie, but Lee heard the spiritual performed during his 'school days' as a Morehouse student in the late 70s. In the ceremony, the song functions as a musical backdrop that draws out the visual metaphor ironically hidden in the College's name, Morehouse. Named in honor of Henry Lyman Morehouse, an early Baptist philanthropist and supporter of Black education, the College has often seen itself as a home built by subsequent generations to sustain Black men amid the harsh threats of racial injustice. At the end of the recording, the upperclassmen lined across the front of the nave and around the center rows of the chapel pass their bricks to the incoming students seated closest to the aisles. This symbolic gesture signifies their initiation as the next class to join the tradition of building

Figure 12: Students holding 1867 bricks symbolizing the building of the 'House, NSO 2012

Having received the bricks, the Student Government Association president offers a charge to the incoming class punctuated every minute or so with a thunderous chorus from NSO leaders with *"Welcome to the House!"* The charge begins by recalling the college's early founders by name and the campus' history as a civil war battleground:

> Welcome to the House that the Rev. Edmund Turner, Rev. Richard C. Coulter, and Rev. William Jefferson White built. Welcome to the House that on a red clay hill in Georgia, once was a Civil War battleground, today the #1 institution in the world for educating African American men.

Turning from history to hope, the SGA president charges the incoming students to get ready to continue the tradition by challenging them to pursue their studies with a sense of urgency and commitment to excellence. He does this by mainly drawing on the College's canon of popular

quotes and prose from words written or often recited by the College's Mt. Rushmore of leaders—Thurman, Mays, and King. Mance states:

> The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goals to reach. Whatever you do, do it so well that no man living, no man dead, or any man yet to be born could do it any better. If you have not touched the human heart, if you have not raised the human condition, not only have you failed this illustrious institution, but you have failed yourselves, you have failed your family, and you have failed your God. "Morehouse, let Got not repent for having made you."

The charge is followed by NSO students introducing themselves by announcing their names, classification, and hometowns—the signature introduction which the first-year students will learn how to give during orientation. The audience interrupts the introductions with applause when they hear their hometowns announced, which signifies a sense of connection between families. Throughout the night, the strange distance between virtual strangers is forming in the nave. With the passing of the brick and announcement of hometowns, the incoming students and their families are invited into the house—not as spectators but as part of a larger village.

The College prides itself on producing morally grounded students anchored by a set of core values. Benjamin Elijah Mays, considered the Schoolmaster of the Movement, led Morehouse through the Civil Rights Movement and emphasized the importance of the moral and ethical dimensions of education. The ceremony continues with a presentation of *The Pillars* in which seven students present short orations on the College's seven core pillars: *awareness, compassion, integrity, respect, academic excellence, truth, and spirituality*:

> …It seems as if there's a portrait that has been fabricated in your lives through the media, statistics, and even the low expectations of some of your peers. It has turned a vessel of brown skin, our mind, and our conscience into a living monster. Unfortunately, for some, that is the only education in which you have received…When was the last time your education was more than just a passing grade? Education is imperative in the Black community because it is worth the opportunity; it allows become more than our competition. It is something we can pass on and something nobody can take from us. Education is oftentimes our only means of transportation in a world where we must do the extraordinary to compare with the ordinary of the next man. But what reason do you have not to excel?

Following the seven orations, the ceremony concludes with a call to action. An NSO leader approaches the stage with a torch asking, "Who will carry the torch?" After a few seconds of ambivalence, one student comes up to the stage, followed by several others until the stage is filled with eager freshmen standing together as the newest bearers of the tradition. This is another moment that signifies the student leaving his family to become a part of a new village or tradition. The ceremony ends with the incoming class recessing out of the chapel through a human corridor of upper-class students and alumni singing some of the College's traditional songs. The audience spills out onto the Chapel Plaza, where students continue to sing to the tune of "Give That Old Time Religion":

Give me that Old Morehouse Spirit
Give me that Old Morehouse Spirit
It's good enough for me

Parent Parting Ceremony

On the second night of NSO, parents and relatives gather for the Parent Parting Ceremony, which marks the separating point where sons leave their parents to begin their journey as Men of Morehouse. The ceremony's origin can be traced back to the early 90s when Akbar led an honorary march from boyhood to manhood during Freshman Week in 1995. According to the College's website, the Parent's Parting Ceremony is inspired by the ancient African tradition of "sending a warrior away from home for battle" and "signals the final transition from boy with potential to Man of Morehouse." The ceremony prepares the young men and their families for the journey ahead. Although they are separated, the family is "forever unified by values, respect, loyalty, goodwill, and love." Faculty members and alumni serve as the elders of the village who engage in a series of ceremonial gestures. The Dean of Admissions passes the baton to the Dean of Freshman, marking the transition from accepted students (or applicants) to Men of Morehouse (matriculating students).

Figure 13: Parents holding the Thurman Chest, NSO 2012

Building on rich historical metaphors, parents are invited to write their dreams and hopes for their sons on index cards placed in a carved wood chest formally known as the Thurman Chest. Howard Thurman purchased the wooden artifact during his trip to India in 1936 to meet Mahatma Gandhi. Parents are invited to write their hopes for their sons during the ceremony on an index card collected and placed into the Thurman Chest. After his death and cremation in 1981, Thurman's widow, Sue Bailey Thurman, transported his ashes to Morehouse, where both of their remains are interred in the obelisk named in their honor outside of King Chapel. After placing their dreams in the chest, the ceremony climaxes as a village elder leads parents and students in a ceremonial moment of parting. Kenny Rice Jr., Professor of Religion at Morehouse and an alumnus, led the Parting Charge during NSO 2015. Rice draws on several examples from history and culture to highlight the importance of separation for personal growth. Here is an excerpt from his address:

> For it was in *The Lion King,* Simba had to let go of Mufasa in order to become the king of Pride Rock. It was in *Toy Story,* Andy had to let go of Buzz Lightyear and Woody. It was in *The Color Purple*, Sofia had to let go of Harpo, hence she said, "I love Harpo, but I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me." It was in Forrest Gump that Forrest had to let go of Jenny to truly find himself. An in the Christian Testament, Mary had to let go of Jesus because she understood if she said goodbye on Friday, she would have the possibility to say hello again on Sunday. And if you learn to let go of your sons tonight, in four years when you get him back, he won't walk the same; in four years, he won't talk the same; in four years, he won't dress the same; in four years, he won't think the same. In four years, he won't be a man of Morehouse; he'll be a Morehouse Man.[195]

Parents respond to Rice's words on letting go with applause and tears. It's a moment of separation and celebration—a joy that is grounded in affirmation and anticipation. Rice leads the parents in a charge as they repeat after him:

[195] Kenny Rice, "'Parent Parting Ceremony Thoughts'" (Atlanta, GA, 2019).

> I (say your name) promise you (say his name) that I will always love you, that I will support you, that I will always be there for you. But tonight, I (say your name) must release you (say their name). I was your voice when you could not speak, I was your strength when you could not endure. I was your hands when you could not reach. But tonight, I release you into the safety of this sanctuary, Morehouse College.[196]

As much as the evening is designed to help parents leave their sons, the ceremony challenges incoming students to trust the process and embrace the liminal stage with its uncertainties. In his address to the Class of 2019, Rice challenges students not to simply move away from their parents but to move into Morehouse. He states:

> And gentleman, just as parents must let go of their sons, you must also let go…Tonight, we beckon you to do the hard homework on yourself, enabling you to redefine yourself so that you may redefine the world…There's something unique about the Morehouse mystique because at Morehouse, we don't just read history, we make history! That's why you ought not go through Morehouse without ever letting Morehouse go through you. Endemic with each of you, you have been endowed and imbued with the genius of Howard Thurman, the veracity of Benjamin Mays, the morality of Dr. King, the audacity of Samuel L. Jackson, the tenacity of John Wilson, the intellect of Robert Michael Franklin, the authority of John Hope, the prophetic mantle of Dean Lawrence Edward Carter, the creativity of Spike Lee, and the acuity of Illya Davis.[197]

Rice uses institutional history to empower students with a sense of pride and confidence by invoking a litany of Morehouse alumni, president, and faculty as both models and sources of inspiration and strength. In a similar fashion, Rice leads the students in a charge:

> I [say your name] am thankful [say your parents'/guardians' names] thankful for your love, support, and encouragement. You were my voice when I could not speak. You were my strength when I was weak. You have been the wind beneath my wings, but tonight, you [say their name] must let me go. If you release me tonight in King Chapel, you will get me back on Century Campus on May 19, 2019. I (say your name) promise and vow to give my best effort, to hold high our family name, and embrace the ideals of Morehouse College because "I am kind. I am smart, I am important." And in the words of Kendrick Lamar, "We Gon Be Alright."[198]

Following Arnold van Gennep's classic theory, separation is the first phase of a rite of passage, followed by liminality and incorporation. In the first phase, a person moves away from the

[196] Rice.
[197] Rice.
[198] Rice.

familiar in order to begin the process of learning, testing, or growth. Having separated from their family or the familiar for a time of transformation, the initiate returns home with a new identity or status. The lack of access to rites of passage that mark growth can lead to what Leonard Waks calls "post-adolescent stasis." Young adults coming of age remain stuck in adolescent identity marked by immaturity and lack of responsibility. Residential college experiences offer students the opportunity to geographically separate from the comforts of their home environment, challenging them to navigate the world from the adult status.

The Wake-Up

As the separation phase of the rite of passage ends, the incoming class moves into the second phase of the passage, the *liminal stage*. The orientation continues behind the gates and away from a public audience with another set of rituals designed to orient the newest members of the community into the Morehouse tradition. Through the creative use of institutional history, these ritualized experiences at the beginning of the college journey give students a sense of urgency, meaning, and agency as they begin their journey. Another signature ritual of NSO is *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, also referred to by students as *The Wake-Up*.

While the details of its origin are unclear, the ritual is vividly reflective of the closing scene of Lee's 1988 *School Daze*, which depicts Dap, the campus activist (portrayed by Laurence Fishburne), ringing the campus bell and repeatedly screaming, "Wake Up" in the middle of the campus. The scene opens with a beautiful early morning shot of the Century Campus of Morehouse. Dap runs across John Hope's grave as he makes his way to the bell positioned in front of Harkness Hall. This scene poetically features the two sites of memory in the two previous chapters, further highlighting the historical layers mapped onto the campus over the course of 80 years. While the scene seemed a bit abrupt and confusing to the cast and audience, Lee interrupts the ongoing craziness of Black college campus politics by calling the cast to rise to a higher level of awareness and consciousness. In

his director's commentary on an anniversary edition of the movie, Lee says, "If you look at the body of my work, 'wake up' is really a motif throughout a lot of the films. Possibly every film I've done, someone is saying, "Wake Up, and that speaks directly…A lot of people are comatose, asleep, dead, and they need to wake their a** up."[199]

For the past 30 years, students at Morehouse have had the opportunity to experience their own wake-up through *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* Drawing on several elements from the movie scene, the ritual helps students to develop a deeper awareness and a sense of urgency as they begin their collegiate journey. The name of the ritual is derived from John Donne's line, "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee," commonly quoted by Dr. King in various speeches.[200] At around 5:00 AM, NSO leaders begin walking through freshmen resident halls knocking on the doors. "Wake up, the bell is ringing!" The early knock catches many of them off guard, but they are summoned to gather with the rest of their Morehouse brothers in the Quad, where the incoming class is already gathered singing the College Hymn and other traditional school songs. Once the entire class is assembled, NSO leaders evoke a sense of urgency by telling them that the bell ringing in the distance goes back to the Civil War. Steps away, on the Century Campus, sits the original bell that was once housed at the top of Graves Hall, the oldest building on the campus. Legend has it that the bell was once used to warn students and the campus community that hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan were riding toward the campus to cause violence and disruption. When the bell was rung, students would hide in the basement. On this morning, the ringing of the bell is both historic and symbolic. It evokes a spirit of vigilance and urgency that has colored Black education in the United States for centuries. Reaching back to the Antebellum period, many enslaved Blacks risked

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[199] Spike Lee, *School Daze: Director's Commentary* (Columbia Pictures, 1988).

[200] King Jr., Martin L., "'Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution,' Address at Morehouse College Commencement," Stanford University, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Educational Institute, accessed January 29, 2019, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/remaining-awake-through-great-revolution-address-morehouse-college.

their lives learning how to read to secure their freedom or gain citizenship. Whether protecting a campus from the Ku Klux Klan or sneaking under the covers in a slave cabin to learn letters, Black education is marked by a sense of social responsibility and alertness. The Wake-Up not only initiates students into Morehouse traditions, but it quickens the heart by placing the value of the college experience within the light of historical and social significance.

In smaller groups of 40-50, freshmen are led to several campus moments in memory of past presidents and distinguished alumni, namely Howard Washington Thurman '23, Martin Luther King Jr. '48, and Benjamin Elijah Mays. Through ritual engagement, these sites of memory not only remember the dead; they serve as daily markers that point to certain institutional values and expectations.

Drawing on my own personal experience of the Wake-Up as a freshman, I remember feeling overwhelmed by the fear of uncertainty running around the campus in the dark. At each monument, we met an erudite upperclassman dressed in a suit and tie who offered a short speech to *wake us up*. Standing before the bronze statue of Dr. King dressed in a suit and tie with his index finger pointing to the future, we were told there was no reason for us to be tired because we had not done anything. "King died at 39 with a 65-year-old man's heart." After hearing that speech, the sleepiness dissipated. Standing before the Thurman Obelisk, we learned that young Howard Thurman read every book in the library as a Morehouse student. This message was a call to move beyond coursework requirements by taking ownership of our education and becoming disciplined in our intellectual habits. At the grave of Benjamin Elijah Mays, we learned that Mays left home at an early age against his father's will, who did not see the value of education. In a moment of deep conflict and conviction, Mays chose to sever ties to pursue his education. These personal vignettes from the lives of these extraordinary personalities left an indelible impression that informed my philosophy of

education. The Wake-Up was one of the most transformative experiences of my life, a baptism of sorts that changed my life forever.

After the tour around campus, the ritual culminates as the sun begins rising. The class is gathered on the Century Campus, similar to the closing scene of *School Daze*. The purpose of the experience is to awaken the conscience of college students who will encounter all of the joys and trappings of college life. Yet, in the face of much to learn and explore, The Wake Up stands out as a moral reminder of *the weight of the seats* they occupy.

In the documentary, *The Morehouse Man*, NSO leaders admonish students to get ready to answer the bell:

> You are not here to play, to dream, or to drift…A Morehouse Man answers the bell whenever it rings…You have a responsibility, not only to your God, not only to your God, not only to your family, but to your race…One day you will hear the bell…What will you do while you are here? What will you do when you leave?[201]

Spirit Night

Figure 14: Students in formation for Spirit Night, NSO 2012

Figure 15: Students running up Brown Street, NSO 2012

After a long week of ceremonies and seminars, NSO commences with a series of celebrations to mark the end of orientation and the beginning of lifelong brotherhood. Another signature moment of NSO is called *Spirit Night*. Unlike the formality of the earlier rites, this moment

[201] PBS Documentary

is reserved for the brotherhood. Continuing with Gennep's model, Spirit Night marks the return or the reincorporation back to society with a new identity or status. Together as a class, the students line up, grabbing hold of the person's shoulder in front of them, chanting, "I GOT MY BROTHER'S BACK." This gesture of bonding embodies one of the College's most endearing values on brotherhood—the mutual care, support, and accountability that will govern their relationships for years to come. In a moment of joy fostered by community and belonging, the class takes off their plain white t-shirts in exchange for their first official Morehouse t-shirt with the College's insignia and the name of their graduating class. Prior to this moment, students have been prohibited from wearing school paraphernalia, which makes this more special. The room gradually shifts from a sea of white to a band of 500-plus students united in their new identity as Men of Morehouse.

ENSOULING THROUGH RITUALS: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Aline Williams and Derek Caldwell, the parents of an incoming student, planned to drop their son off at Morehouse and return home that evening. That was until the provost learned that they would miss the Parent Parting Ceremony and paid to reschedule their flight for the next morning. Ms. Williams commented, "It was one thing to be told about it, another to experience firsthand…I felt like I was walking into the past, into an ancestor vibe. I've had a wonderful life as a woman, but this was the first time I'd ever been jealous of one of my sons."[202] This vignette poignantly demonstrates that the NSO label is too constrictive to adequately describe what really takes place over the course of the week. Now that we have a description of the orientation's rituals, we now move to examine NSO as an ensouling educative experience. How might NSO offer a model for creating opportunities for ensouling students with meaning, hope, and belonging? This

[202] Samuel G. Freedman, "Parents' Ceremony Serves Up Elements of 'Morehouse Gospel' - The New York Times," *The New York Times*, August 21, 2015, https://nyti.ms/1NJSQr3.

section analyzes three ritual functions in connection to corresponding elements of an ensouling education: (1) Celebration & Hope, (2) Orientation & Meaning, and (3) Initiation & Belonging.

Celebration & Hope

One of the most evident functions and elements of New Student Orientation is *celebration.* The moment is marked by the sheer joy of hundreds of families moving about the campus as they move their sons into their new home for the next four years. The joy of beginning a new chapter is met, of course, with a sense of anxiety about the unknown. It is a hope not borne out of naïve optimism, but one that acknowledges the shadow of death and despair yet refuses to give in to its threats. It is a joy that is created and sustained as an act of resistance, creating a space to imagine new possibilities in the face of social death. It is, in fact, the shadow of existential threats, perhaps, that makes this moment such an exuberant gathering of celebration. Students and parents alike are still wondering about how this will all turn out—financial uncertainties, adjusting to a different social climate, and the heartache of leaving old friends behind and making new ones. There are worries that go unspoken, yet, in the face of fear, the ritual of celebration brings a sense of hope to anxious hearts. The hope and joy found in celebration can be contagious and linger as a memory for years to come.

For communities historically marginalized and disinherited, opportunities to celebrate life's achievements are often threatened by the looming shadow of death caused by many factors—poverty, health, and violence, to name a few. For many Black families, the celebratory dimension of NSO is driven by several thoughts flooding to mind in the moment. For working-class parents who have traveled from cities like Chicago, New York, Houston, New Orleans, and Oakland, bringing a son to Morehouse is a moment of gratitude and victory. Unfortunately, Black teenagers from urban communities lose friends to death as a rite of passage. NSO provides counter-rituals to death-

dealing experiences that have too often become the common measurement for growth. For too many, being alive at 18 becomes a testimony of survival.

In their work on "Seeing College as a Rite of Passage," Marc Goldstein and David Blumenkrantz highlight the effect of a rite of passage on a community. A rite not only benefits the initiate but inspires the entire community that witnesses. They state:

> The celebration of a rite of passage is renewing for the entire community. A youth's public expression of and commitment to a community's values and beliefs reinforces expectations for behaviors for the entire community. A child's coming of age presents an opportunity for the whole community to examine, adapt, and re-commit themselves to their social and cultural heritage.[203]

In the face of nihilism and despair, the NSO experience creates a space for joy that empowers students, but it also sends parents back to their homes with a memory that counters the pervasive image of Black men in society. Having experienced the hope and joy of NSO, they are inspired by the assurance that "the story can be told another way."[204]

Orientation & Meaningful-Education

Given the long history of social injustices inflicted upon Black men like mass incarceration and heightened levels of poverty, Morehouse sees itself as the "headquarters of Black excellence" given its distinct position in the American academy as the only all-male historically Black college in the United States. Thus, students have often approached education with a level of serious urgency and responsibility. In the 1992 PBS documentary, "The Morehouse Men," Spencer Tolliver, a student director of NSO, offered a comment about the seriousness of the NSO orientation: "Some colleges focus on getting students comfortable and letting them have fun and playing games; we don't play games. Everything we do is serious. Letting them know that there are serious things

[203] Marc B. Goldstein David G. Blumenkrantz, "Seeing College as a Rite of Passage: What Might Be Possible," *New Directions for Higher Education* 81, no. 1 (2014): 88, https://doi.org/10.1002/he.
[204] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*.

involving college. I don't think there is a school as serious as our orientation."[205] The primary function of NSO is to orient students into campus life; however, I argue that aspects of Welcome to the House and the Wake-Up demonstrate an orientation into a philosophy of historically Black education. Students not only become acclimated with the campus but they are also introduced to a way of learning and engaging that is shaped by a tradition grounded in social consciousness and agency. Where nihilism and despair give way to pessimism, a *meaningful* education provides a sense of hope for students by pointing to possibilities for change. Meaning is a fundamental need for human existence, and the absence of it causes great danger. Without meaning, people are susceptible to harming themselves and others because there is nothing to lose.

NSO offers a vivid example of how institutional narratives and myths can be used in meaningful ways to inspire a healthy sense of agency. The history is taught in a way that helps students to see their life's work as a continuum of their ancestors' legacy; hence, they draw inspiration, examples, and courage that propels them toward agency rather than spectatorship. For instance, the theme of legacy and responsibility is highlighted in this excerpt from a Pillar speech of 2008:

> In an era where the fate of the Black man is uncertain, and complacency may very well be the catalyst of our demise, indifference is taking us down a long, winding path to nowhere, and self-destruction seems to set us back time after time. In a world where we have to do twice as much to get half as far, we cannot afford to fall asleep behind the wheel because that's where you are now—behind the wheel. When you made the decision to walk through those gates, you made the decision to put the needs of your people before your own; to be that change you sought in others; to lead proud, fearlessly, boldly; to be that beacon of light on this red clay hill in Georgia. When the world is filled with hatred, Morehouse teaches us to love. The world may foster destruction, Morehouse teaches us that we may transcend all. And when the world oppresses us, Men of Morehouse set us free.
>
> So my challenge to you, as you become the men Morehouse calls you to be; as you rise to the occasion; as you saunter to the pearly gates of Spelman, leave this place empowered. Walk with your head held high because you are on this side of the iron gates. With your eyes, keep watch over these hallowed hills. Let your heartbeat be the pulse of this illustrious institution; with your hands, hold high the name of Morehouse College; and with your feet, leave a footprint, so ages past and to come shall know that the Class of 2012 stood

[205] Spencer Tolliver

> for something greater than themselves; that the Class of 2012 were true Men of Morehouse. Welcome to the House!

School is one of the main public institutions that provide meaning for society. To be sure, the role of schools is an expansive topic, but for the sake of the case study at hand, we will focus on school as a site of meaning-making education. Linda Nowell draws on John Dewey in her article, "Education as Meaning-Making and the Development of Critical Thinking," where she defines education as the process of creating and discovering meaning, taking what one may find problematic, strange, and puzzling and connecting it to one's own personal experience, beliefs, or knowledge.[206] School is "the simplified environment in which the complexities of life are mined, where individuals gain practice in coming to reasoned judgments about what to think and how to act." It is the educator's task to create an environment where intellectual virtues such as intelligence, creativity, and compassion are nurtured and developed.

Human beings rely on myths and narratives to make sense of life. Without meaning, we fall prey to what William Losito calls *ontological anxiety*—the angst precipitated by a meaningless life. As this anxiety intensifies, one becomes alienated from their community and the larger world. Teenagers and young adults coming of age often turn to mischief, criminal behavior, or violence to fill the void of meaning, power, and control. Myths and narratives primarily live in religious communities. Given the sensitivity to diverse perspectives and populations, Losito makes the case that these meaning-making resources have become difficult to find. However, colleges and universities can fill that void as non-sectarian institutions. As is the case with Morehouse, the institutional narratives, virtues, and values continue to provide students from diverse backgrounds with a shared story and ideals not confined to theological commitments.[207]

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[206] Nowell, "Education as Meaning-Making and the Development of Critical Thinking," 20.
[207] William F. Losito, "Philosophizing about Education in a Postmodern Society : The Role of Sacred Myth and Ritual in Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 1996, 71.

Initiation & Belonging

Figure 14: Class of 2016 singing "Dear Old Morehouse" for the first time, NSO 2012

Among all the College's values, *brotherhood* is perhaps its most definitive virtue. The all-male college places a heavy emphasis on the familial bonds of its students and alumni. In addition to several bonding rituals during NSO, there are also a series of gestures that also reiterate the focus on building relationships. From the moment students arrive on campus, NSO leaders demonstrate support and guidance by helping families move their sons into their rooms. Later that evening, the incoming class assembles on Brown Street for a procession in the Chapel Nave for "Welcome to the 'House." First-year students form two lines with a corridor along a narrow street that runs through the campus. As students await the procession, NSO leaders move up and down the line encouraging students to get to know each other. A few minutes later, an NSO leader will randomly ask a student, "What's your brother's name? Where is he from?" The quiet, nervous energy of hundreds of young men who are virtually strangers begins to break out into conversations and introductions. Unbeknownst to many, these initial encounters often develop into lifetime friendships and *brotherhoods*. Over the course of the week, students engage in a number of bonding rituals intended to socialize them into relationships grounded in mutual care, accountability, and support. The College's website describes a Morehouse brother as "the Morehouse Man's most influential guide and closest friends." It further reads: "From day one, their brothers inspire them, challenge them, hold them

accountable, and stand by them. The Morehouse brotherhood extends across generations, throughout the nation, and into every industry and area of life."[208]

As the only all-male historically Black college in the United States, Morehouse is uniquely positioned in the American academy to address the ontological anxiety that hounds African American men coming of age. Students in the 90s commonly referred to Morehouse as the "The Mecca of Black Manhood." As a single-sex institution, students and faculty take advantage of the space to design and implement a curriculum and cultural experience that caters to the spiritual and intellectual formation of Black men. African American men have historically faced insurmountable social barriers, leading to many emotional and mental challenges. Black men are often seen as society's pariah, the poster children of crime, poverty, and incarceration. Even when such claims are unfounded, such narratives continue to shape the public's perception of Black men.

Gregory Ellison, Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, has worked extensively with young African American men to explore feelings of invisibility and muteness due to social ostracism. Inspired by William James' phrase *cut dead*, which describes the inner feeling of torment from being unseen and unheard, Ellison examines the existential angst of feeling ignored and offers pastoral direction for ways to bring them back to life.

Ellison builds on the work of social psychologist Kipling Williams, who outlines four fundamental needs that must be met in order for human beings to achieve a level of flourishing. (1) First, human beings require *belonging* and consistent interactions in a stable environment with a few people who are concerned with one another's welfare.[209] (2) Secondly, human beings require a healthy sense of *self-esteem*. Going unrecognized and unheard eats away at a person's sense of self-esteem, leading them to push away from society and isolate themselves. Healthy self-esteem affirms

[208] Morehouse website, https://morehouse.edu/about/the-morehouse-man/
[209] Gregory C. Ellison II, *Cut Dead But Still Alive: Caring for African American Young Men* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 22.

that an individual is valued, desired, wanted, and capable of fitting in. (3) Thirdly, human beings must believe they have *control* and the capacity to change an undesirable situation. Loss of agency often leads to suicidal ideations.[210] (4) Fourth and lastly, human beings also require a sense of *meaningful existence*. Loss of meaning is a fundamental driver of human anxiety.

Ellison goes on to suggest "small miracles" and practices that caregivers and communities can take to restore young men back to full humanity. These miracles can break through the resisters to revive those *cut dead*. Ellison provides several responses that are helpful as we consider how education can help students find a way through the nihilistic threat. (1) First, caregivers can offer a *listening ear* for those who have felt mute or unheard. The ability to tell their story and control their narrative.[211] (2) Secondly, caregivers can disrupt despair with an *interrupting hope* that introduces a desire for existential change generated and sustained in a community of reliable others that names difficulties, envision possibilities, and inspires work toward the transformation of self and others.[212] (3) A community of reliable others interrupts by providing a sense of accountability that faces realities and considers new possibilities. (4) Lastly, a community of reliable others may also affirm a sense of meaningful existence by constructing a new myth or helping individuals map new meaning onto their lives with narratives.

I'M BUILDING ME A HOME

Creating Baskets, Armor & Homes

This notion of creative resistance for liberation hearkens back to the ancient story of the birth of Moses, the Hebrew leader who set his community free from Egyptian oppression. Moses was born during a genocide of Hebrew boys in Egypt. Pharoah, the vicious leader of Egypt, saw that the Israelites were increasing in number and would eventually outnumber the Egyptians; thus, he

[210] Ellison II, 23.
[211] Ellison II, 52.
[212] Ellison II, 82.

ordered the midwives to kill all the Hebrew baby boys by drowning them in the Nile River. In an uncanny act of defiance, two Hebrew midwives let the boys live, giving the king the explanation, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."[213] After his birth, Moses' mother creates a basket out of the bulrush, lines it with tar to waterproof it, and hides it in the marshy area in a betwixt location, between the water and the land, where he remains until Pharaoh's daughter discovers the basket and takes him home, where she ironically raises him in Pharaoh's palace where he grows up learning the language and skills of Egypt and ultimately uses his experience to liberate his community from oppression.

The story of Moses' birth and the network of women subversively working together to protect an innocent child whose life chances are threatened by social injustices and racial supremacy looms large in the shadows of historically Black education. Like that papyrus basket, Black Americans have long seen schools as a place of refuge in a weary land. While it may seem far-fetched to map such religious or theological meaning on education, many continue to celebrate such milestones as high school graduations and college send-offs as liberatory moments—not just for the graduate but the entire family. As Moses would later lead the people across the Red Sea, these crossing-over celebrations not only mark liberation from oppression but the consequence of those women and community activists who thought enough to protect his futurity as a child.

Drawing inspiration from a Biblical narrative with deep significance in African American history and social thought, this chapter explores the ways Black communities have created cultural bricolage by drawing on intellectual and artistic traditions to affirm and protect its young—those at risk of being lost.

Creativity & Imagination in Black Education

[213] Exodus 1:19, NIV

While many saw no hope for Black America in the early 90s, Cornel West's 1993 essay "Nihilism in Black America" posited that nihilism had long overshadowed the Black community. From slavery in the New World and across generations of antiblackness, the nihilistic threat has been an ever-present enemy seeking to destroy meaning and hope. "For as long as hope remains, meaning is preserved," West states, "the possibility of overcoming oppression stays alive. The self-fulfilling prophecy of the nihilistic threat is that without hope, there can be no future, that without meaning, there can be no struggle."[214] It is here that West makes a poignant contribution to the discussion by evoking the *genius of the ancestors* who created what he calls 'cultural armor' to protect the souls of Black Folk from nihilism. He writes:

> The genius of our Black foremothers and forefathers was to create powerful buffers to ward off the nihilistic threat, to equip Black folk with cultural armor to beat back the demons of hopelessness, meaninglessness, and lovelessness. These buffers consisted of cultural structures of meaning and feeling that created and sustained communities; this armor constituted ways of life and struggle that embodied values of service and sacrifice, love and care, discipline, and excellence. In other words, traditions for Black surviving and thriving under usually adverse New World conditions were major barriers against the nihilistic threat.[215]

Though the nihilistic threat was not new, what was different about this period was the absence of cultural armor to beat back the demons of meaninglessness, hopelessness, and lovelessness. These buffers consisted of social, political, and economic structures, such as family, religious institutions, and schools, that provided space for members of society to "make sense of their experiences." West is concerned that the institutions have failed to provide armor as they once did in the past. Although West expresses concerns about the absence of cultural armor in the early 90s, I would argue, based on the evidence of this case study, that a new type of cultural armor was coming into being through the creative agency of a generation coming of age.

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[214] West, "Nihilism in Black America," 15.
[215] West, 15.

How might the Age of Afrocentrism and the New Student Orientation at Morehouse inform our conception of a philosophy of historically Black education? The evolution of the New Student Orientation at Morehouse offers a vivid portrait of the imaginative work of historically Black education, namely the ability to use one's education along with institutional narratives, sites of memory, and rituals to create a meaningful ensouling experience. This case study examined how a campus community—faculty and student—reimagined a new student orientation into a signature rite of passage. Through creativity and imagination, the Morehouse campus is transformed into an African village as faculty members become village elders, and history comes to life in meaningful and creative ways through the artistry of students. Every year, hundreds of students are initiated into a brotherhood, and thousands of parents and families return home with newfound strength and hope for the future of Black men.

Uzee Brown's spiritual, "I'm Building Me A Home," is one of Morehouse College Glee Club's signature songs. It was recorded for Spike Lee's *School Daze* and remains a favorite. In a recent interview, Brown expressed that President Mays, his college President, was a major inspiration for the song. Mays knew firsthand the challenges of becoming *homeless*. As the son of two former slaves, Mays' father, Zechariah, did not see the importance of education but rather that he would stay home to assist on the farm. Following his conviction, Mays left home against his father's wishes to pursue his education and would later go on to become one of the most consequential leaders in education. Considered the Schoolmaster of the Movement for his intellectual and spiritual influence on King and other Civil Rights leaders, Mays knew firsthand the need to find a home for the soul.

The sentiment of Brown's spiritual was inspired by the likes of men like Benjamin Elijah Mays, who not only knew what it was like to long for a home but who gave much of his life building Morehouse as a home for countless numbers of students. Each generation has sought to keep that

tradition alive by leaving something behind for those to come. It is with the tools of hope, joy, and imagination that we continue to build a home for the soul.

V. I Got a New Name: Imagination as Ethical Mindfulness

I got a new name over in Zion,
I got a new name over in Zion,
I got a new name over in Zion!
It's mine, it's mine,
it's mine, I declare, it's mine!
— Wendell Whalum, "I've Got A Name"

Surrounded by all of the memories and the dreams and the hopes and the desires of so great a host of witnesses, we still ourselves in the presence of God, gathering together all of the things that are needful for our peace. The mood of thanksgiving overwhelms us when we remember how good and great our fortune is, even as we are mindful of the ways that are hard and difficult for so many whose names are known to us and whose pictures are vividly in our minds. It is so great a privilege to experience the watering of one's roots at a time of such dryness in the world.
—Howard Washington Thurman, *The Watering of Our Roots*

Morehouse's future will depend in large measure on the *imagination* and *creativity* of its President, faculty, and Board of Trustees. New ideas must be developed by which new programs and new and better ways of carrying out those programs…Faculties must be secured that are not afraid to experiment and to depart from the "beaten paths of yesteryears…the same methods and ways of doing things will not suffice. Colleges which are allergic to change will not command support.
—Benjamin Elijah Mays[216]

The purpose of this study was to lay the groundwork for a new way of thinking about the meaning and value of historically Black education. We began with the question, *what does it mean to be educated in a historically Black way?* The study of HBCUs has too often been approached through a deficit-laden lens focuses on its challenges and failings. As Black College culture has become a phenomenon in popular culture, like Beyonce's ode to HBCU Homecoming at the 2019 Coachella concert, the cultural appreciation for Black colleges rarely extends beyond the social life. In addition, it is common for the value proposition of Black Colleges to be overly centered on their historical significance, rather than on the quality of education and opportunities they offer in the present. The Higher Education Act of 1965 defines an HBCU as "any historically black college or university that

[216] Jones, *A Candle in the Dark: A History of Morehouse College*, 308–9.

was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans…" Today, there are historically Black colleges like Bluefield State College, which was founded in 1895, that now has a predominantly white student-body, while Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, New York is not considered an HBCU because it was established in 1970, after the 1964 mark stipulated by the Higher Education. This irony is evidence that the definition of historically Black education cannot be determined by history alone.

To my knowledge, there has been no extensive conceptual analysis on the philosophy of historically Black education to date. Philosophers of education approach their work with a different angle and set of questions from researchers who use quantitative methods to measure success and impact. Philosophers of education remind us that there is a deeper dimension to life together within the daily rounds of the institution. While there maybe financial deficits, enrollment shortages, and student demands for better food and new programs, it is also true that there a new world is coming into being as students develop lifelong bonds with one another, and meaningful mentoring relationships with professors. As Emerson writes in "The American Scholar," the office of the scholar is to help cheer and celebrate what is going well amid the challenges of the moment. Philosophers of education urge us to take the time to reflect on the significant and meaningful aspects of the educational experience, such as a leisurely stroll with a classmate, lounging on the quad on a spring day to foster community and belonging, attending a thought-provoking lecture that motivates a student to pursue a particular career path, participating in a campus protest that sparks an interest in politics, being moved by a performance from the Glee Club, engaging in conversation with someone from a different culture over a meal, having a genuine conversation with a professor during office hours, challenging and overcoming personal or cultural biases to embrace new ways of thinking, and admiring the campus and its monuments' beauty and wonder.

DISCUSSION

To develop the concept a philosophy of historically Black education, we have examined the role of rituals at Morehouse College over an 80-year span to explore how the hidden curriculum of a college has helped students resist the abyss of nihilism and despair in the face of racial oppression. These case studies are examples of how generations of students have continuously built meaningful and memorable traditions such as memorials, protests, and rites of passage. I have attempted to begin what I believe will be a more expansive work on the philosophy of historically Black education by highlighting the role of memory, protest, and rites of passage in building and maintaining living and ensouling tradition. In this final chapter, I analyze three of the underlying themes present in each of the studies—the power of rituals, disruptive imaginings and ensouling experience.

Rituals in Historically Black Education

I have tried to show how rituals function in various ways to create and maintain living traditions. Rituals are signifying events and enactments that gesture toward the unfolding of the future. While rituals can serve many functions, we have focused primarily on three functions in this dissertation. First, we have seen how rituals of memory can preserve memories and transmit values and virtues from one generation down to the next through traditions like the John Hope Memorial. Secondly, we explored how counter-rituals can challenge and question traditions to unsettle seemingly fixed and inflexible customs to prevent traditions from dying. Thirdly, we also explored ritual as tool of meaning-making through an extensive analysis of the New Student Orientation.

Rituals can prevent traditions from decaying, disintegrating, and disappearing, as MacIntyre suggests many do, by keeping a sense of the future alive in the present. Rituals break open space to imagine and dream of a more liberative and affirming future. As MacIntyre reminds us, living traditions are as much about the future as they are about the past. Tedla's Sankofan definition reiterates this point. In addition to looking back to the past, learners must look *around* to borrow

new ideas and technologies from knowledge, accomplishment, and experiences across the African diaspora. The rites of passage movements have disrupted the death-wrenching culture that subjected Black men to stereotypes and stigmas, by giving them a new name and new vision of the possible.

These three iterations of disruptive imaginings demonstrate the myriad of ways Black colleges have created the space to *preserve* the microhistories and legacies of "choice spirits of the past" that would otherwise have fallen victim to erasure; to *protest* and fashion democratic leaders to chart a more hopeful future for society; to *empower* disinherited communities with a renewed hope through affirming and life-giving rituals.

Disruptive Imagining

Why does imagining freedom sometimes trigger disruption? The notion of disruptive imagining developed in this study was inspired by reflecting on the work of Eric DeMeulenaere on *disruptive rituals,* and Gregory Ellison's concept of an *interrupting hope.* In his research on disruptive rituals, Eric DeMeulenaere showed how three teachers challenged school rituals at a low-performing school in Massachusetts by introducing a new set of practices at the beginning of the year. These new rituals, borrowed from the theatre and faith communities, replaced the traditional routines of discipline and control with more affirming and loving practices. By introducing new team-building activities and rituals, students with bad reputations and a history of misbehavior could take on new identities as encouragers instead of troublemakers. This vignette was one of several; however, it highlights ritual's power to break open space for new identities to emerge for even the most unpromising students.

Like the students in that classroom in Massachusetts, generations of historically Black college graduates hold their testaments and stories of transformation. Spanning communities, rich and poor, across the United States and the world, these students have memories of ensouling experiences that changed their name, added new meaning to their lives, and gave them hope for the future. Likewise,

Ellison argues that the threat of nihilism and despair can be disrupted by the interrupting of hope of a community of caregivers that acknowledge difficulties, envision possibilities, and inspires transformation of self and others. These two thinkers paint a picture of hope developed in this study was inspired by an anchor to support those who are at risk of being lost to the waves of nihilism and despair. This confrontational and crucial motif was evident when the Class of 1936 creatively found a way to remember John Hope after his passing. We saw it when students confronted the Trustee Board about the lack of Black representation in governance and curricula. It is also evident amid the nihilism of Black America in the 1990s, where students took their rage but also their pride and came together to imagine a new rite of passage for incoming freshmen.

To be sure, some may find *disruptive* to be a too brash and abrasive a term for an approach to education; however, it conveys the Morehouse philosophy of education that emphasizes both *disruptive* and *imagining.* On one end, there is a narrative woven through the history that encourages students to disrupt current ways of thinking, to resist the status quo, to interrupt systems of injustice and inequality, and to break the cycles of poverty, violence, and discrimination. John Hope, Benjamin Elijah Mays, and Martin Luther King and countless others are moral examples of the Morehouse Man as disrupter. On the other end, there is also the call to imagine and dream a new world into being. Students are empowered to move beyond confronting to *imagining* a better future by creating new possibilities. Alumni like film director Spike Lee is an example of one who has used his Morehouse experience to started his own film company, 40 Acres and a Mule, to create thought-provoking films that have changed the landscape of the American industry film with movies like *School Daze, Do The Right Thing,* and *Malcolm X.* Lee's Morehouse pride is a part of his own aesthetic signature, and in many ways has become a major emblem of the College's persona.

Disruptive imagining is the work of creatively unsettling routines and fixed notions of tradition and identity to breathe new life into dry bones, and to reclaim those at risk of being lost.

The three historical case studies we have examined are a few of many events that demonstrates how Black college campuses have turned to rituals and counter-rituals to remember the dead, challenge traditions, and create meaningful rituals for initiating the next generation of students. To be sure, the events discussed were drastically different in nature—a memorial, a protest, and New Student Orientation; however, they all point to the power of imagination *to make a way out of no way*.

Traditions of Ensouling Education & Care

Schools have too often been sites of what bell hooks calls *soul murder*. In the early phase of research, I came across numerous publications highlighting problematic school routines. Recent scholarship shows that Black students are suspended, expelled, and shamed at higher rates than their white counterparts, and the constant degradation leads to a loss of curiosity that ultimately feeds the pipeline to poverty, prison, and premature death. To be sure, these reports deal with on K-12 education and the dissertation is focused on college; however, I have endeavored to show that the story can be told another way. There is a long history of ensouling love and care in education, and these examples are worth emulating as we seek to reclaim future generations from the abyss. We have seen through these enactments how love and care are at the center of historically Black education. Black colleges have operated in the tradition of the cultural armor, which Cornel West defines as institutions that provide meaning, hope, and love.

The overwhelming expressions of love and appreciation from students after John Hope's death is a testament to the power of ensouling education. President Hope is a historic model of an ensouling leader, who relied on memories of his personal experiences with mentors as a model that shaped his identity as a leader. This same spirit is evident in the New Student Orientation and the ritual of affirmation and bonding that define the Morehouse brotherhood. Ensouling is a response to the nihilistic threat that robs of a sense of a meaningful, hopeful, life filled with love.

While the chapter on protest does not offer a clear example of love and care, it does offer a reminder that institutional politics can cause schools to forget their obligation as *alma matter,* or nurturing mother to its students. When this happens students must engage in protest as a way to remind their beloved institutions of its mission and obligation. DuBois was a vocal advocate for students when Fisk University's administration chose to appease and appeal to the Victorian moral sensibilities of white benefactors over academic freedom.

TRACKING THE WATERING OF OUR ROOTS

After years of reading articles that highlighted the deficits of HBCUs and raised questions about their relevance, I tried to do what Toni Morrison famously suggested in her 1981 speech before the Ohio Arts Council: "If there's a book you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." These reports and analyses are written from a deficit-laden approach that could never capture the true power and beauty of HBCUs. I began to realize that the book I wanted to read could only come from the office of philosophy of education—one who in the Emersonian spirit is still enough to turn their attention to the meaning and love found in the hidden curriculum of campus life. My own journey to this dissertation was inspired by Emerson's "The American Scholar," and I have tried to offer historically Black education the gentle care and attention that it deserves. Periodically, popular news and education companies release reports that rate schools in comparison to each other based on a number of factors. I have always imagined a way to value an institution based on its ability to provide students with an ensouling experience. Moving beyond the typical quantitative approach to measuring Black college success, I sought to show that Black colleges are a distinct tradition within the American helping to prevent a vast number of young adults from falling into the abyss of nihilism and despair. This project was driven by a deep concern for the souls of Black children and teenagers learning in schools concerned more with maintaining control rather than inspiring curiosity, and for young adults coming-of-age without cultural armor.

There has been growing interest in recent years in genealogical detective work. This is most evident in the hit PBS series *Finding Your Roots,* starring Professor Henry Louis Gates, who uses genealogical research and genetics to trace the ancestry of well-known Americans. In addition, more and more individuals are turning to popular websites like *23 and me* and *ancestry.com* to engage in their journey to find the missing pieces of their family tree and to discover their ancestry. This work is even more difficult for people of African descent, given the disruptions caused by the slave trade. Yet, with the search for ancestral roots, it is also the case that our formation as human beings is never entirely determined by familial ties or accidents of birth. Instead, much of our development reflects many tributaries that have shaped our worldviews and values. This is why schools are such a significant part of society. Learners encounter teachers, mentors, and influences outside the family and home with classmates who become an extended network.

This dissertation, in many ways, has been an attempt to trace the roots of my intellectual and moral formation. In addition to my family's love and support, I have been profoundly shaped by the hands of teachers, mentors, and guides whose examples have indelibly marked the man I am still becoming. As a child born in raised in Brooklyn, New York, in a family whose roots extend to the South, I was nurtured by the love of a Baptist church that was a part of my extended network or village that instilled values of cultural pride, faith, education in me at an early age. These virtues informed my decision to attend Morehouse College. Unlike other detective projects, my interest in this work was not focused on genetic ancestry but more so a genealogy that traces the roots of this philosophy of education grounded in hope, imagination, and care.

Edward M. Jones' 1967 *Candle in the Dark* was published on the Centennial Anniversary of Morehouse College and is still a treasured piece of the College's history. Jones offers a poetic account of the College's first one hundred years, but one of the most moving aspects of the narrative is his retelling of the College's founding. From its inception, Morehouse was birthed out of

the imagination and ingenuity of a community of formerly enslaved folks living in Augusta, Georgia. Hear these words:

> No glamor marked the founding of the Augusta Institute. Its beginnings were characterized by the most humble, and to all appearances, the lease auspicious circumstances imaginable. Founders of exceedingly limited literacy, aided by a small faculty of similar limitations, established and conducted classes for some 30-odd illiterate freedmen in a Negro Baptist Church. This is how the Augusta Institute came into being. But what the founders and original teachers lacked in formal education was more than compensated for by the vision, foresight, wisdom, ambition, and courage which carried them forward toward the realization of their dreams, in spite of almost insuperable odds. They might have inveighed against the difficulties, animosities, hostility, and innumerable circumstances and limitations that made the outlook for education of the recently freed Negroes seem so bleak and their efforts so futile. But instead of cursing the darkness, they lighted a candle in the dark. That candle came to provide prodigious light, signalized by the motto of Morehouse College: *Et facta est lux (And there was light).*[217]

What is worth noting from this passage is the ongoing work of the early founders and teachers who dared to imagine a way forward despite their own "lack of formal education" or limitations, who continued to offer the little they knew to others despite the challenges they faced. Their vision for the Augusta Institute was not simply to teach knowledge and train in skills; the foremost task was "making men" by enlightening their mind, liberating them from the shackles of what Joy DeGruy later termed 'Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome' and repairing the psychological damage done to the souls of enslaved men who needed to be taught self-respect and dignity even in a degrading environment.[218]

The evolution of Morehouse is a testament to the power of hope and imagination. The early founders never intended or envisioned creating a world-class college. Over the first hundred years, Morehouse evolved from an elementary school to a secondary one and eventually into a college; however, it would have never become a college without the mustard-seed dreams of its founders.

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[217] Jones, 19.
[218] Jones, 10–11; Joy Degruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Portland: Joy DeGruy Publications, 2017).

Over time and through seasons of political change, Morehouse—like any other college—has been forced to deal with new challenges and demands. In 1967, on the occasion of its Centennial, President Benjamin Mays reflected on the first 100 years and charged the leaders of the second century to prepare for a new set of challenges. One of the significant challenges Mays saw for the future was the place of historically black colleges in a desegrated and integrated society: "The future of Morehouse College is not written in the stars. Whereas during its first century of operation, Morehouse was considered first-rate as a segregated-for-Negroes institution, it must in its second century be first-rate for *all* Americans." Mays said the College's future would be determined by the imagination and creativity of its leaders. He knew first hand that the College was often "too reluctant to break with the past and to renounce outmoded traditions." In addition to the call for imagination, the College's future, according to Jones, would also be determined by its students—their social activism and involvement in the educational process.

Every generation faces challenges that are unique to its time. However, the continuity and significance of a living tradition depend on the ability of its leaders and students to confront these challenges, such as reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, antiwar efforts, the Black Power movement, the Age of Afrocentricity, Black Lives Matter and the LGBTQIA+ rights movement, and the current issues of the day with an openness and willingness to adapt and change.

Institutions are the offspring of the dreams and visions of their founders; however, traditions are a dynamic, fluid organism watered by blood. In the words of Tertullian, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Like churches, historic institutions take on new forms, identities, and commitments after the death of saints, elders, and influential leaders. Their deaths, in essence, contribute to the futurity of the tradition. As George Young reminds us in the 1936 eulogy to John Hope:

> And though we have lost our great friend, we cannot repay that life dedicated to us and our posterity by forever bemoaning its death. In that death we must discern the *resurrection of a new life*—a life we must live with all of the vigor and completeness characteristic of the noblest of men.[219]

In response to death, we are called to use our imagination to create new forms of life, ideas, and memorials that can continue the legacy of the deceased. As we have seen with the John Hope Memorial, much of Morehouse reflects its commitment to carrying the bones of the dead into its future. The most significant death in its history was the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the College's most notable and revered son.

In the immediate weeks following Dr. King's assassination on April 4, 1968, Morehouse received numerous cash contributions from supporters wishing to honor his life powerfully. As a result, President Hugh Morris Gloster announced on April 13 that the College planned to build a 2 million dollar chapel in King's memory to be known as the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Chapel. The 2,000-seat auditorium would serve as a religious center for students and a living monument to the beloved son of the College, whose funeral was conducted just steps away from John Hope's graveside and the Harkness Hall, the site of the 1969 Lock-In. President Gloster envisioned that the Chapel would be the location for the resting of Dr. King, as well as a library for his selected papers, books, and personal items. Although his crypt was not relocated to Morehouse and instead to his native Sweet Auburn Avenue, Morehouse acquired a substantial part of his collected papers in 2006, 38 years later. Ten years later, the Chapel was dedicated in February 1978, with a life-size statue near the entrance. The Rev. Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter was named the first Dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Chapel a year later in October 1979, a position he has held now for 43 years. Shortly after his investiture as Dean of the Chapel, Carter petitioned that the name of the Chapel be

[219] "Morehouse Students in Memorial Service."

modified to reflect King's ecumenical vision of the "World House" According to Carter, "By making the Chapel an international, interracial, and interdenominational Christian symbol, our work will better acquaint others with Dr. King's vision and emphasize him as a man of this century, not just a man of this country."[220]

As with all imagining, visions do not always come to reality as envisioned, nor do they come to fruition in our lifetime. Nevertheless, King's untimely death changed the College landscape and mission forever. President Gloster led the construction efforts, and Dean Carter added by bringing his vision of a comprehensive program in honor of King. Carter's inaugural sermon was featured on the front page of the November 1981 *Maroon Tiger*. Carter acknowledged the Memorial Chapel as "the descendent and long shadow of the Springfield Baptist Church, and Sale Hall Chapel," the birthplace of the College and the auditorium where generations of Morehouse students were morally shaped by daily chapel services that featured candid talks by John Hope and Benjamin Mays. Carter writes:

> In the history of the Morehouse College Chapel hour, we have seen and experienced a Force that equips men for authentic living, clarifies vocational callings, changes lives, unites families, and causes students to respond seriously to God's activity in the world. This has been the case at Morehouse since 1867.[221]

It is important to note that the mission of the Chapel was never to evangelize or proselytize the student body like other campus-based ministries that target college-age students with messages emphasizing morality. Instead, the Chapel's mission went beyond Christian morality. Carter had a prophetic vision for his role in the life of the College:

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[220] "Morehouse Plans M.L. King Chapel," *New Pittsburgh Courier (1966-1981)*, May 4, 1968, City Editi edition, http://rd8hp6du2b.search.serialssolutions.com/directLink?&atitle=Morehouse+Plans+M.L.+King+Chap; Evelyn L Newman, "King Chapel At Morehouse Opening Arms To Community," *Atlanta Daily World (1932-)*, April 17, 1980, http://rd8hp6du2b.search.serialssolutions.com/directLink?&atitle=King+Chapel+At.
[221] Lawrence Edward Carter, "'The Purpose of the College Chapel,'" *The Maroon Tiger*, November 1, 1981, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1981_006.pdf.

> The Chapel does not simply echo the prevailing views of society or the College. The Chapel speaks to the College; it does not speak *for* the College. Loyal critic, indeed, standing fundamentally as a free agency which the College dares to maintain for that purpose. The Dean of the Chapel is hired by the College to be pastor, preacher, priest, professor, prophet, theologian-in-residence, fiscal administrator, facilitator of counseling and psychotherapy for the Morehouse community…[222]

By 1982, Dean Carter organized the Chapel Assistants program, for some 60 students who indicated a call to this ministry and interest in seminary education following Morehouse. The program was designed as a "life advising ministry" that addressed three core areas: the academic, the personal, and the occupational.[223] Through weekly meetings, hands-on experience with Dean's guidance, the program has become an incubator for generations of aspiring faith leaders and scholars who have gone on to hold positions in prominent congregations, colleges, and civic institutions. The weekly gatherings held in the Chapel library, affectionately known as Carterologies, are impromptu lectures offered by the Dean on a wide-range of topics in religion, history, ethics, and more. The Chapel and its Dean have creatively continued the legacy of Dr. King in way that has allowed his memory to live on for generations.

Upon reflecting, alumni share memories of ordinary moments and conversations with the Dean that turned into lifechanging encounters and ensouling memories. The ordinary moments of campus life and classroom performance are also rituals. If we limit rituals to ceremonies and convocations, we underestimate and misunderstand the power of ritual in the ordinary and mundane world of everyday school life. In recent years, Chapel Assistant alumni have begun sharing stories and testimonies of their memories with the Dean and how those moments impacted their personal

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[222] Carter.

[223] "'King Chapel Name and Mission Expanded,'" *The Maroon Tiger*, January 15, 1982, http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/mc.006.newspaper:1982_001.pdf.

and vocational development. Here are two examples of recent testimonies from Chapel Assistants alumni that offer a testament of ensouling moments with the Dean. Delman Coates recalls meeting Carter during his first week on campus, and he left an indelible impression on the freshman:

> The Rev. Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter Sr., affectionately known as "Dean" by his student, is singlehandedly responsible for guiding me as an undergraduate student to pursue doctoral studies in Religion. I met him my first week at Morehouse College during Freshman Orientation in fall 1991. During an orientation session for the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel Assistants Program, Dean Carter gave those assembled a copy of Cain Hope Felder's *Stony the Road We Trod*, which had just been released. I shall never forget reading Dr. Felder's introduction sitting there in the King Chapel office, and decided that day that I would pursue a Ph.D in New Testament and Early Christianity. Dean Carter impressed upon us the importance of "an informed ministry," and encouraged those of us who were so inclined to prepare ourselves to pursue a terminal degree in Religion. Taking that charge seriously, I began taking courses in Greek, Hebrew, French, and German my first year at Morehouse in order to prepare myself for later doctoral studies. I am indebted to Dean Carter for his guidance and mentoring during those formative years of my intellectual development.[224]

Coates' interest in Early Christianity and African American interpretation of the New Testament was

> sparked by lectures delivered by the Dean and guest lecturer, Charles S. Finch, who was a major voice at the Nile Valley Conference held at Morehouse just years before. Indeed, Coates continued his education at Harvard Divinity School and earned a Ph.D. in New Testament and Early Christianity from Columbia University. We see that through these ordinary encounters, educators and mentors can use these moments to instigate curiosity and nudge students to imagine and contemplate personal, academic, and occupational goals. Dr. Mays famously challenged students to constantly aim for the stars and the unattainable ideals.

In addition to inspiring students toward an informed ministry, the Dean works as a bridge to connect his students to opportunities and internships, where they can grow into the potential and

[224] Delman Coates, "Dr. Lawrence Edward Carter, Sr. and My Journey to Christian Allegory," in *In The Beginning: The Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College*, ed. Echol Nix (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 2015), 33–46.

exercise their gifts. This is also an important function of education. No matter how gifted and talented a student may be, they will need opportunities to exercise those gifts to become the embodiment of that which they envision for themselves. Without these rituals of apprenticeship, they will remain in an adolescent stasis devoid of growth and transformation. As Dewey shows, the teacher must keep their eye on the student at hand while imagining what they can become in the future. In that same spirit, Carter nurtures students, offering guidance in academic, personal, and vocational development while imagining how his students might best serve the world in ministry.

In his recent memoir titled *A Way Out of No Way*, Senator Raphael Warnock recalls his journey to ministry, beginning with first internship at Birmingham's Sixth Avenue Baptist Church and later at Harlem's The Abyssinian Baptist Church, both of which were made possible by Dean Carter. After graduating, Warnock moved to New York to attend Union Theological Seminary and needed a job:

> Two weeks after I arrived in New York, I called Abyssinian, introduced myself, and asked for an appointment with Reverend Butts. I was shocked and slightly taken aback when his assistant told me that the earliest appointment, I could get with him was in two months. Being the young, brash Morehouse man that I was, I suppose I thought that he, a fellow Morehouse man, would make the time to see me sooner. I had met Reverend Butts just months before my graduation, when he visited the College and Dean Carter pulled aside a few chapel assistants to meet him.[225]

Warnock would go on to serve at Abyssinian alongside Rev. Butts for 10 years, "a decade of growth and transformation" between "the ivory towers of Union and the ebony trenches of Harlem and ministry at Abyssinian."[226] In many ways, Warnock's Morehouse education was extended by the opportunity to work with Rev. Butts in the early years of his pastorate at Abyssinian. Rev. Butts was deeply shaped by his own Morehouse experience and carried on the uncompromising commitment to justice and excellence into his work as Pastor. Warnock had a front-row seat as Rev. Butts took

[225] Ralphael Warnock, *A Way Out of No Way: A Memoir of Truth, Transformation, and the New American Story* (New York: Penguin Press, 2022), 75.
[226] Warnock, 75.

on the alcohol and tobacco industries' billboard advertisements targeting poor communities of color; record companies for exploiting black rappers and as he built the Abyssinian Development Corporation.

Senator Warnock is one of several Chapel Assistants who was nurtured by Dean Carter and Reverend Butts, a small tradition that continued for nearly 40 years between Morehouse and Abyssinian. The stories of former Chapel Assistants like Coates and Warnock are only one example of the many traditions that live within various disciplines and departments. These are the intergenerational relationships and bonds that transmit virtues from the ancestors to future generations.

In the closing pages of this project, I will take the opportunity to end with a portrait of my own ensouling education. This dissertation is deeply personal for me, because so much of my world has changed in the process of completing this work. I originally planned to travel to Atlanta over the course of an academic year to observe ceremonies as a case on the role of rituals in college life. Unfortunately, all of the event I planned to attend were cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. With travel restricted and events postponed for the foreseeable future, I decided to turn to the digital archives of the Atlanta University Center to track the history of rituals at Morehouse. As a both a doctoral student and minister, I was reading student eulogies of John Hope, tracing the events of the 1969 Lock-In, and learning about the Afrocentric Movement of 1990s while burying congregants and family members, participating in the Summer 2020 protest in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd, and watching thousands of HBCU alumni lamenting the loss of the cherished Homecoming experience. Perhaps, it was the absence of in-person, embodied interactions, a human touch that made us pause and realize "how good it is to dwell together in unity." Physical distance became an opportunity to appreciate the human touch and the soulful elements of living and learning together as a community.

While I have tried to articulate my notion of *ensouling education* in these pages, this concept came to full consummation in the past few months with the death of Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III. Dr. Butts in many ways stands as a portrait of an ensouling teacher, whose life and leadership reflects all of the elements discussed in this project. His life in many ways was shaped by the *memory* of teachers and mentors, yet he blazed his own trail as community leader who *protested* against racial injustice and advocated for and created access to quality education and housing in New York City, and he understood the importance of education and faith grounded in the best traditions of the Black experience. As I retrace the steps of my journey from my childhood in Bedford-Stuyvesant to my completion of this dissertation, I realize that my own personal, academic, and vocational journey has been shaped in large part by the voice and example of Rev. Butts.

A PORTRAIT OF ENSOULING EDUCATION

I first heard Rev. Butts' voice coming from the radio in my parents' bathroom as my father was getting ready for church. At that time, New York's R&B Station, *98.7 KISS*, aired Rev. Butts' sermon from the Abyssinian pulpit at 7 AM on Sundays, followed by "The Open Line," a weekly radio show on issues in the African American community. The sounds of Black preaching and the banter of callers weighing on the politics of the day enticed me to go looking for more. It was around that same time that my 8th grade English teacher assigned a research project on a topic of our choice. While my classmates chose sports and fashion, I wanted to learn about Harlem. We studied the poets of the Harlem Renaissance earlier that year in class, and I had recently seen a feature on ABC's *Good Morning America* about a revival in Harlem, so I figured this would be an interesting topic. A sales associate at Barnes & Noble recommended *We've Come This Far,* a photographic journal with essays on The Abyssinian Baptist Church. The pictures conveyed an overwhelming sense of pride and warmth that was captivating. I was finally able to put a face to the voice I heard

on the radio. Long after the research paper was written and graded, these images left an indelible impression on me that I would remember for years to come.

When the time came to apply to colleges, there were hundreds of viewbooks and brochures arriving in the mail week after week, but I remembered how captivated I was by the book, and I really saw in those pictures who I aspired to be. I decided that I would apply to one school. If I was going to be great pastor, then I would have to follow Rev. Butts. I decided early on that I would apply to Morehouse and major in Philosophy. I even enrolled in my first Philosophy course at Long Island University in my senior year of high school. Although I had high hopes of attending Morehouse; unfortunately, my grades and test scores were not equally as high. Yet, I was so captivated by the image of "The Morehouse Man," that there was no other option. I wrote to the Dean of Admissions asking for an opportunity: "Just as John Hope gave Daddy King a chance in 1926, I ask that eighty years later, you give me that one opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the Morehouse College experience." After a few weeks, I was admitted with no financial support. I knew that I would have to work hard for the rest of my life to pay off this dream.

When I finally arrived at Morehouse in August 2008 as a Freshman, I was ready to prove to myself and everyone else that I could excel. I did not waste much time making the most of the experience; I knew I was beginning to sense a strong pull to ministry and the life of the mind. With the stress of rejection behind me, I was ready to get on with my studies. One Sunday, following a joint worship service for Morehouse and Spelman first year students, Dean Carter issued a call to all students considering ministry. "If you feel you are called to the ministry, walk down the aisle and meet me here at the stage." I walked down the aisle, and my life was never the same. Dean Carter invited us to come back to the Chapel on Thursday night at 5:30 PM for the Chapel Assistants Meeting. For generations of Chapel Assistants, Thursday at 5:30 PM is the sacred hour when the student organization made up of aspiring ministers and scholars gather in the Chapel Library for the

weekly meeting. The walls of the library are filled with pictures and portraits of significant figures in the history of the College. It is a mixture of photographs of the Boston Personalist from Boston University's School of Theology, where the Dean earned his Ph.D., past Morehouse presidents, legendary pulpiteers, photos from past events, one wall is lined with youthful photos of former Chapel Assistant presidents now prominent leaders and pastors, like Senator Ralphael G. Warnock. The weekly meetings range in topic from current events, lessons in preparation for ministry, the inner workings of college administration, and deep theological conversations intended to help us learn how to think for ourselves. While the buzzer was going off from the football practice across the way, the Chapel Assistant Meetings brought together some of the sharpest minds on the campus; Black men passionately debating on politics, critiquing sermons, and ultimately sharpening each other. These moments reminded me of the voice I heard on the radio back at home in high school.

By my third year in the Chapel, I had an opportunity now to do more than watch. I ran to be President of Chapel Assistants. This was my first time taking on a leadership position, but most of my peers sensed I had some leadership potential. As President, I was responsible for planning Thursday meetings and Sunday services and working closely with the Dean. After listening to Dean's weekly Carterologies (the term used by Chapel Assistants to refer to his impromptu lectures), I began to sense that I was being shaped and fashioned by a tradition. The older Chapel Assistants modeled for us captivating preaching, academic discipline, and political acumen. Among the many lessons I learned from the Dean was the work of maintaining rituals in a community.

For my sophomore and junior year, I delayed my summer vacation to stay behind and serve as one of the Dean's commencement assistants. For two weeks, we worked closely with Dean Carter in preparation for the rituals and ceremonies of commencement weekend. Organizing academic regalia and guest seating; coordinating the ringing of the bell; typing the Dean's script and holding

the portable microphone during the Graveside memorial were some of our responsibilities. While much of it seemed trivial at the time, I later realized this was a behind-the-scenes experience into rituals and the work of tradition. Rituals maintain traditions.

By the beginning of my senior year, it was time to start thinking about my next steps after Morehouse. My classmates were beginning to throw around names of professional schools and companies, but I was pretty sure I was still sensing the call to ministry. Going back to the Abyssinian book from five years ago, I remembered Rev. Butts went to Union Theological Seminary in New York City. I was intrigued by the idea of continuing my education back home in New York and exploring my own theological formation in an urban context but also in a place that was home. As I was completing my application to Union, Rev. Butts was calling Dean Carter looking for students who may be willing to serve at The Abyssinian Baptist Church upon graduation.

Shortly after his installation as Pastor in November 1989, Rev. Butts continued Abyssinian's tradition of nurturing the next generations of church leaders. Seventeen years prior, when Rev. Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor became Pastor of Abyssinian, he hired young Calvin Butts as a field education intern during his first semester of seminary. In 1990, Rev. Butts began building a corridor of young preachers from Morehouse to begin their ministry work at Abyssinian. Among them were D. Darrell Griffin, Raphael G. Warnock, Kevin Johnson, Nicholas Richards, and Rashad Moore. For 30 years, the congregation grew accustomed to hearing Rev. Butts laud his pride as a Morehouse man while working closely with younger Morehouse Men being shaped by their mentor and Pastor.

By the fall of 2012, I was back home in Brooklyn, and quickly becoming acclimated to the Harlem community. I was learning how to juggle the rigor of seminary with the responsibilities of the parish. Like many of the ministers before me, I was making the daily trips, sometimes twice a day, between the classroom and the church; reading systematic theology and philosophy for class while preparing sermons and Bible studies; missing out on social functions to attend to members at

bedside and be present for funerals. In addition to the Union and Teachers College experience, working at Abyssinian was its own education.

From time to time, this all felt like a dream. The voice I heard on the radio, the man I saw in the pictures, was now sitting in front of me as my boss.

It would take a few years for me to warm up to being comfortable in his presence. His impeccably tailored suits, commanding voice, no-nonsense demeanor, and sharp attention to detail could be quite intimidating. Apparently, his captivating aura was one of the elements that defined a "Morehouse Man." He reminded me of Robert Pershing Foster, a Morehouse Man and one of the six characters profiled in Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns.* Wilkerson describes Foster as a perfectionist who "a mark on everyone he met. The people around him knew to smooth their tie, check their hem, reach a little higher, do a little more because Robert Foster demanded it of them. He made everybody crazy and better for the sky-high expectations he had of them for even the smallest of things. (Page 504, The Warmth of Other Suns)." Like Foster, Rev. Butts left a mark on us with his uncompromising commitment to excellence. Whether it was the mispronunciation of 'trespasses' while leading the congregation in The Lord's Prayer, a typo in a draft, or lateness on a Sunday morning, Rev. Butts addressed it and reminded me that the church is a model institution for Black people, we set the standard for the rest of the community. "As its leader," he would say, "you set the tone for the institution."

Rev. Butts collapsed the dualism between education and faith, effortlessly moving between being Pastor of Abyssinian and President of State University at Old Westbury. Inspired by the bi-vocational models of the pastors before him, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Samuel Proctor, Butts ingrained in us that the needs of the community demand educated clergy who move beyond the pulpit to the public square, taking their talents and abilities into other sectors like education, politics, tech innovation, and international development. It was common to see assistant ministers juggling

church duties while teaching at the seminary, protesting down at City Hall, working at the Abyssinian Development Corporation, establishing organizations like the Abyssinian Fund which helped Ethiopian coffee farmers to compete in a global market. Butts' ministry was prophetic in the sense that he was unrelentingly confrontational in the face of injustice, but he was constantly pushing us to think ahead.

Confrontation and innovation may be the best two words to define Butts' philosophy for ministry and education. In the late 80s, Butts made a name for himself as the Executive Minister when he painted over cigarette and alcohol billboards in protest of the hyper-advertisement of tobacco and liquor in Harlem and black communities. A few years later, Rev. Butts would also take on rappers and record labels for their obscene messaging in Hip-Hop lyrics that promoted violence and the denigration of women. He was not afraid to speak truth to power and courageously exposed the racism and hypocrisy in local and national politics. There was the time in 1998 where the Reverend stunned city official and black leaders by calling Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani a racist. When asked whether he was calling the mayor a racist, Butts answered boldly, "Yes, I don't believe that he likes Black people, and I believe that there's something fundamentally wrong in the way we are disregarded, the way we are mistreated, and the way our communities are devastated."[227] Years later, I got a chance to see the Reverend's prophetic rage in action as he persistently called for Mayor Bill de Blasio to fire Officer Daniel Pantaleo in the death of Eric Garner at the height of the Black Lives Matter Movement of 2015. Not only did he organize meetings with clergy and elected officials, Butts led the congregation in a march down Broadway, walking alongside Cornel West. Later that year, he called the congregation to meet him down in Herald Square on Black Friday, where he led chants as we walked through major department stores. The pastor and college president never

[227] Dan Barry, "Butts, Harlem's Prominent Pastor, Calls Giuliani a Racist," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1998.

allowed the spoils of office to silence his voice, but through his own example he demonstrated of prophetic disruption.

Although Butts was known for taking elected officials to task, his greatest contribution to the community was his ability to re-imagine a promising future for a dilapidated neighborhood. In 1989, Rev. Butts established the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) as an auxiliary organization for community development work. With the support and ingenuity of a small group of the church's young professionals, Butts led the team in revitalizing Harlem by purchasing abandoned brownstones and empty lots, building affordable rentals, and restoring homes for first-time homeowners. ADC created the Thurgood Marshall Lower School and Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change, providing Harlem with its first high school built in 50 years. ADC supports small business owners and entrepreneurs strengthening the local economy. ADC led the community's revival after the dreadful years of underinvestment and neglect during the war on drugs.

In our office hours together, Rev. Butts would often lean back in his chair and look out the window into the neighbors' apartments across 138th Street and recall the days when those same buildings were drug dens. He remembered the Sunday he called the police to go in raid the building and shut it down. ADC bought and used the bottom floor as its offices. The irony is gentrification has now priced out the stakeholders who held on during the rough years, many who can no longer afford to live in the neighborhood they fought to save.

Whether Rev. Butts was confronting elected officials or collaborating with political friends like President Bill Clinton and philanthropists like Michael Bloomberg, he brought a sense of commitment to his work that was grounded in an appreciation of past leaders whom he referenced as mentors and models. In his final words to the congregation on September 11, 2022, Dr. Butts remarked:

> I have tried over the years to hold up the street activism of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and El Hajj Malik (Malcolm X); I have tried to hold up the dignity, pride, and educational excellence of a Samuel DeWitt Proctor; I have tried over the years whether at Yankee Stadium or the National Museum of African American History and Culture to hold up the high standards of Morehouse College.

The memory of past mentors and role models played a significant role in shaping Butts' philosophy, which he lived out at the church, College, and in the community. The memory of sainted mentors spurred his activism and community involvement. Prophets are often agitated and maladjusted to the status quo because they are always conscious of the times but also ahead of their time. Prophets across the ages are defined by their ability to courageously confront injustice while providing messages of hope to the disinherited.

Seventeen years later and lifetimes of memories with Rev. Buts, there I was linked right arm over left with close to 50 Morehouse brothers lined across the altar of The Abyssinian Baptist Church singing our College Hymn, "Dear Old Morehouse" in front of a maroon casket that held the remains of the man I knew as my spiritual father and mentor. Dr. Butts died at the age of 73 on October 21, 2022 at his home in Harlem. Although I knew his illness was terminal, I was in disbelief as to how our paths had crossed—from my early interest as a 13-year-old overhearing his voice from my father's radio, through College, and finally to my seven years as ministerial intern under his leadership. Standing before a sanctuary of thousands and thousands more streaming virtually singing "Dear Old Morehouse," I could do nothing but cry, not so much for his transition but overwhelmed by the sheer thought: this is what an *ensouling education* is all about. The paideia—the deep education—reaches down to the depths of one' s being.

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