

Contributors

Victor Anderson is John Frederick Oberlin Theological School Professor of Ethics and Society at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and Professor of African American and Diaspora Studies and Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (1994), *Pragmatic Theology: Negotiating the Intersections of an American Philosophy of Religion and Public Theology* (1998), and *Creative Exchange: A Constructive Theology of African American Religious Experience* (2008), and numerous academic articles.

Elonda Clay is a Ph.D. student in Religion and Science at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She grew up vibing off of Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, and Maya Angelou while wylin' out to Alice Walker's poetry and prose. Spoken word, hip hop, and neo-soul are often her contemplation companions. As a writer, she operates in what her friends call "mad scientist" mode; that is, she resuscitates the alchemy of creative intellectual transmutation. She describes her works as "Awkward Black Girl Meets African American Religious Thought"!

Monica A. Coleman is Associate Professor of Constructive Theology and African American Religions at Claremont School of Theology in the Claremont Lincoln University consortium and Co-Director of the Center for Process Studies. She is the author of *The Dinah Project: A Handbook for Congregational Response to Sexual Violence* (2004), *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (2008), *Not Alone: Reflections on Faith and Depression* (2012) and co-editor of *Creating Women's Theology: A Movement Engaging Process Thought* (2011), the oft-cited article, "Must I Be Womanist?" in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (2006), and various other journal publications.

Nessette Falu is a Ph.D. candidate in Socio-Cultural Anthropology at Rice University. She completed a graduate certificate program at Rice University's Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality, as well as two years of Religious Studies doctoral work at Rice. She was a graduate assistant for Race Scholars at Rice, a program of the Kinder Institute for Urban

Research. Sited in Salvador-Bahia, Brazil, her current fieldwork and research looks at black lesbians' sexual subjectivities, Candomblé women in particular, and the social and religious ethics by which they contest the silencing of their sexual subjectivities and practices within the gynecological medical care domain. She holds an M.Div. and is a Physician Assistant. She is a recipient of a generous fieldwork grant from the Ruth Landes Memorial Research Fund.

Stephen Finley is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and African American Studies at Louisiana State University. His book manuscript, *In and Out of This World: Material and Extraterrestrial Bodies in the Nation of Islam*, is under review. He is also co-editor (with Margarita Guillory and Hugh Page) of *"There Is a Mystery": Esotericism, Gnosticism, and Mysticism in African American Religious Experience*. He is authoring a book on Malcolm X and gender with Eldon Birthwright (English, LSU). He continues to research for his second monograph, tentatively titled *Sojourners in a Strange Land: The Religious Lives of African American Latter-day Saints*. Dr. Finley is on the Executive Committee of the Society for the Study of Black Religion.

Barbara A. Holmes is President of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and Professor of Ethics and African American Religious Studies. She was formerly Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Memphis Theological Seminary. Ordained in the Latter Rain Apostolic Holiness Church in Dallas, she has privilege of call in the United Church of Christ and recognition of ministerial standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Her latest book, *Dreaming*, was published by Fortress Press (Compass, Everyday Living Series) in March 2012. Other titles include: *Liberation and the Cosmos: Conversations with the Elders*; *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church and Race*; and *Race and the Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently*.

EL Kornegay Jr. earned his Ph.D. in Theology, Ethics, Culture and Human Science from the Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL. He is the author of an influential article on Black masculinity and homophobia titled "Queering Black Homophobia: Black Theology as a Sexual Discourse of Transformation" in *Theology and Sexuality* (2004) and "Baldwin on Top: Towards a Hetero-Anomalous Queer Calculus of Black Theology" in *Black Theology: An International Journal* (2012). His current research considers and rethinks the importance of literary contributions—such as those of James

Baldwin—as sacred mediums informing, conveying, and necessitating black religious interpretation in relation to the formation of black masculinity, sexuality, and multiple forms of homophobia.

Debra Majeed is Professor of Religious Studies at Beloit College. A religious historian, Majeed has published in *CrossCurrents*, *the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *the Encyclopedia of Muslim–American History*, *the Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in America*, *the Encyclopedia of Women in Islamic Cultures*, *the Pakistan Journal of Women’s Studies*, and *Deeper Shades of Purple: Charting Twenty Years of Womanist Approaches in Religion and Society*, among others. Her current project, “Encounters of Intimate Sisterhood? Polygyny in the World of African American Muslims,” is forthcoming from University Press of Florida.

Layli Maparyan is Executive Director of the Wellesley Centers for Women, a women- and gender-focused research institute housed at Wellesley College. As Layli Phillips, she published *The Womanist Reader* (Routledge, 2006), which documents the first quarter-century of womanist thought from an interdisciplinary perspective. Her most recent book is *The Womanist Idea* (Routledge, 2012), in which she focuses on womanist metaphysics and spiritual activism. She has been a recipient of both a Contemplative Practice Fellowship from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society and a Fulbright Specialist Award.

Darnise C. Martin earned her Ph.D. in Cultural and Historical Studies of Religion from the Graduate Theological Union. She is the author of *Beyond Christianity: African Americans in a New Thought Church* (2005), and co-editor of *Women and New and Africana Religions* (2009). Her research interests include a forthcoming article, “Not Your Grandmother’s Christian Church,” an examination of the connections between New Thought religions, sometimes called “The Health and Wealth Philosophy,” and the contemporary evangelical-based prosperity gospels.

Monica R. Miller is Assistant Professor of Religious and Africana Studies at Lehigh University, where her research focuses on the intersections of religion and material/popular culture. Miller currently serves as a Senior Research Fellow with the Institute for Humanist Studies (Washington, DC) and is co-chair of Critical Approaches to the Study of Hip Hop and Religion Group (AAR). Miller is the author of *Religion and Hip Hop* (Routledge, 2012) and Principal Investigator of Remaking Religion—a large-scale survey project exploring

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Ronald B. Neal holds a Ph.D. in Religion, Ethics, and Culture from Vanderbilt University. He is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. His research and writing interests include: religion, ethics, and politics, postmodern philosophy, gender studies, third world studies, and popular culture. He is the author of the book, *Democracy in Twenty-First Century America: Race, Class, Religion, and Region* (Mercer University Press, 2012). He is currently at work on an untitled book on religion, masculinity, and hip hop.

Xiumei Pu is a Ph.D. candidate in Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota. She will defend her dissertation “Imagining the Decolonial Spirit: Ecowomanist Literature and Criticism in the Chinese Diaspora” in the spring of 2013. Her forthcoming essay “Turning Weapons into Flowers: Ecospiritual Poetics and Politics of Bön and Ecowomanism” offers her understanding of Tibetan Bön and ecowomanism, exploring the meanings of ecospiritual ways of knowing and ecospiritual practice. Her current research studies premodern Chinese ecospiritual traditions and their implications for contemporary Chinese and diasporic Chinese women’s literature, (post)modern life, and the global healing praxis.

Arisika Razak is Associate Professor and former Program Chair of the Women’s Spirituality Program at California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA. Her work integrates women’s studies in religion, multicultural and postcolonial feminisms, and women’s health. Her essays on Alice Walker and womanism have been published in academic journals in the United States and Great Britain. She leads spiritual and embodied workshops nationally and internationally. Her film interviews include *Alice Walker: Beauty in Truth* (2012), and *Fire Eyes* (1994), an African feature film on female genital mutilation.

Roger A. Sneed is Assistant Professor of Religion at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. He holds a Ph.D. in Ethics and Society from Vanderbilt University. His first book, *Representations of Homosexuality: Black Liberation Theology and Cultural Criticism*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2010. He is currently working on a manuscript that explores masculine

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Sharon D. Welch is Provost and Professor of Religion and Society at Meadville Lombard Theological School (Unitarian Universalist). She is a Senior Fellow of the Institute for Humanist Studies, and a member of the International Steering Committee of Global Action to Prevent War. Welch is the author of five books: *Real Peace, Real Security: The Challenges of Global Citizenship* (2008), *After Empire: The Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace* (2004); *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (1990), *Sweet Dreams in America: Making Ethics and Spirituality Work* (1998), and *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity* (1985).