

When Race, Rape, and Religion Collide: A Case Study of IPV, IPA, and Femicide Intervention during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Evelyn L. Parker¹

SHORT BIO

¹Evelyn L. Parker is a Professor Emerita of Practical Theology at Southern Methodist University and an Extraordinary Professor at The University of the Western Cape. Her most recent books are *Between Sisters: Emancipatory Hope Out of Tragic Relationships and Tangible Grace: Ministry Interventions for Teen Dating Violence*.

INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

Southern Methodist University
University of the Western Cape
eparker@mail.smu.edu

ORCID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9518-0918>

SUBMISSION DATE

30 June 2024

ACCEPTANCE DATE

08 November 2024

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.36615/sf080b07>

ABSTRACT

UN Women identified gender-based Violence (GBV) as the shadow pandemic of the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022. For almost two years, women and girls worldwide were sheltering in homes with abusive intimate partners and experiencing violent trauma and even death. The United States (US) was among the nations that experienced lockdown-related spikes in GBV. Indeed, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the domestic violence crisis peaked in early 2021 during the COVID-19 lockdown, mostly among women and children who were having to shelter with their abusers. Among this population of women living in the US who were experiencing the shadow pandemic were female college/university students who experienced either intimate partner violence (IPV) while sheltering with abusive partners and/or cyber intimate partner aggression (IPA) via technology and social media. Black female college students were not only victims of IPV and IPA but also of femicide during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a case study of an HBCU chaplain, this article explores intervention in and prevention of IPV, IPA, and femicide during the COVID-19 pandemic at the intersection of race, gender, class, and religion for African-descended female college students. Specifically, this article will investigate what role historical black college/university (HBCU) chaplains play in intervening in lockdown IPV, IPA, and femicide. Using the concept of positionality, the author argues that the HBCU chaplain is a key on-campus figure who can intervene and prevent sexual assault on college and university campuses. The article concludes with suggestions for necessary further research needed to address GBV on HBCU campuses.

KEYWORDS

Intimate Partner Violence, Intimate Partner Aggression, Femicide, campus sexual assault, Historical Black Colleges and Universities, role of chaplain, campus minister

“I know that I’ve got to forgive. I know that this is my brother in Christ,” said Oluwatoyin (Toyin) Salau, a nineteen-year-old Florida A&M University (FAMU) student, remorsefully to campus minister/chaplain Rev. Laticia Edwards Scriven¹ during their conversation about being raped by her male

¹ Laticia Edwards Scriven, interview, September 5, 2020. Rev. Dr. Laticia Edwards Scriven gave permission to use her name and identity in this essay. The quotations are from Rev. Scriven’s conversation about Oluwatoyin.

roommate in March 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Toyin told her Black Lives Matter (BLM) activist friends about being raped by her male roommate, and with her permission her friends told Rev. Scriven. When Rev. Scriven spoke with Toyin over a two-day period, Toyin indicated to her that her assailant was not her romantic partner. During their conversations, Toyin recounted several incidents of sexual assault. Rev. Scriven stated that, “possibly within her family, that suggested a history of sexual abuse” and, as a result, “Sexual assault had become normalized for Toyin”. At the chaplain’s suggestion, Toyin agreed to leave her apartment and the abusive male roommate and stay with a female student activist friend. Over the following two days, Toyin worked with the BLM group at the New Life United Methodist Church where BLM from IMPACT@FAMU Wesley Foundation organized and prepared food. Together with that BLM group, Toyin attended a protest rally, at which time she accidentally left her phone at the church. She became separated from the BLM group during the rally but, as she later reported in some tweets, was able to find someone to take her back to the church to retrieve her phone and some other belongings. On June 6, 2020, BLM friends reported Toyin Salau missing. The news media subsequently reported the sequence of events using Toyin’s tweets:

On that same day, Salau released a series of tweets detailing a sexual assault she said she had recently experienced. The thread of tweets starts off with Salau explaining that she had been staying at a church for safety due to “unjust living conditions.” That morning, she apparently got into the vehicle of a man who offered to give her a ride to get her belongings from the church and find somewhere to sleep. “He came disguised as a man of God,” she wrote. “I trusted the holy spirit to keep me safe.”

Salau went to the man’s home, took a shower, and changed into clothing that he provided her, she tweeted. Eventually, the man began to touch Salau without her consent. “He started touching my back and rubbing my body using my body until he climaxed and then went to sleep,” she wrote.

In the tweets, Salau noted that she had been the victim of another sexual assault in March. Salau says she told the man who picked her up that morning about the March assault. So, when he asked her if she wanted a massage and started touching her, she wrote, “I was laying on my stomach

trying to calm myself down from severe ptsd [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder].”

Her string of tweets ends with her explaining how she left the man’s home that morning when he was naked and asleep. “I escaped from the house and started walking from Richview Road to anywhere else ... Literally wearing this man’s clothes right now DNA [Deoxyribonucleic acid] all over me because I couldn’t locate his house the moment, I called the police because I couldn’t see.” (Earlier in the thread, Salau [Toyin] explains that she has complications with eyesight).²

On June 13, 2020, the police found Oluwatoyin Salau’s murdered body. The rape and murder of Toyin, a nineteen-year-old Black, cis-gendered, African-descended woman, illustrates how race, rape, and religion can collide in cases of sexual assault and femicide. The intersection and marginal factors of being an African-descended female who trusted a supposedly religious Black man and was then raped and murdered by him are tragic. The tragic death of Toyin poses bigger questions about gender-based violence (GBV) on Black college and university campuses and those prepared to intervene and prevent such senseless harm and death. Considering the extent of the problem of GBV on Black college campuses, this article wonders what role did historical Black colleges and universities (HBCU) chaplains play in preventing and intervening in sexual assault and femicide during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown? I use a case study approach to argue that the positionality of a HBCU chaplain is pivotal to preventing and intervening in GBV on their campuses.³ By case study, I mean the description and analysis of the life and work of a particular individual in a particular context and

² Fabiola Cineas, “The disappearance and death of activist Oluwatoyin Salau, explained,” July 16, 2022, Vox. Accessed March 13, 2024 <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/16/21292237/oluwatoyin-salau-death> There was a link embedded in the text of Cineas’s news article with Toyin’s tweets. However, the link is no longer available for my analysis of her words. Thus, by quoting the entire newspaper article, I provide a secondary source of interpretation of Toyin’s tweets. The body of seventy-five-year-old Victoria Sims, a white community volunteer, was found dead near Toyin’s body. Police speculate that the suspected murderer, forty-nine-year-old Aaron Glee, knew Sims from her volunteer work and may have located Toyin with Sims’ help.

³ Chaplain and campus minister are synonymous in this essay and used interchangeably.

bounded by specific parameters.⁴ In this article, I offer an in-depth study of Rev. Scriven and her pastoral intervention practices with HBCU students who had been raped or whom she deemed to be at risk of sexual assault, intimate partner violence (IPV), intimate partner aggression (IPA), and femicide during the period before and during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown from 2020 to 2022. The primary source of data for this case study is a series of interviews with Rev. Scriven that began in September 2020. Though I began the interviews via Zoom, more recently, we continued our “conversations” via phone text messages, voice phone conversations, and email exchanges. along with an additional Zoom session. Rev. Scriven has asked that her real name and identity be revealed in this essay as an act of advocacy not only on behalf of young women on HBCU campuses but of all women and girls who are vulnerable to sexual assault or any other forms of GBV.⁵

Among the places that African-descended women and girls sheltered during the COVID-19 pandemic were dormitories and university-owned apartments or residences, often because they had no other place to go. That is to say, that many of them could not go home. Some of these properties were on the campuses of HBCUs. These institutions of higher education are explicitly for

⁴ This definition and process of a case study approach is adapted from Creswell and Poth’s conceptualization of case study research as a qualitative research method. See John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2018), 96–98.

⁵ The Southern Methodist University Institutional Review Board committee authorized the interviews used in this article as part of a larger research project for which I interviewed other college and university chaplains in the United States. Rev. Dr. Latricia Edwards Scriven signed and dated an informed consent form for these interviews. The research and writing of this essay are related to a larger research project on the role of religious leaders in preventing and intervening in youth/teen dating violence that I was fortunate to explore as a 2019 Fulbright Scholar, hosted by Professor Sarojini Nadar, Director of the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Cape Town, South Africa. Professor Nadar, her Tutu Centre colleagues, Professor Miranda Pillay, and UWC students and faculty helped me conceive my ideas and pursue my qualitative approach on GBV and youth in violent romantic relationships. Both Professors Nadar and Pillay are members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in the South Africa chapter. My work in South Africa prepared me for research on youth in violent romantic relationships on college campuses in the US upon my return in 2020.

the purpose of educating African-descended young women and men and were established primarily during the Reconstruction period after the United States Civil War, during the early part of the nineteenth century. A few HBCUs were established prior to the US Civil War, including the oldest, Cheyney University in Pennsylvania, which was established in 1837.⁶ They are owned either by state governments (land grant institutions) or various private nonprofit entities, including Black church denominations. Of the 101 HBCUs in existence today, the majority are in southern US states.⁷ Sheltering in HBCU housing during the pandemic rendered college women more vulnerable to gender-based violence from partners of both heterosexual/binary and homosexual/nonbinary intimate partners or roommates.

Very quickly, administrators and faculty of HBCUs had to pivot not only to design and implement remote teaching and learning programs but also to secure housing for students who could not move back home. College chaplains were among the university personnel who played a part in securing the welfare of HBCU students during the COVID-19 shelter-in place period. Indeed, chaplains had a unique positionality for their transformative work on campuses,⁸ as their position, power, and influence gave them particular authority to intervene in situations of lockdown intimate partner violence, intimate partner aggression, and femicide.

I come to this research as a cis-gendered female of African descent, whose parents bore and raised me in the southern US state of Mississippi. My maternal grandmother, Virgie Foster McNair, a farmer and teacher, nurtured my early childhood spiritual formation. During my elementary and high school years, my parents and a community of Black church folks and Black educators continued to nurture my spirituality as a seamless fabric of love for the secular and the sacred. Although now retired from a professorship of a theological education institution, I identify my sensibilities as a scholar and researcher as those of a womanist practical theologian concerned about

⁶ History of HBCUs, last modified February 27, 2024. Accessed March 18, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historically_black_colleges_and_universities_

⁷ History of HBCUs.

⁸ Carole Rushton, "Positionality," *Nursing Philosophy* 24, no. 4 (2023): e12415–e12415, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nup.12415>. The definition of positionality in this article informs my method for developing this article.

lived religion and culture at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and other marginalizing and intersecting categories of African-descended young women and girls. My primary approach to understanding the lived religious experiences of young women and girls is through ethnographic approaches where I offset my power as researcher and interpreter of young women and girls' experiences with their own evaluation of what I have heard in interviews, seen in observations, analyzed from collected data, and written about in essays and books. I intentionally level my social and political position and the power that I wield with that of the power of research participants, who edit what I hear and write about them. Thus, my positionality is, at least to some extent, balanced by the positionality of the participants.⁹

I approach my research with a dearth of publications, especially peer-reviewed articles, available to me on the topic of sexual assault on HBCU campuses. However, I hope that this article will spark more interest in research and publications on sexual violence on HBCU campuses with a view towards ending the violence.

Essential Concepts and Terms

Six important concepts ground my research: positionality, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, intimate partner aggression, femicide, and chaplain. Being central to this article, they thus warrant definition.

First, "positionality"¹⁰ is a concept that foregrounds a person's subjectivity and identity while avoiding hegemony and essentialization, particularly that of women:

Positionality is the social and political context that creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status.

⁹ My reflections on my own positionality are influenced by Andrea L. Dottolo and Sarah M. Tillery, "Reflexivity and research: Feminist interventions and their practical implications" in *Reflexivity and international relations: Positionality, critique, and practice*, eds. J. L. Amoreaux and B. J. Steele (New York: Routledge, 2015), 123–41. Accessed March 9, 2024. DOI:10.4324/9781315765013-7

¹⁰ Alcoff, Linda. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Positionality also describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of and outlook on the world.¹¹

In the context of this research, I understand it as the social and political position of an HBCU chaplain or campus minister and the nature of their power. The positionality of a HBCU chaplain as “subject” is the result of authorization and review by the HBCU chaplain in this project to name her identity so that the researcher will avoid objectification of her identity. Said another way, the HBCU chaplain in this case study reviewed the content of my description and analysis of her positionality and agreed that it represented her accurately.

The positionality of nurses also informs my use of positionality for college and university chaplains.¹² In her essay, Carole Rushton considers positionality in regards to how and from where nurses construct meanings for themselves in their professional relationships, and how they act out of their meaning-making to shape practices and policies in the places where they work.¹³ Rushton uses Linda Alcoff’s idea of positionality as more appropriate for her argument about the advocacy of nurses because it “displaces hegemony and binarity of agency verses structure, essentialism and oppressive, omnipotent conceptualizations of power intrinsic to prevailing constructions of the nurse identity”.¹⁴ Instead, positionality assumes the multiple and diverse identity of nurses formed within contexts of oppressive and liberating power networks. Rushton’s essay offers a template for understanding the identity, influence, and power of chaplains, particularly African-descended chaplains on HBCU campuses.

In this sense, positionality grounds this essay methodologically as I describe chaplaincy work of intervening and preventing intimate partner violence (IPV) in a particular case study on an HBCU campus and as I draw implications for positionality of African-descended chaplains on HBCU campuses to practice prevention and intervention of IPV. I present a case study description and analysis followed by a suggestion of what that case

¹¹ Dictionary.com, Accessed March 6, 2024 <https://www.dictionary.com/e/positionality/>

¹² Rushton, “Positionality,” 1.

¹³ Rushton, “Positionality,” 1.

¹⁴ Rushton, “Positionality,” 2.

study infers for an Africana¹⁵ chaplaincy, a goal of which is ending sexual violence against HBCU Black students.

Second, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, GBV is defined as:

any form of violence against an individual based on biological sex, gender identity or expression, or perceived adherence to socially defined expectations of what it means to be a man or woman, boy or girl. This includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; threats; coercion; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and economic deprivation, whether in public or private life. Additionally, GBV is rooted in gender-related power differences.¹⁶

The CDC joins with the World Health Organization (WHO) to address this global health problem.

Third, intimate partner violence (IPV), is defined as “abuse or aggression that occurs in a romantic relationship”.¹⁷ The term “intimate partner” refers to both current and former spouses and dating partners and includes both heterosexual and homosexual partners. Forms of IPV include physical, sexual, stalking, and psychological aggression. The frequency and severity of these forms vary.

Fourth, intimate partner aggression (IPA) is related to psychological aggression of an intimate partner that uses “verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm a partner mentally or emotionally

¹⁵ Ericka Shawndricka Dunbar. *Trafficking Hadassah: Collective Trauma, Cultural Memory, and Identity in the Book of Esther and in the African Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 14. Dunbar writes: “When I refer to Africana girls and women, I refer to the collective communities of girls and women located on the continent of Africa, and/or who descend from them, and/or who have been displaced from the continent through the transatlantic slave trade or voluntary and involuntary migration.” I adopt this same position.

¹⁶ “Ending Gender-based Violence Globally,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Global Health, last modified November 21, 2023, Accessed March 7, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/topics/gbv/>.

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

and/or to exert control over a partner”.¹⁸ In the United States, 70% to 90% of all IPA occurs in dating relationships. It is facilitated more aggressively by technology and noted as “cyber-IPA”, so-called because it occurs through social media, email, and text messages.¹⁹

The fifth term essential to this essay is femicide, which “is generally understood to involve intentional murder of women because they are women, but broader definitions include any killings of women or girls”.²⁰ Femicide highlights the misogynous murder of women in contexts where economic factors that include poverty, work, and patriarchal policing intersect and materialize in the killing of women and girls. The history of femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, Central America, where thousands of women have been brutally killed, has influenced the conceptualization of this term.²¹

Finally, an HBCU chaplain is considered the religious leader primarily responsible for the spiritual formation, pastoral care, and moral aptitude of all multi-faith and non-faith students and other persons in the greater campus community.²² Frederick T. Faison provides this definition of the HBCU chaplain in his Doctor of Education (EdD) dissertation titled “The Role and Relevance of the Black College and University Chaplain”. Faison indicates that all college and university chaplains generally work under the auspices of the student affairs administration, or the presidential administration, or as faculty.²³ Faison serves under the authority of the Student Success Division and has oversight of the Mary Dod Brown

¹⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

¹⁹ Julia F Hammett, Brennah V. Ross, Anna Peddle, Anna E. Jaffe, Jennifer C. Duckworth, Jessica A. Blayney, and Cynthia A. Stappenbeck. “Associations Among Emotion Regulation, COVID Stress, Alcohol Use, and Intimate Partner Aggression Among College Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Journal of Family Violence*, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-023-00601-y>.

²⁰ “*Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Femicide*,” World Health Organization, last modified September 29, 2012. Accessed March 7, 2024. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-12.38>.

²¹ Dana A. Meredith, and Luis Alberto Rodríguez Cortés. “Femicide: Expanding Outrage: Representations of Gendered Violence and Femicide in Mexico.” In *Modern Mexican Culture: Critical Foundations*, (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2017) 237.

²² Frederick T. Faison, “The Role and Relevance of the Historically Black College and University Chaplain.” ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2017, 1, 109–112.

²³ Faison, “Role and Relevance,” 20.

Memorial Chapel and Health and Wellness at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. While not evident in Faison's dissertation or available literature that he reviews, HBCU chaplains may also address the many manifestations of sexual assault of students. Responsibility for the involvement of chaplains in sexual assault cases may be determined by a college administrator, such as a dean of students, student affairs officer, or even the HBCU president. Faison may or may not have worked with victims of sexual assault in the Health and Wellness department of the Student Success Division.

The concept of a HBCU chaplain is the starting point for this case study of Rev. Dr. Latricia Scriven, an HBCU chaplain (also known as campus minister) who has worked to address IPV. Her positionality, I argue, is a model for chaplains to practice intervention and prevention of sexual violence on HBCU campuses.

Positionality of a HBCU Chaplain/Campus Minister: Rev. Dr. Latricia Edwards Scriven

"Mama" is the moniker that Florida A&M University (FAMU) students use for Rev. Dr. Latricia Edwards Scriven. Young African Americans use it as a term of endearment when they like and trust an adult. At first, Rev. Scriven did not appreciate the term. She would rather have been called "Auntie", another term of endearment, but "Mama" is understood as being the highest honor, as she well knew. She sighed, and commented that "Mama" came with so much expectation.

Rev. Latricia Scriven is a cis-gender female of African descent. She is a wife and mother of three adult children. She was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA and, hence, was "shaped by all that comes with being a southern gurl!!!".

Rev. Scriven is a clergywoman with a Bachelors in Mathematics and Masters in Mathematics Education. She earned a doctorate in Educational Studies from Purdue University. Upon graduation from Purdue, she received a Masters of Divinity from The Interdenominational Theological Center, Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, GA, where she concentrated in Biblical Studies (Hebrew Bible). She was valedictorian for both her

Bachelors and Masters of Divinity degrees. Her academic training has afforded her the opportunity to be an adjunct mathematics teacher at FAMU. Students know her as a campus minister as well as a university professor. Teaching has also enabled her to build relationships among FAMU faculty and administrators. She is an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church and serves as a campus minister among several other campus ministers. While she has preached and served as a worship leader for several university events, she was not afforded the authority of being the only chaplain on campus, as is the practice of some HBCU schools. She has served on numerous FAMU committees and boards that affirm her gifts and abilities as a university teacher, administrator, and minister.

Rev. Scriven credits her ability to serve in many capacities on FAMU's campus to the relationships that she fostered among students, faculty, and administrators. Scriven said, "I was willing to be in relationship with students, building relationships of trust". She did so by being available to listen to students, be honest with them, and accept them unconditionally. She and her husband welcomed students, as well as faculty, staff, and administrators, into their home for food and fun, which no doubt fostered those "relationships of trust" with the FAMU community. Relationships of trust, Scriven emphasized, are central to constructing her positionality.

Rev. Scriven's positionality as an HBCU chaplain—her non-essentialized identity at the intersection of race, gender, class, sexuality, sociopolitical, and sociocultural context—includes trustworthiness, influence, and power. These three aspects of Scriven's positionality were instrumental in the prevention and intervention of IPV and femicide on campus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When I first interviewed her in September 2020, Scriven was the pastor of the New Life United Methodist Church in Tallahassee, Florida, and the pastor and director of IMPACT@FAMU, that is the Wesley Foundation at Florida A&M University also in Tallahassee. The Wesley Foundation is the umbrella name for all United Methodist Church campus ministries that own and financially support IMPACT@FAMU. Governed in partnership with FAMU, Rev. Scriven served as the pastor and director of IMPACT@FAMU from 2014 to 2022, functioning as chaplain to FAMU students who chose to

participate in programs and services at IMPACT@FAMU,²⁴ which functions much like other student-serving organizations and is an affiliate organization of FAMU with a faculty sponsor. As a land grant, state-owned HBCU, FAMU does not have a university chaplain but, instead, affiliates with ministers from various religious organizations, like IMPACT@FAMU Wesley Foundation, that provide chaplaincy services for their students.

During Scriven's eight years of service at FAMU with IMPACT@FAMU Wesley Foundation, she taught Bible study, led worship services, and hosted retreats and other programs despite having no permanent building to call their own. She talked about her experience reserving classrooms and other gathering spaces to convene meetings and host guests, only to discover on numerous occasions that her group had been locked out. On some occasions, her group would convene outside the building instead of spending time trying to find someone with a key. Some of these programs were hosted by New Life UMC, her parish appointment. New Life UMC was where FAMU Black Lives Matter students organized protest activities after the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 where, for example, they had the space to prepare food.

Rev. Scriven came to know Toyin, the FAMU BLM femicide victim discussed earlier, from the students Toyin confided in about being raped by her Black, male roommate. After several conversations with Toyin, Scriven discovered that Toyin believed that God wanted her to forgive her rapist because he was "her brother", a fellow human being. Scriven helped Toyin understand the fallacy of her belief and how a loving God does not hold her accountable for her rapist's actions. She helped Toyin find more permanent housing with another student over their two-day interaction. When Scriven learned that another rapist had killed Toyin, just when she had just found refuge from her previous rapist, she was heartbroken and dismayed, to say the least.

Toyin had clearly trusted Rev. Scriven with her history of sexual abuse because her BLM activist friends had told Toyin that being sexually abused by a roommate is not acceptable and had likewise trusted Rev. Scriven

²⁴ The UMC Florida Conference appointed Rev. Scriven as senior pastor of St. Paul's UMC in Tallahassee, FL during the annual conference in June 2022 after the tragic death of Toyin on June 6, 2022.

enough to call her and ask if she would speak with Toyin. Rev. Scriven did indeed talk with Toyin and, upon hearing Toyin justify her rapist's actions, told her that it was not OK, then helped Toyin get out of the situation and move out of the house with a police escort that same day. Toyin was safe from her sexually abusive male roommate for two days before she disappeared, abducted by someone else, and found dead seven days later. In a conversation with God, Rev. Scriven said, "God, I can't imagine that you brought this person to cross my path and this has happened. Something must come out of this other than a murder situation".

Later, she was asked to speak at a public event about Toyin's murder where one of her Black female students was in the audience. The news about Toyin's experience had resulted in that student seeking Scriven out for help. A married clergyman was harassing the female student and threatening to get her fired from her job and expose her if she did not consent to being sexually intimate with him. The student had been a victim of rape, and the married clergyman, knowing this, used this information to berate her and make her feel worthless. Consequently, the student had attempted suicide, believing there was no way out of her situation. Indeed, the married clergyman was exerting his power to control the student and make her believe that her only option was to concede and be sexually intimate with him. Rev. Scriven supported the student in getting counseling and care and bringing legal charges against the clergyman. The case was being litigated when we spoke in September 2020. When he realized that he no longer held power over the student, the clergyman filed a restraining order against her, as if he was the victim.

Rev. Scriven attributes this student's trust in her to her intentional relationship building efforts with students in general. She welcomed all students, without conditions, stereotypes, or assumptions, to IMPACT@FAMU Wesley Foundation and New Life UMC. Now, as then, she balances her position as a clergywoman, "a woman of the collar", and the respect and power it wields with compassion and care, so much so that students call her Mama. Recall that she and her husband, a college professor, fostered trust among the students, faculty, and administrators primarily through their hospitality. As Rev. Scriven knows, good relationships yield trust, and she works hard to foster both.

Trustworthiness is yet another aspect of Rev. Scriven's positionality. Positionality is a subjective non-essentialized construct of identity that gives regard to context while also considering the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability that shape meaning-making and actions that usher from that meaning-making. Knowing one's positionality enables one to think critically and constructively about oppressive situations and develop practices and policy to alleviate oppression.²⁵ For Scriven, that trustworthiness enables her to advocate on behalf of her students, specifically in cases of sexual abuse and sexual harassment as noted above. Students trust her to hear their concerns, free from judgement, on a campus that some students deem to have "a rape culture". The students trusted her to help Toyin and, due to their endorsement, Toyin also trusted Rev. Scriven. As a trustworthy chaplain, Rev. Scriven gave Toyin courage, not only to share that a male roommate had raped her, but also to leave their shared house immediately with a police escort that Rev. Scriven had arranged.

Moreover, trustworthiness leads to influence, another aspect of Rev. Scriven's positionality that enables her to prevent and intervene in situations of sexual assault. Influence means Scriven can shape students' behavior and opinions because they trust her. Among the many sermons that she has preached, she noted that her favorite is the story of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19. When she preaches from this text in her congregation, she asks women to share their experiences of sexual assault: "More than half of the women willingly give their testimony". When she teaches Bible Study at IMPACT @FAMU, her favorite session is titled "Sex, Love, and Don't Forget the Glove". She has taught Bible study to students from Judges 11, the exploitation of Jephthah and his exploitation of his unnamed daughter. Another favorite for Bible study is the story of Hagar in Genesis and how Abram (later Abraham) raped her.

Through her preaching and teaching, Rev. Scriven has influenced FAMU students to think critically about the Bible and their own identity and agency. Her Bible study classes consistently draw between 25 and 35 Christian, Muslim, and non-religious-affiliated students. Her husband is present to

²⁵ Rushton, "Positionality."

model how cis-gendered males can approach the topic of rape and sexual abuse seriously. She has influenced students to come out to her about their sexuality as well as to confide in her about being sexually abused. In other words, influence is an aspect of Rev. Scriven's positionality.

Together, trustworthiness and influence result in a transformative power that shapes policy to prevent and intervene in IPV and IPA on an HBCU campus. While this worthy ideal was not Rev. Scriven's experience at FAMU, she did initiate securing land and building a house and movable tent to serve the students at IMPACT@FAMU Wesley Foundation. Erected between 2022 and 2023, the house provides space for students to gather for Bible study, guest lectures, and presentations, and has a kitchen in which they can prepare meals. Most importantly, the house has living quarters for students in need of emergency housing, like students fleeing situations of IPV or sexual assault.²⁶ In short, the positionality and power of an HBCU chaplain can shape policy on GBV on campus.

Future Work on the Positionality of HBCU Chaplains

How might this power be used to save the lives of potential victims of GBV on HBCU campuses? I conclude by suggesting future work for preventing and intervening in sexual violence on HBCU campuses. First, we need more research on GBV, IPV, and IPA on HBCU campuses, examining the historical, social, political and economic contexts. The Centers for Disease Control provides definitions and statistics on IPV on college campuses, but the data refers to general populations of college students and includes nothing specific about HBCU campuses. The American Psychological Association offers similar types of facts but uses categories under the heading of "marginalized populations" that merely suggests at African-descended college students. The APA category of "intersectionality" means "to encompass one's unique identities (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, etc.)."²⁷ The point of intersectionality is illustrated

²⁶ Video of IMPACT@FAMU Wesley Foundation Accessed March 29, 2024, <https://famuwesley.org/our-story>.

²⁷ Stephanie Miodus, Samantha Tan, Nicole D. Evangelista, Cynthia Fioriti, and Monique Harris, with Contributions by the APAGS Advocacy Coordinating Team, "Campus Sexual Assault: Fact Sheet from an Intersectional Lens." *American Psychological Association*, updated June 2023, <https://www.apa.org/apags/resources/campus-sexual-assault-fact-sheet>, 2 Accessed March 29, 2024

with an example, that “transgender People of Color are more likely to experience sexual assault than transgender White students”.²⁸ Fact sheets are a good starting point for more research about sexual assault on HBCU campuses. However, the sexual assault of poor, Black binary or nonbinary students needs attention. Research that intentionally addresses these intersections is vital. Most importantly, this research must be correlated with persons who are positioned to advocate on behalf of victims of sexual assault, which would include HBCU chaplains.

Second, the research must give attention to the role that the patriarchy plays in GBV on HBCU campuses. Patriarchy, writes Miranda Pillay, powers the heinous activities of GBV; patriarchy is “male rule, male headship, and androcentrism”.²⁹ It is the lived belief among all genders and sexualities that maleness is normative. The patriarchy dominates thinking and action in culture and religion. Indeed, patriarchal beliefs and practices are internalized in women and girls who apologize for men’s egregious acts of rape and murder of women simply because they are male. Recall that Toyin in the case study above felt the need to forgive her Black male roommate who raped her. Toyin’s words are an example of internalized patriarchy, coupled with her religious beliefs. Research on the nature and role of the patriarchy in HBCU rape culture holds promise for broader understanding of the patriarchy as a frame of meaning or meaning-system for African descended, binary and nonbinary, poor, and religious students.

The patriarchy also connects to IPA. Research is also needed to understand the nature and prevalence of this form of violence. While it is akin to cyber bullying, IPA is not cyber bullying. Specific research questions about race, gender, class, and other marginalizing factors regarding IPA is needed. Like other research on GBV and IPV, the existing literature does not focus on the problem of IPA on HBCU campuses.

Third, more religious and theological education for chaplains is needed, specifically for HBCU chaplains who are called to minister Africans and

²⁸ Stephanie Miodus, et al, “Campus Sexual Assault,” 2.

²⁹ Miranda Pillay, “The Anglican Church and Feminism: Challenging ‘the Patriarchy of Our Faith’” *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*, 2013, 19 (2) 57.

African American students within the historical context of enslavement and dehumanization by white supremacist structures. HBCU chaplains minister to students whose forebears were enslaved and dehumanized by white supremacist institutions, and whose present world continues to oppress them. Such imperial structures, one can hypothesize, are also the source of generational trauma that can lead to black-on-black sexual assault. I argue that students and chaplains (along with university leaders and administrators) would benefit from further education about the history of rape among enslaved persons in North America. What were the consequences for Black persons who raped another person, or even those who were alleged to have raped another? How is religion entangled in the history of rape among African-descended people?

Chaplaincy education in theological education is usually categorized under Pastoral Care and Counseling courses in the larger area of Pastoral Theology. These courses usually focus on pastoral care for congregations and hospital chaplaincy. However, there are a number of chaplaincy positions that merit specific educational training, among them military, industrial, and college and university chaplaincy, all of which could benefit from units that focus on sexual violence. Chaplaincy clinical training would provide additional needed focus on sexual assault on college campuses and emphasize intersectional marginalizing factors of students.

Fourth and finally, there is a need for future work on the positionality of HBCU chaplains on the topic of advocacy: the capacity to act on behalf of students so that they flourish as they matriculate in higher education. HBCU chaplains are uniquely positioned to foster flourishing students, and to protect their ability to do so by shaping and implementing policy on rape culture on campus, due to their religious and theological training and the very nature of their office.

The example of Chaplain Scriven hints at what is possible through further research and education of HBCU chaplains, whereby their advocacy can aid students in ways that support the flourishing of African descended students on HBCU campuses, whether during pandemics, after being raped, or simply when being away from home for the first time.

References

- Alcoff, Linda. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Ending Gender-based Violence Globally." *Global Health*. Last modified November 21, 2023. Accessed March 7, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/topics/gbv/>
- Cineas, Fabiola. "The disappearance and death of activist Oluwatoyin Salau, explained," July 16, 2022, *Vox*. Accessed March 13, 2024. <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/16/21292237/oluwatoyin-salau-death>
- Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2018.
- Dottolo, Andrea L. and Sarah M. Tillery, "Reflexivity and research: Feminist interventions and their practical implications" in *Reflexivity and international relations: Positionality, critique, and practice*, eds. J. L. Amoreaux and B. J. Steele (2015): 123–41. Accessed March 9, 2024. DOI:10.4324/9781315765013-7
- Dunbar, Ericka Shawndricka. *Trafficking Hadassah: Collective Trauma, Cultural Memory, and Identity in the Book of Esther and in the African Diaspora*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Faison, Frederick T. "The Role and Relevance of the Historically Black College and University Chaplain." *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*, 2017, 1, 109-112.
- Hammett, Julia F., Brennah V. Ross, Anna Peddle, Anna E. Jaffe, Jennifer C. Duckworth, Jessica A. Blayney, and Cynthia A. Stappenbeck. "Associations Among Emotion Regulation, COVID Stress, Alcohol Use, and Intimate Partner Aggression Among College Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Journal of Family Violence*, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-023-00601-y>

Meredith, Dana A., and Luis Alberto Rodríguez Cortés. "Femicide: Expanding Outrage: Representations of Gendered Violence and Femicide in Mexico." In *Modern Mexican Culture: Critical Foundations* (2017): 237.

Miodus, Stephanie, Samantha Tan, Nicole D. Evangelista, Cynthia Fioriti, and Monique Harris, with Contributions by the APAGS Advocacy Coordinating Team, "Campus Sexual Assault: Fact Sheet from an Intersection Lens." American Psychological Association, Accessed March 29, 2024.

Pillay, Miranda. "The Anglican Church and Feminism: Challenging 'the Patriarchy of Our Faith'" *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*, (2013): 19 (2) 57.

Rushton, Carole. "Positionality." *Nursing Philosophy* 24, no. 4 (2023): e12415–e12415, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nup.12415>.

The IMPACT HOUSE Story. Video of IMPACT@FAMU Wesley Foundation, Accessed March 29, 2024, <https://famuwesley.org/our-story>.

World Health Organization, "Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Femicide." Last modified September 29, 2012. Accessed March 7, 2024. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-12.38>