

## BRAD R. BRAXTON

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### Summary of Qualifications

- **Scholarly and Public Speaking Expertise** – Rhodes Scholar. Director of a Smithsonian Institution research center on religion. Held tenured professorships at Southern Methodist University and Vanderbilt University. Taught courses on religion and social justice at Harvard University. Widely-published author with 3 scholarly books and more than 30 essays and online publications. 20+ years of numerous speaking engagements at universities, conferences, and ecumenical religious gatherings. International speaking appearances in Canada, England, Ghana, and South Africa.
- **Leadership Skills for Diverse Groups** – Consensus-builder with strong interpersonal and listening skills. Experienced counselor and clergyperson able to facilitate intercultural dialogue. Considerable experience as a cultural ambassador and diversity consultant in global and interreligious contexts. Teach and write extensively on ethics, cultural diversity, social justice, and interreligious collaboration.
- **Management Capabilities** – Manage a four-person staff and a \$10 million grant at a Smithsonian Institution research center on religion. Served as Senior Minister of New York City’s historic Riverside Church. Managed Riverside Church’s \$12 million annual budget and staff of 100+ persons. Established a religious, non-profit organization committed to social activism and interreligious collaboration.

### Education

**Ph.D.**, 1999

Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia

Primary Area: New Testament Studies, Secondary Area: Homiletics (Preaching)

Ph.D. dissertation examined the Bible’s role in Roman and U.S. slavery.

**George W. Woodruff Fellow (four-year, full-tuition scholarship and stipend)**

**The George W. Woodruff Fellowship is “awarded to students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievements and who show excellent promise as future leaders in their fields.”**

**M.Phil. (Master of Philosophy)**, 1993

University of Oxford, Oxford, England

Primary Area: Theology (New Testament Studies)

**Rhodes Scholar (two-year, full-tuition scholarship and stipend)**

**Rhodes Scholars demonstrate “literary and scholastic attainments; energy to use one’s talents to the full; truth, courage, devotion to duty; sympathy for and protection of the weak; kindness, unselfishness, and fellowship; moral force of character; instincts to lead and to take an interest in one’s fellow beings.”**

**B.A.**, 1991

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

Major: Religious Studies, Minor: Classics

**Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude Graduate, Jefferson Scholar (four-year, full-tuition scholarship)**

**The Jefferson Scholarship is the “premier undergraduate scholarship at the University of Virginia. Scholars are selected through a rigorous selection process that is based on exceptional performance in the areas of leadership, scholarship, and citizenship.”**

**Professional Experience**

**Director and Supervisory Curator**, The Center for the Study of African American Religious Life, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC: Provide thought leadership, produce public programs, and collect artifacts relating to diverse African American religious practices and beliefs. Engage in significant research projects on religion and social justice. Manage a four-person staff and a \$10 million grant. Serve as an expert and consultant on African American history and culture to educational and religious institutions, research foundations, governmental agencies, and the general public. 2018-present.

**Founding Senior Pastor**, The Open Church, Baltimore, Maryland: Established a religious, non-profit organization committed to social activism and interreligious collaboration. Lead interreligious initiatives including Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Religiously Unaffiliated communities. Hired and manage a professional and volunteer staff of 10 persons. The organization has raised more than \$1 million to support its diversity and outreach initiatives. 2011-present.

**Adjunct Lecturer**, Department of Theology, Georgetown University, Washington, DC: Taught undergraduate courses on the New Testament and African American religion in the 2017 fall semester. Mentored undergraduate students, especially from underrepresented cultural groups. Continuing the research for a book project on the pioneering work of James A. Forbes, Jr., the first African American Senior Minister of New York City's historic Riverside Church. 2017-present.

**Senior Advisor**, Center on African-American Religion, Sexual Politics, and Social Justice, Columbia University, New York, New York: I am a senior member of a team of scholars and religious leaders providing intellectual oversight for the center. Guiding the implementation of a national strategy for LGBTQ equality and gender justice in African American religious communities. 2013-present.

**Adjunct Lecturer**, Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Taught graduate courses examining religion and social justice. Mentored graduate students, especially from underrepresented cultural groups. Received a mentoring award from students for my contributions to students' success and well-being. 2016-2017.

**Program Officer, Religion in the Public Sphere**, Ford Foundation, New York, New York: Managed Ford Foundation's \$3.4 million annual investment in religious activism. Reviewed grant proposals and recommended grant awards to the Foundation's senior leadership. Served as the Foundation's thought-leader on religion's role in fostering diversity, inclusion, and social justice. 2014-2015.

**Lois Craddock Perkins Professor of Homiletics (Preaching), with tenure**, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University (SMU), Dallas, Texas: I was the first African American to come to SMU with an appointment to an endowed faculty chair. Conducted research on social inclusiveness and cultural diversity. Taught graduate courses on the role of religious practices in fostering diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Mentored graduate students, especially from underrepresented cultural groups. 2012-2014.

**Distinguished Visiting Scholar**, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois: Organized a public conference on the role of religious rhetoric and ethics in public leadership and delivered keynote lectures. Conducted research on social inclusiveness and cultural diversity. Taught graduate courses on the role of religious practices in fostering diversity, inclusion, and social justice. 2010-2012.

**Senior Minister**, The Riverside Church, New York, New York: Provided pastoral and administrative leadership for large, ecumenical congregation. Managed 100+ employees. Oversight of \$12 million annual budget. Ministries dealt with social justice issues such as strengthening early childhood education, reforming the criminal justice system, and alleviating poverty. Delivered keynote speech at an international conference uniting Muslims, Jews, and Christians. 2008-2009.

**Associate Professor of Homiletics (Preaching) and New Testament, with tenure**, Divinity School, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee: Supervised Ph.D. dissertation on religion and racial justice. Participated on a faculty task force examining cultural diversity and social justice in higher education. Chaired and served on successful faculty search committees that enhanced faculty diversity. Supervised departmental self-study comparing department to peer institutions. Taught graduate courses on the role of religious practices in fostering diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Mentored graduate students, especially from underrepresented cultural groups. 2004-2008.

**Jessie Ball duPont Assistant Professor of Homiletics (Preaching) and Biblical Studies**, School of Divinity, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Chaired the School of Divinity's accreditation process. Supervised master's theses on religion and social justice. Taught graduate courses on the role of religious practices in fostering diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Organized the School of Divinity's Black Student Association. Mentored graduate students, especially from underrepresented cultural groups. 2000-2004.

**Senior Pastor**, Douglas Memorial Community Church, Baltimore, Maryland: Provided pastoral and administrative leadership for mid-size, ecumenical congregation. Church ministries included 50-acre residential camp for youth, moderate-income apartment complex, federal credit union, and interfaith dialogues with Baltimore's Jewish community. Hired and managed professional and volunteer staff of 10+ persons. Oversight of \$750,000 annual budget. 1995-2000.

**Ordained Minister**, First Baptist Church, Salem, Virginia: 1991.

## Publications

### Books

*Preaching Paul*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004. (This 208-page book examines the theological, ethical, and homiletical significance of the Apostle Paul, one of the earliest and most influential interpreters of Jesus of Nazareth.)

*No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002. (This 160-page book explores the lingering "mental slavery" in many African American communities that fosters violence and poverty and recommends solutions for racial justice and inclusion.)

*The Tyranny of Resolution: I Corinthians 7:17-24*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000. (This 302-page book explores the ambiguous role the Bible played in first century and nineteenth century debates about slavery.)

### Selected Articles

"Aiding and Abetting New Life: 'Sex-Talk' in the Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square" in *The Sexual Politics of Black Churches*, ed. Josef Sorett. New York: Columbia University Press, Forthcoming 2018; manuscript submitted to the editor. (This article examines ways to foster healing and constructive discussions concerning diverse sexual identities in religious communities and public venues.)

**“An Experiment in Radical Religious Openness”** in *Intercultural Ministry: Hope for a Changing World*, ed. Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Jann Aldredge-Clanton, 81-96. King of Prussia, PA: Judson Press, 2017. (This article explores how progressive religious approaches can sponsor diversity, inclusion, and social justice in intercultural communities.)

**“From ‘It’s Just Words’ to Just Words: Speech Ethics in the Time of Trump”** in *Religion Dispatches*. <http://religiondispatches.org/from-its-just-words-to-just-words-speech-ethics-in-the-time-of-trump>, October 2016. (This article examines how diverse religious perspectives can improve the content and tone of public conversations, especially in light of the divisive rhetoric of the 2016 presidential campaign.)

**“The Grace of the Lord Jesus Be with All: A Minister’s Conversion to Religious Pluralism”** in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, vol. 44, numbers 3 and 4 (2016): 57-63. (This article presents an inclusive approach to religious pluralism that fosters cooperation among diverse religious traditions.)

**“The Zimmerman Verdict: There’s a New Justice in Town”** in *The Huffington Post*. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brad-r-braxton/zimmerman-verdict\\_b\\_3635159.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brad-r-braxton/zimmerman-verdict_b_3635159.html), July 2013. (This article calls for restorative justice in the aftermath of the death of Trayvon Martin.)

**“Every Time I Feel the Spirit: African American Christology for a Pluralistic World”** in *Radical Christian Voices and Practice: Essays in Honor of Christopher Rowland*, ed. Zoe Bennett and David Gowler, 181-199. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. (This article examines how African American religious resources can promote social justice and the embrace of religious pluralism.)

**“Leave No Change Behind (Preaching for Social Transformation)”** in *Sojourners*. <http://sojo.net/magazine/2012/08/leave-no-change-behind>, August 2012. (This article provides practical counsel to religious leaders and social activists concerning imaginative and courageous preaching on social justice issues.)

**“Same-Sex Marriage Support: A Sign of Love, Acceptance and Devotion to God”** Opinion Editorial in *The Washington Post*. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/same-sex-marriage-support-a-sign-of-love-acceptance-and-devotion-to-god/2012/05/16/gIQAlkFkTU\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/same-sex-marriage-support-a-sign-of-love-acceptance-and-devotion-to-god/2012/05/16/gIQAlkFkTU_story.html), May 2012. (This article provides a progressive religious rationale for marriage equality.)

**“Preaching, Politics, and Paul in Contemporary African American Christianity”** in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, ed. Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, Jonathan Roberts, and Christopher Rowland, 557-575. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. (This article investigates the religious and political significance of contemporary African American sermons based on the letters of the Apostle Paul.)

**“Lifting the Veil: *The Shoah* (The Jewish Holocaust) and *The Maafa* (The African Holocaust) in Conversation”** in *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, vol. 38, number 2 (2011): 185-193. (This article examines the similarities of the genocides experienced by the Jewish and African American communities.)

**“Sanctification and Proclamation: Walking with God”** in *A Spiritual Life: Perspectives from Poets, Prophets, and Preachers*, ed. Allan Hugh Cole, Jr., 231-241. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011. (This article explores the role of personal ethics in preaching.)

**“The Holy Spirit, Jesus, and Social Justice in Black Churches: Making Noise or Making a Difference?”** in *The Huffington Post*.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brad-r-braxton/the-spirit-jesus-and-soci\\_b\\_829665.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brad-r-braxton/the-spirit-jesus-and-soci_b_829665.html), March 2011. (This article encourages black churches to embrace socially-relevant ministries that enrich the community.)

**“Getting in Front of Jesus: The Politics of Progressive Christianity”** in *The Huffington Post*. Part I: [www.huffingtonpost.com/brad-r-braxton/getting-in-front-of-jesus\\_b\\_649152.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brad-r-braxton/getting-in-front-of-jesus_b_649152.html), July 2010. Part II: [www.huffingtonpost.com/brad-r-braxton/getting-in-front-of-jesus\\_b\\_680553.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brad-r-braxton/getting-in-front-of-jesus_b_680553.html), August 2010. (This two-part article argues that progressive approaches to religion, rather than conservative approaches, more accurately represent Jesus’ counter-cultural legacy.)

**“What Happened to Sacred Eloquence? (Celebrating the Ministry of Gardner C. Taylor)”** [co-authored with Martha Simmons] in *Our Sufficiency Is of God: Essays on Preaching in Honor of Gardner C. Taylor*, ed. Timothy George, James Earl Massey, and Robert Smith, Jr., 272-300. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2010. (This article explores the theological and rhetorical genius of Gardner C. Taylor, one of the most celebrated American preachers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.)

**“Paul and Racial Reconciliation: A Postcolonial Approach to 2 Corinthians 3:12-18”** in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay*, ed. Gail O’Day and Patrick Gray, 411-428. Leiden: Boston, 2008. (This article examines the Bible’s problematic role in trans-Atlantic slavery and the Bible’s potentially promising role in contemporary public dialogues about racial justice and reconciliation.)

## Academic Projects

**Contributing Editor, *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present***, ed. Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010. This 900-page anthology chronicles the contributions of African American religious rhetoric to national and international movements for social justice. I wrote historical synopses for the anthology and served as an editorial consultant. 2003-2010.

**Scholar-in-Residence, Social Justice Global Immersion Trip to Ghana and South Africa.** Served as thought leader and cultural ambassador during trip sponsored by the Ford Foundation. Visited religious communities, schools, community centers, and cultural sites in Accra and Cape Coast, Ghana and Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa. Established dialogue with African leaders about current and future economic, educational, and healthcare ventures. Prepared a scholarly, twenty-five-page report examining cultural and religious principles for local and global social justice work in black communities. Presented the report at a national conference on religious leadership. 2007-2008.

**Founding Team Member, *The African American Lectionary*.** This team of scholars created the first, online lectionary (a series of biblical texts, theological commentaries, and cultural resources) for socially-engaged African American churches. The website contains more than 4,000 pages of culturally-nuanced scholarship and has received more than 10 million visitors. I designed the biblical interpretation guidelines, wrote biblical commentaries, and edited commentaries from other contributors. [www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org](http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org). 2005-2010.

### Work in Progress

***Give Yourself to the Wind: Interpretive Essays on the Public Theology and Sacred Rhetoric of James A. Forbes, Jr.*** (I am co-editing with Eric Lewis Williams a volume of scholarly essays interpreting the public impact and rhetorical genius of James A. Forbes, Jr., the first African American Senior Minister of New York City's historic Riverside Church and a renowned ecumenical theologian.)

**“Baptism and Holy Communion: Affirming that Black Lives Matter” in *T&T Clark Companion to African American Theology*,** ed. Frederick L. Ware, Antonia M. Daymond, and Eric Lewis Williams (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming. (I am writing an article on the social and political significance of baptism and Holy Communion in African American churches.)

***School Is in Session: Lessons from the Left to Make the World Right.*** (I am preparing the proposal for a book-length collection of my essays examining cultural diversity, racial justice, and religious pluralism from a progressive perspective.)

### Selected Lectures

**“Lifting the Veil: Religion, Reparations, and Reconciliation,”** UNESCO International Conference on New Approaches in Interpreting and Representing Slavery in Museums and Sites, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. March 2018. (Representatives from more than a dozen nations attended the conference. My presentation examined how postcolonial readings of the Bible can provide intellectual and moral frameworks to rectify the lingering injustice and trauma from trans-Atlantic slavery.)

**“Faith-Based Social Enterprise,”** 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Social Enterprise Conference, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. March 2017. (I moderated and participated on an interracial and interreligious panel of non-profit leaders who examined the role of religion and values in social entrepreneurship.)

**“Blueprint for the Beloved Community: Vocation, Values, and Voice,”** Harry Vaughan Smith Distinguished Lectures, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia. February 2017. (This lecture investigated the moral dimensions of effective public leadership.)

**“Street Corner Religion: Public Theology for a Pluralistic World,”** Schaff Lectures, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. April 2016. (This lecture invited scholars and religious communities to join practical, public efforts to reduce violence and overcome racial and religious bigotry.)

**“Violence and Reconciliation: Three Dimensions of Restoration,”** Samuel DeWitt Proctor National Social Justice Conference, Norfolk, Virginia. February 2015. (This lecture examined how violence ruptures the personal, communal, and spiritual dimensions of human interaction. The lecture also provided constructive suggestions for promoting reconciliation after violence.)

**Selected Preaching Engagements**

Commemoration Service, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC. April 2018.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Interfaith Service, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts. January 2017.

Chapel Service, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts. February 2016.

Distinguished Preachers Series, Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia. March 2012.

Chapel Service, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut. November 2009.

Sunday Worship Service, Westminster Abbey, London, England. (The service was part of the bicentennial commemoration of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.) March 2007.

**Selected Courses Taught**

**“The New Testament and Contemporary Cultures”** (This course highlights the inescapable influence of cultural contexts on interpretations of influential texts such as the New Testament. The course also introduces students to a variety of contextual reading strategies practiced in African, African American, Asian, Asian American, Latin American, and LGBTQ communities.)

**“The New Testament and Politics: Ethical Considerations”** (This course explores the Apostle Paul’s responses to pressing political, ethical, and religious issues of his time such as Roman imperialism, slavery, ethnic reconciliation, gender equity, and sexual behavior. The course also examines the enduring role of the Apostle Paul’s letters in contemporary conversations concerning political and ethical issues.)

**“African American Religious Rhetoric”** (This course examines the historical foundations, social justice commitments, and rhetorical features of African American religious rhetoric. The course also situates African American religious rhetoric in larger, pan-African cultural contexts.)

**“Rhetoric and Ritual: An Interdisciplinary Investigation”** (This course invites students to consider the interdisciplinary nature of rhetorical practices and public rituals in religious communities. Within the framework of practice-based learning, the course introduces students to a variety of disciplines including media studies, human development theory, critical discourse analysis, and performance studies.)

**“Pluralism and Public Speaking”** (This course responds to the question: How do leaders and social activists speak life-giving words in diverse, interreligious contexts? The course engages the fields of cultural studies and interreligious studies and draws upon my extensive entrepreneurial experience in establishing an intercultural congregation with an interreligious agenda.)

**“Preaching, Healing, and Justice”** (Drawing upon liberation and feminist theologies, this course equips religious leaders and social activists with theoretical and practical tools for healing the “brokenness” [i.e., the suffering and injustice] that affects individuals and communities.)