

BRAD R. BRAXTON

Summary of Qualifications

- **Leadership Skills for Diverse Groups** – President of Chicago Theological Seminary. Senior Program Advisor for the 2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival on religious diversity. Former Chief Diversity Officer at a respected New York City independent school. 15+ years mentoring university faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds. 15+ years serving as a Senior Pastor/CEO in progressive, urban congregations. Consensus-builder with strong listening, facilitation, and teambuilding skills.
- **Scholarly and Public Speaking Expertise** – Rhodes Scholar. Thought leader in religion, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Held professorships in religion at Southern Methodist University, Vanderbilt University, and Wake Forest University. Taught courses on religion and social justice at Harvard University. Widely-published author with 5 scholarly books and more than 30 essays and online publications. 20+ years of speaking engagements at universities, conferences, and interreligious gatherings. International speaking appearances in Benin, Canada, England, Ghana, and South Africa.
- **Management Capabilities** – Manage 50+ staff/faculty and a \$6 million budget at Chicago Theological Seminary. Managed 5 staff, 5 postdoctoral fellows, and a \$10 million grant at a Smithsonian religion research center. Wrote a successful \$1.5 million grant proposal to the Lilly Endowment for a Smithsonian program on religious diversity. Managed a staff of 100+ at New York City’s Riverside Church. Established a non-profit organization committed to 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

Higher Education Senior Administration

President and Professor of Public Theology (with tenure), Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois: Serve as CEO for this historic, progressive seminary with 50+ staff/faculty and 300+ students. Provide oversight for Academic Affairs, Admissions and Student Services, Advancement, Finance and Administration, and Strategic Initiatives. Manage a \$6 million annual budget. Collaborate with the Board of Trustees in articulating a vision for the role of progressive, graduate education in religious and interreligious leadership. Cultivate diverse sources of revenue, including foundation grants, alumni giving, and major individual and institutional donors. Represent the seminary in local, national, and international gatherings. 2022-present.

Independent School Senior Administration

Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, St. Luke's School, New York, New York: Reported to the Head of School at this coeducational independent school. Established the vision for a multi-staffed DEI department and created job descriptions. Hired an additional DEI practitioner who reported to me. Provided DEI thought leadership. Mentored professional staff. Assisted Board of Trustees and staff with DEI and social justice initiatives. Facilitated affinity groups. 2019-2022.

Thought Leadership and Senior Management at the Smithsonian Institution

Senior Program Advisor, Living Religion in the United States, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington, DC. Provide thought leadership and facilitate program development for the 2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival on religious diversity in the United States. Wrote a grant proposal to the Lilly Endowment that received \$1.5 million for the festival. The festival will attract more than 700,000 visitors to the National Mall in Washington, DC and more than 10 million people through online resources. 2020-present (part-time).

Director and Supervisory Curator of Religion, The Center for the Study of African American Religious Life, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC: Provided thought leadership and produced public programs relating to religion, race, and social justice. Managed 5 staff persons, 5 postdoctoral fellows, and a \$10 million grant. Served as an ambassador to educational and cultural institutions. 2018-2019.

Full-Time Faculty Positions in Higher Education

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 in ministry studies and biblical studies. Mentored graduate students. 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 in ministry studies and biblical studies. 2010-2012.

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 search committees that enhanced the gender and

racial diversity of the faculty. Supervised a departmental self-study in ministry studies comparing the department to peer institutions. Taught graduate courses in ministry studies and biblical studies. Mentored graduate students. 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 steering committee. Supervised master's theses on religion and social justice. Taught graduate courses in ministry studies and biblical studies. Organized the School of Divinity's Black Student Association. Mentored graduate students. 2000-2004.

Social Entrepreneurship

Founding Senior Pastor, The Open Church, Baltimore, Maryland: Established a non-profit organization committed to social activism. Lead initiatives including Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Humanist, Jewish, Muslim, and religiously unaffiliated communities. The organization supports LGBTQIA+ equality. Provide visionary oversight for 6 paid and volunteer staff. The organization has raised nearly \$2 million to support its social justice work. 2011-present (part-time).

Program Officer, Religion in the Public Sphere, Ford Foundation, New York, New York: Managed the Ford Foundation's \$3.4 million annual investment in religious activism. Reviewed grant proposals and recommended grant disbursements 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.

Senior Minister, The Riverside Church, New York, New York: Provided pastoral and administrative leadership for large, ecumenical congregation. Managed 100+ staff persons. 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.

Senior Pastor, Douglas Memorial Community Church, Baltimore, Maryland: Provided pastoral and administrative leadership for mid-size, ecumenical congregation. 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 a paid and volunteer staff of 10+ persons. Oversight of \$750,000 annual budget. 1995-2000.

Adjunct Faculty Positions in Higher Education

Adjunct Lecturer, Department of Theology, Georgetown University, Washington, DC: Taught undergraduate courses on religion, diversity, and social justice in the 2017 fall semester. Mentored undergraduate students. Delivered the Martin Luther King, Jr. pedagogy lecture to Georgetown faculty and staff in the 2019 spring semester. 2017-2019 (part-time).

Adjunct Lecturer, Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Taught graduate courses on religion, diversity, and social justice. Mentored graduate students. Received a faculty mentoring award from Harvard students for supporting student well-being. 2016-2017 (part-time).

Publications

Books

A Master Class on Being Human: A Black Christian and A Black Secular Humanist on Religion, Race, and Justice. Boston: Beacon Press, Forthcoming July 2023 [co-authored with Anthony B. Pinn].

(This 206-page book explores the similarities and differences of Christianity and secular humanism in the struggle for social justice. The book is under contract, and the manuscript is complete.)

Open: Unorthodox Thoughts on God and Community. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, Forthcoming April 2023 (This 246-page book addresses cultural diversity, social justice, and religious rhetoric from a progressive perspective. The book is under contract, and the manuscript is complete.)

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 “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, 173-189. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022. (This article examines ways to foster healing and constructive discussions concerning diverse sexual identities in religious communities and public venues.)

“Sad but Not Surprised: A ‘Talk to Teachers’ in Times of Violence and Death” in *Smithsonian Folklife Magazine*. <https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/talk-to-teachers-in-times-of-violence-death>, June 2020. (This article examines how the willful ignorance of injustice perpetuates racism in the aftermath of the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd.)

“Baptism and Holy Communion: Affirming that Black Lives Matter” in *T&T Clark Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. Antonia Michelle Daymond, Frederick L. Ware, and Eric Lewis Williams, 197-211. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2019. (This article examines how religious rituals can foster political consciousness and social inclusiveness in African American communities.)

“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 public conversations, especially considering 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*. <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/summerautumn2016/grace-of-lord-jesus-be-with-all>, Summer/Autumn 2016. (This article presents an inclusive approach to religious pluralism that fosters cooperation among diverse religious traditions.)

“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. Zoë 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.)

“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/gIQAikFkTU_story.html, May 2012. (This article provides a progressive religious rationale for marriage equality.)

“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.)

Selected Lectures

“Policy and Poetry: The African American Religious Imagination and Social Transformation,” Betsey Stockton Lecture, Black Theological Leadership Institute, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey. July 2021. (This lecture explored how African-derived approaches to pedagogy and poetics can empower students to learn about and engage in social activism.)

“Preaching, Protest, and ‘Public Health’: A Theology of Worship in Dangerous Times,” Black Theological Leadership Institute, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey. July 2020. (This lecture examined how religious leaders and communities contribute to public health through moral leadership amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing struggle for racial justice.)

“Broad Meadows and Open Tables: Spiritual Openness in a University,” Division of Student Affairs, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. May 2019. (This lecture considered the role of progressive forms of spirituality in the holistic nurturing of university students.)

“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. The lecture investigated 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,” 18th Annual Social Enterprise Conference, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. March 2017. (I moderated and spoke on an interracial and interreligious panel of non-profit leaders who discussed 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 examined the moral dimensions of effective public leadership.)

Selected Speaking Engagements

Annual Membership Assembly, Community Renewal Society, Chicago, Illinois. October 2022.

Morning Worship Service, Diversity and Inclusion Conference, National Association of Episcopal Schools, Baltimore, Maryland. March 2020.

Commemoration Service, 50th 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.

Green the Church: An Environmental Justice Summit, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago, Illinois. August 2015.

Interfaith Organizing Initiative's National Summit on Criminalization and Race, Chicago, Illinois. May 2014.

Graduation Worship Service, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. May 2013.

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 Bible and Contemporary Cultures” (This course highlights the role of culture in interpretations of classic texts such as the Bible. The course introduces students to contextual reading strategies practiced in African, African American, Asian, Asian American, Latin American, and LGBTQIA+ 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.)

“Preaching, Healing, and Justice” (This course responds to the question: How do leaders and social activists speak life-giving words and promote social justice in diverse cultural contexts? The course engages the fields of cultural studies and interreligious studies and draws upon my extensive entrepreneurial experience in establishing a non-profit organization committed to intercultural harmony.)