

# Black Theologies of Liberation

## How Should Black Lives Matter Theologically?

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### Abstract

*This article introduces this thematic issue of The Ecumenical Review, which originates from a colloquium hosted at the University of the Western Cape on Black theologies. Our aim is to propose a set of theological frames through which to consider the 11 articles presented here, as well as the study of Black theology in general. We propose that Black theologies of liberation can be understood within three theological frameworks: a theology of resistance that encompasses both the social and epistemic, a theology of existence that focuses on Black consciousness and identity, and a theology of solidarity that fully embraces African feminist and queer theological perspectives. What the contributors to this issue on Black theology succeed in doing is ushering in new ways of thinking about the subject. Not only do they open new frontiers for theorizing and conceptualizing the gospel in light of Black experiences, but they also challenge the exclusionary nature of the old frontiers, calling to attention how even liberation discourses can sometimes reinscribe hegemony.*

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## Keywords

*Black theologies, decolonial, race, women, justice, liberation, epistemic violence, reconciliation*

In the euphoric period since South Africa transitioned into a democracy in 1994, some have implied and asserted that Black liberation and the democratization of South Africa render Black liberation theology passé.<sup>2</sup> Some suggest Black liberation theology to be moribund, if not (bizarrely) presenting the danger of “reversing racism” in the situation where Black people are in political power.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the collapse of apartheid is a significant variable in emerging proposals seeking to replace “liberation” with notions deemed more appropriate for the democratic context; it is argued that the themes of “liberation” should now be replaced with those of democracy, nation-building, reconciliation, and reconstruction.<sup>4</sup> While many scholars suggest that the proponents of Black liberation theology have yet to devise a clearly defined theological framework for reflection following apartheid’s demise, the articles contained in this thematic issue tell a different story. The authors (a majority of whom are early-career Black scholars of theology and religion mainly from across South[ern] Africa), while foregrounding the phenomenal impact Black theology had on social change in the past, are also setting a strong Black theological agenda in the current moment, and for the future. They are fully aware of the situation that Allan Boesak sketches:

As we are discovering (black people, the poor, women, and LGBTQI+ persons, for example), the struggle for liberation is far from over. The naïveté of our rainbow-nation fixation has cost the vast majority of South Africans dearly. More than 50 percent of South Africans (the vast majority of them black) live in desperate poverty, and it is an undeserved, generational impoverishment that is the flip-side of the undeserved, generational white enrichment. The wealth gap is now wider than it was under apartheid. Because we attempted reconciliation devoid of justice, that process is under savage strain, social cohesion remains elusive, and racism, never conquered, is

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2 A. A. Boesak, *Children of the Waters of Meribah: Black Liberation Theology, the Miriamic Tradition, and the Challenges of 21st Century Empire* (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2019), xvi.

3 For an interesting discussion in this regard, see V. S. Vellem, “The Symbol of Liberation in South Africa in South African Public Life: A Black Theological Perspective” (PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, 2007), 16.

4 T. S. Maluleke, “The Proposal for a Theology of Reconstruction: A Critical Appraisal,” *Missionalia* 22:2 (1994), 254–58.

resurgent. The need for liberation theology is great, and most of these issues have caught us unprepared.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond awareness of the context described by Boesak above, the contributors to this thematic issue are actually doing the theological work in their research, teaching, and social advocacy commitments. Which raises the question: Why do so many people complain that Black liberation theology is in crisis? Perhaps Vuyani Vellem provides a clue in an interview with Martin Laubscher in 2018, where he boldly asserts, “The critical point we must contend with [is] the hypocritical assumption that it is BTL [Black theology of liberation] that is in crisis, rather than the whole project of Eurocentric theology in the 21st century.”<sup>6</sup> Liberation theologies, like Black, womanist, feminist, queer, and decolonial theologies, have always been the proverbial thorn in the side of Eurocentric theologies that lay unearned claim to universality and continue to entrench binaries between social advocacy work and deep theological reflection. And yet scholars within the liberation theology tradition have long called out the hypocrisy of these binaries, arguing that “God’s justice *is* social justice.”<sup>7</sup>

The extent of the challenge that liberation theologies pose to the power of Eurocentric theologies can be seen in the eagerness to suggest that the work of liberation theologies is done and that we can now return to doing “normal” theologies since the formal demise of apartheid, or the ordination of women, or even the reluctant blessing of queer partnerships, in some quarters. Black theologians beg to differ, as the articles in this thematic issue reveal.<sup>8</sup> They wish to press on with this question: How do/can Black lives matter theologically, and by extension, how do women’s lives, queer lives, Dalit people’s lives, Indigenous peoples’ lives – how do the lives of those who are marginalized matter theologically? The articles in this thematic issue point to several possible responses to such a question. We foreground three points for consideration.

## A Theology of Resistance: Social and Epistemic

The origins of Black theologies in South Africa lay in the desire of their proponents to speak prophetically and powerfully to “state theologies” that justified apartheid

<sup>5</sup> Boesak, *Children of the Waters*, xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Vuyani S. Vellem and Martin Laubscher, “Interview with Vuyani S. Vellem,” *Acta Theologica* 38:1 (2018), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Sarojini Nadar and Sarasvathie Reddy, “God’s Justice Is Social Justice: Exploring African Feminist Theologies in a Master’s Programme at Two South African Higher Education Institutions,” *Ecumenical Review* 67:4 (2015), 591–607.

<sup>8</sup> The articles are listed in the Table of Contents of this thematic issue of *Ecumenical Review* 74:4 (2022), “Black Theologies of Resistance, Existence, and Solidarity,” <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17586623/2022/74/4>.

and to “church theologies” that wanted to claim some apolitical (or neutral) stance. Prophetic theology was a theology of resistance against church and state theologies and is foundational to Black theology, as Demaine Solomons points out in his reflections on the energies that galvanized the creation of the Kairos Document. In his essay, “On Re-membering Reconciliation and the Black Theological Impulse Embedded in the Kairos Document,” Solomons argues that “debates about reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa tend to vacillate between paradigms set as dualisms: justice versus peace, equality versus unity, and repentance versus forgiveness.” He argues that prophetic theology, as a resistance theology (embedded in the Kairos Document), makes a choice in each of these cases: “the prerequisite for peace is justice, for unity is equality, and for forgiveness is repentance.”

Picking up on the treatment of Black theology as a prophetic theology is Eugene Fortein in his essay, “Vulnerable by Design.” Fortein makes a case for resisting the taken-for-granted idea that Black people are poor, marginalized, and vulnerable. He argues, “the situation of poor and vulnerable people is not an accident but a deliberate design of the powerful and is therefore closely linked to South Africa’s political past.” As a church historian, he carefully traces the structural vulnerabilities that Black people experience back to various apartheid laws, including the Native Land Act, the Group Areas Act, and the Bantu Education Act. These vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. He asserts, “this deliberate shaping of the vulnerable continues in post-apartheid South Africa.” Fortein concludes that “the COVID-19 pandemic offers a kairos moment for the church in South Africa to redesign its theologies and consider an option for Black theology as prophetic theology.”

Based on Fortein’s challenge above and the critical theological work being done by many of the contributors to this issue, it is clear that the proclivity toward resistance within Black theology did not die with the demise of apartheid, despite the claims of those who are keen to write the obituary of Black theology. Theologies of resistance were born anew, especially in projects of “un-thinking the West,”<sup>9</sup> a point the late Vuyani Vellem gestured toward.

Several articles in this thematic issue point to what “unthinking the West” might mean for Black theologizing. “Unthinking the West” involves epistemic reparations where Black theologians have to be ever vigilant about the usurping and instrumentalizing of Black liberation history, particularly in contexts where the rewards for being “woke”

<sup>9</sup> Vuyani Vellem, “Un-thinking the West: The Spirit of Doing Black Theology of Liberation in Decolonial Times,” *HTS: Theological Studies* 73:3 (2017), 1–9.

are great. This is the main subject of Sarojini Nadar and Tinyiko Maluleke's essay, "Of Theological Burglaries and Epistemic Violence: Black Theology, Decoloniality, and Higher Education." Through a critical discourse analysis of a recent publication claiming to provide decolonial perspectives about the history of theology at a Black institution of higher learning in South Africa, they show how theological knowledge about Black liberation history can be distorted to such an extent that white colonial actors can be portrayed as the originators of decoloniality! The invisibilizing of the real Black actors for liberation, as well as the audaciousness in even venturing into such decolonial claims, they argue, is epistemic violence.

Claiming the decolonial as a strong impulse within Black liberation theology, long before decoloniality became a scholarly trend, is Nobesuthu Tom in her essay, "Black Theology before the Decolonial Turn." Through carefully tracing the central arguments in the works of scholars such as James Cone, she argues that what has been called the "colonial wound" is, in many respects, the foundations of Black theologies. She highlights several central characteristics of decolonial thought found within Black theological scholarship to demonstrate three affinities: "the unmasking of epistemic silences, the distortions and denials of white theology, and the practices of epistemic disobedience."

These four articles point to the history of resistance theologies within the Black theological enterprise and the ongoing need for resistance in the contested, postcolonial/post-apartheid period. Black theology, however, is not just a theology of resistance; it is a theology of existence, as we will show in the next section.

## A Theology of Existence: Black Consciousness and Black Identity

The task of Black theology is not just to *critique* the racist and socially unjust underpinnings of systems and structures or so-called universal Western theologies – it is to *create* theologies that arise proudly from Black existential and cultural experiences and to provide more nuanced conceptions of blackness. As Desmond Tutu poignantly observes, "Our blackness is an intractable ontological surd. You cannot will it away. It is a brute fact of existence, and it conditions that existence as surely as being male or female, only more so."<sup>10</sup> This conditioning of existence that Tutu refers to is what marks the shift from critique to creation. The shift necessarily involves formulating innovative philosophies, methodologies, principles, and theoretical frameworks that engage with and draw directly from Black existence.

<sup>10</sup> Desmond Tutu, "Black Theology/African Theology: Soul Mates or Antagonists?" *Journal of Religious Thought* 32:2 (1975), 25.

An example of this can be found in Hlulani Mdingi's essay, entitled "Blackness and the God of the Oppressed," in which he argues that the state of blackness oscillates between two speculative positions: "The first puts forward the irrelevance of race in the modern technological period, a view often coming from those who are colour blind and 'optimistic' futurists. The second postulates the need to reaffirm the condition of blackness in a racist and capitalistic production-driven society." Mdingi concludes that "whatever direction technology is going, perhaps through its God complex, idolatry, and the enormous funding behind artificial intelligence, technology, and so on, blackness in the age of technology is still an insignia toward humanization and liberation."

In keeping with the idea of the importance of existential blackness, Sandiswa Lerato Kobe points to the continuing significance of the work of Black liberation theologians such as Biko and Tutu in revitalizing and infusing an appreciation of blackness and African-ness as an existential category for theologizing. In her essay, "Steve Biko's Black Theology of Liberation from the Perspective of Ubuntu," Kobe seeks to bring Steve Biko's Black theology of liberation into dialogue with Desmond Tutu's Black theology of liberation. She notes that "several scholars have argued that within the context of BTL, Tutu relied more on Christian theology derived from the Bible and tradition, while Biko relied more on Black consciousness to develop his thinking." Despite their differences, they drank from the same wells of African culture and tradition, most notably the philosophy of ubuntu. Kobe, like scholars such as Ngada and Mofokeng, is keen not to draw strict binaries between Christian and African traditions, to avoid falling into the dualist trap of Eurocentric theologies. As Ngada and Mofokeng observe, "We are simply African Christians who have preserved our African identity. Just as there is nothing wrong with being an English Christian or a Christian with any other identity, so also there is nothing strange about being an African Christian."<sup>11</sup>

What constitutes African Christianity, and how should "African" be defined within African theology and, moreover, "Black" within Black theologies? These are some of the critical questions that Johnathan Jodamus poses in his article, "The 'Pinkster Kerk' as a Site of Indigenous Religious Expression within Black Pentecostal Theology." Exploring the phenomenon of Pinkster Kerk through a decolonial epistemological framework, Jodamus highlights the Pinkster Kerk "as a productive site for indigenous meaning-making within studies on Black theology and African Pentecostalism." The Pinkster Kerk is a church formation predominantly among "Coloureds" in the Western

<sup>11</sup> Ndumiso Harry Ngada and Kenosi Mofokeng, *African Christian Witness: The Movement of the Spirit in African Indigenous Churches* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001), 17.

Cape. Beyond the novel idea that this type of Pentecostalism can be conceptualized as indigenous religion, Jodamus raises critical questions about conceptualizing “degrees of Blackness” within the important Black theological discussions on identity, politics, and race. The point about “degrees of blackness” has been taken up in other disciplines, too, and described as “the colour line.”

Sociologists Moon-Kie Jung<sup>12</sup> and Katrina Quisumbing King<sup>13</sup> point out how scholars of top sociology and race and ethnicity articles misconstrue the concept of “the colour line” through a selective reading of W.E.B. Du Bois’s notion:

“The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour-line.” WEB Du Bois’s oft-referenced aphorism appeared three times in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1965 [1903]). Seldom quoted in its entirety, the second instance went on to explain what he meant by the “colour-line”: “the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men [sic] in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.”<sup>14</sup>

The problem with straying from Du Bois’s full statement is that the colour-line gets characterized as “unidimensional and Black–white rather than as many divisions between non-white people and whites,”<sup>15</sup> suggests King. Apart from noting the nuances missed in these conflation, King makes a more critical point that “scholars portray the colour line as the outcome of micro-level factors rather than the product of international geopolitical arrangements.”<sup>16</sup> While the lines of solidarity between those classified African, Coloured, and Indian were strong in the fight against apartheid, those lines of solidarity need to be reclaimed in the current moment more than ever, as structures of empire and white supremacy are critically engaged with. As editors of this thematic issue, we lay a strong claim to political blackness while being fully aware of the privileges that “brownness” has allocated to us in contexts marked by anti-Black racism, even within predominantly Black societies. Notwithstanding our combined histories of euphemistically termed indenture in Colonial Natal and slavery in the Cape, honest and candid conversations about race fluidity and colour blindness need to be had, especially when power is obscured through claims of neutrality and universality. This reflexivity cannot be resolved in one compulsory identity marker at the beginning of the paper,

<sup>12</sup> Moon-Kie Jung, “The Problem of the Color Lines: Studies of Racism and Resistance,” *Critical Sociology* 41:2 (2015), 193–99.

<sup>13</sup> Katrina Quisumbing King, “Recentering US Empire: A Structural Perspective on the Color Line,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 5:1 (2019), 11–25.

<sup>14</sup> Jung, “The Problem of the Color Lines,” 193.

<sup>15</sup> King, “Recentering US Empire,” 11.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

but it needs constant reflection and revision so that we do not fall prey to the red herding of oppression olympics, nor to the equally problematic “what-aboutisms” that dominate public discourses.

While we need to always be vigilant about not collapsing all forms of oppression into a vulgar relativism, we also have to call Black theological thinkers to account for the ways in which they have not more fully included the marginalization of women and queer people as part of the agenda of Black theology. In this respect, Black theology has to account for how it might have failed to be a genuine theology of solidarity.

## A Theology of Solidarity: African Feminist and Queer Perspectives

All the articles in this issue locate Black theology firmly within the liberation theology tradition, and many argue for its decolonial impulse long before decoloniality became a scholarly trend. Exploring the connections between Black theologies and African theologies of liberation early in the 1970s was Desmond Tutu, in a book chapter called “Black Theology/African Theology – Soul Mates or Antagonists?”<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding the clear connections between liberation discourses within African, feminist, womanist, queer, and decolonial theologies, Vuyani Vellem’s question concerning the lessons Black theology did not learn<sup>18</sup> is taken up in several of the articles in this issue.

In their essay, entitled “Black Theology and Insights from African Women’s Theologies,” Isabel Apawo Phiri and Masiwa Ragies Gunda explore the relationship between Black theologies and African women’s theologies, asking a critical question: “What would Black theology look like if it considered gender a critical variable for theologizing?” They conclude that “within Black theology lies the largely untapped potential to not only address growing waves of anti-Black racism, but also, using an intentional intersectionality lens, to privilege gender, disability, and ethnicity in its purview.”

Also exploring the untapped potential of African women’s theologies is Selena Headley in her essay, “Black Theology in Theological Education.” Through an exploration of the key features of African women’s theologies, she concludes that the success that African women have gained in mainstreaming gender (engendering) in theological education can also be instructive for Black theologies, as it seeks to

<sup>17</sup> Desmond Tutu, “Black Theology/African Theology – Soul Mates or Antagonists?” in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966–1979*, ed. G. S. Wilmore and J. H. Cone, 483–91 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> Vuyani Vellem, “Hermeneutical Embers from the Zone of Non-being,” Unpublished paper, presented at the Council for World Mission DARE Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, 2017, 2.



provide a sustained and widening influence in the shaping of theological education. Notwithstanding the lessons that can be learned from African women's theologies, she makes the critical observation that they were forged because African women "lacked substantive representation in Black theology or African theology, African women's theologies were forged in the face of many challenges. The advent of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians . . . is well documented as a response to the lack of voice and presence of African women in the theological enterprise."

Equally critical of the lesson concerning gender that Black theology has not learned is Fundiswa Kobo in her article, "Walking Together to the Promised Land: Womanism and Black Theology of Liberation." She "posits that Black theology of liberation (BTL) focused only on race and class, even when it included patriarchy in its theological vision, thus running the risk of truncating the liberation of Black humanity." Drawing on Gayraud Wilmore's work, Kobo argues that "Womanist theology is not a branch of Black theology, nor is it a substitute for Black theology. Womanist theology *is* Black theology."<sup>19</sup>

Making a similar point in the article "Black Theology in Dialogue with LGBTQ+ Persons in the Black Church: Walking in the Shoes of James Hal Cone and Katie Geneva Cannon," SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai recalls the links between Black theologies and womanist theologies and provocatively asks, "Who is Cone without Cannon? What is Black theology without Womanist theology?"<sup>20</sup> Ahiokhai goes on to assert:

As though their destinies are intricately linked as those of Osiris and Isis, Cone and Cannon spent many years articulating theological narratives that gave voice to the Black experience. When theology is used to silence the voices at the margins intentionally or unintentionally, a corrective measure calls for a prophetic stance. The structures of oppression that Cone and Cannon spent their adult lives deconstructing are like a complex web holding its victim hostage from many angles.<sup>21</sup>

Focusing on this "complex web holding its victim hostage from many angles" is Godfrey Owino Adera's article in this issue, "Black, Queer, and Christian." Adera points out the irony of theologies that centralize Black identity and dignity and yet exclude queer Africans as subjects of African Christian theologies, claiming that

<sup>19</sup> G. A. Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith through an Africentric Lens* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 207.

<sup>20</sup> SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai, "Black Theology in Dialogue with LGBTQ+ Persons in the Black Church: Walking in the Shoes of James Hal Cone and Katie Geneva Cannon," *Theology and Sexuality* 27:2–3 (2021), 138.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

queerness is “un-African.” He contends that “this is curious and ironic because Black queer identities are excluded from the racial category of blackness and are forcefully assigned whiteness as an identity. Yet, contrary to the popular belief that the concept of whiteness is related to power, superiority, and privilege, the identification of Black queer people with whiteness suggests that LGBT lived experiences are ‘un-African’ and thus (ironically) entrenching powerlessness and ‘unbelongingness.’”

To address this unbelongingness and powerlessness that have resulted from the exclusionary dynamics concerning women and queer people, it may be instructive to reconsider how James Cone and Katie Geneva Cannon worked out their agendas for Black theologies. Aihioekhai reminds us,

While Cone focused his effort on articulating a systematic approach to Black theology that helped to shed light on the hypocrisy of what has come to be called normative theology, which is at best a colonising theology that favoured heterosexual White men, whose experiences in human history have come to be taken for granted as the universal norm, Cannon, on the other hand, focused her prophetic gaze on the terrain of feminist ethics, where the normative standard was still one that favoured Whiteness and heterosexuality.<sup>22</sup>

This is a stark reminder of the common enemy for Black theologies: white supremacy and heteronormative patriarchy. How must Black lives matter in a world where white supremacy and heteronormative patriarchy dominate our social imaginaries?

### Conclusion: How Must Black Lives Matter Theologically?

On 15 May 2022, a white student, Theuns du Toit, at Stellenbosch University near Cape Town, in South Africa, went into the dormitory room of a Black student and urinated on his computer, his books, and other belongings. The video of the incident was widely circulated on social media, sparking country-wide outrage. The incident led to the suspension and eventual expulsion of Theuns du Toit on 21 July 2022, after a university investigation.<sup>23</sup>

Just a week after this incident, on 23 May 2022, several of the contributors to this thematic issue of the journal gathered together at an online colloquium to consider the continuing significance of Black liberation theology for contemporary struggles. While the reason for this gathering was not directly related to the Stellenbosch University

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Marvin Charles, “Stellenbosch Urine Saga: Theuns du Toit Expelled after University Finds Him Guilty,” News24, 21 July 2022, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/stellenbosch-urine-saga-theuns-du-toit-expelled-after-university-finds-him-guilty-20220721>.

incident, this critical event brought the ongoing significance of Black liberation theology into painfully sharp focus, and the matter inevitably permeated and shaped the discussions throughout the colloquium.

The collection of articles in this thematic issue arising from that colloquium, offered in the year that the World Council of Churches held its 11th Assembly, in Karlsruhe, Germany, with the theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” posed critical questions about what reconciliation and unity mean in global contexts of mounting racism against Black bodies and lives. The contributors also asked probing questions not just about reconciliation between Black and white bodies but about Black and white bodies of theological knowledge. Who produces theological knowledge and how that knowledge is produced in light of Black experiences and social contexts constituted many of the questions put forward in the articles. What topics should Black theology be occupied with? And can vulnerability and poverty be taken as inherently part of the Black condition, or should more critical questions be asked?

Who qualifies to be considered Black, and what happens in contexts where race is invisibilized through claims of post-racialist societies or ostensibly neutral territories such as in the area of technology? What of forgiveness and reconciliation, and can these ever be in balance with reparation and restitution, let alone with truth and justice? If Black theology is about epistemologically privileging the experiences of Black people, why have women and those who identify as queer been marginalized within Black theological discourses? These are just some of the inquiries in which the authors engaged in this thematic issue. Interestingly, most of the articles cite South Africa as the locus and location of Black theology on the continent. While many argue that this was perhaps necessary given the direct and recent history of apartheid, several contributors recognized the need for Black theology to move beyond South Africa not just to the rest of the continent, but indeed even to Europe and the US (without disputing the origins of Black theology in the US). However, there is still much to learn from the experience of Black theologizing in South Africa, where Black people constitute a majority.

While the focus of each of the articles was different, they overlapped in many ways, often foregrounding common theoretical, methodological and socio-political starting points. What was common to all the articles is the unanimous agreement on the ongoing significance and import of the Black theological project. Despite the overlap in concerns in several of the articles, each article gave clues to defining what Black theology is, what lessons we can learn (or have not learned), and what the agenda for Black theology might be going forward.

Perhaps the most critical feature of these contributions is how the authors expanded the semantic range of the meaning of liberation in Black liberation theology. Salvation in Christ is equated and given meaning in the liberation of oppressed people (Black people, poor people, women, and LGBTQI+ persons). In more concrete terms, liberation reflects the need for justice for the marginalized. In this context, the significance of Black liberation creates an environment in which the marginalized open themselves to receive God's saving love. This reflects the liberation from social oppression, including the liberation from servitude and sin that breaks humanity's relationship with God and others. To liberate is to give life! To be liberated is to be sanctified. Sanctification does not mean substituting inward piety for social justice, nor does a focus on liberation imply an exclusive political activity. What these articles show is that the ability to hold space for both the spiritual and the social in a radical embrace of inclusion is a hallmark of Black liberation theology, separating it from its colonial counterpart as a theology of resistance, a theology of existence, and a theology of solidarity.