

WEBVTT

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Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome. My name is Brandon Thomas Crowley and I serve as the Director of Theological Education at the Episcopal Divinity School. It is such a joy to have you with us today for How Art Can Liberate.

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with Dr. James Howard Hill Jr. This gathering is part of our ongoing work at EDS to create spaces for reflection, learning, and faithful imagination as the church wrestles with urgent questions about faith.

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and justice in our world. Today's conversation centers on how art can liberate. This conversation invites us to think of theology as a form of storytelling and artistic truth-telling, where creative vision opens space to witness divine movement.

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Though an artist, through an artist's lens, we are encouraged to loosen inherited assumptions about God and expand the possibilities for encounter, imagination, and liberation.

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Before we begin, I invite you to introduce yourselves in the chat and let us know where you are joining us from. We love seeing the breadth of our community gathered here. A couple of housekeeping rules and notes as you share your location and name.

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This event will run for about an hour, with time at the end for your questions. Please place those questions in the Q&A tab or in the chat as they arise, and we will be sure to bring them into the conversation later on in the program when possible.

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This session is being recorded and will be available as a resource for ongoing learning and reflection in the future. It is now my joy and pleasure to welcome Dr. Oluwa Tomisin Ola Yinka.

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or redeem. Dr. Tomi, as we call her, is a proud daughter.

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and she is a friend, a poet, a creative writer, and an assistant dean for strategic initiatives and theological imagination and associate professor in Black religious traditions and Constructive Theology and Ethics.

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at the Bright Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. She is teaching a class with us this semester, and we are so honored to have her. This session today is a part of that ongoing class. I welcome Dr. Tome now to introduce our special guest.

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Welcome, everyone. So glad that you are here. So glad that you are here to be in conversation to learn with us. I have the distinct pleasure of having a conversation with a colleague that I deeply admired, Dr. James Howard Hill, Jr.

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Dr. James Howard Hill Jr. Is assistant professor in the Department of Religion at Boston University. He holds a BA from Criswell College and Mts from Southern Methodist University, and a PhD from Northwestern University.

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He teaches courses and conducts research in Black Study, religion, and the politics of popular culture in the United States, teaches on political theory, Black political thought, modernity, ecology, and coloniality, and conceptual methodologies informing the study of religion. He teaches on everything, y'all.

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Hill Jr. Is the author of two forthcoming books, very, very soon forthcoming, The Haunting King, Religion, Michael Jackson and the Politics of Black Popular Culture, as well as another book, Haunting Joy.

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Essays on religion, Black popular culture, and overcoming childhood adversity. Dr. James Howard Hill, welcome, and I'm so blessed and glad that we are going to be in conversation today. How are you doing?

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Uh, thank you.

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I'm doing well, as I always say. I'm better, I'm better every time I'm talking to you, family, so I'm good. I'm good. I can't wait. I've been waiting all week for this conversation, so... Oh, great.

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Yeah.

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Same, same. I'm just glad. We're gonna talk about the aortics, we're gonna talk about art, we're gonna talk about liberation,

decoloniality. I want us to talk about every and anything that comes to mind, so that we can share and just bounce off of, sharpen each other.

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I'm home now. I'm on now.

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Yeah. Beautiful. Beautiful.

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And, you know, folks get to be witnessing the conversation and then join join the conversation later. So I'll start off. This the session is called How Art Can Liberate.

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Yeah. Yeah.

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Um, I want to start off with a big question, and it's okay if you don't want to answer it in the way, you know, that I name it, but... What kind of art do you do?

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Yeah, great, great opening, great opening question. Thank you for that. The art I do, I would say first starting off writing. I'm a writer, and I think that's important to name writing as a mode of art. I think we'll get into it, which, what we create.

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you know, even while we're... there's jobs we have, but then we can see there's an excess to it, right? So, you know, not every person who's a scholar is a writer, right? And many of them will say that. They'll be the first to say that, right? And, you know, and that's.

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That's... that's that, but for me, being a writer, the... as we'll get into later on, what you can create. And as we'll go on, you know, later in the conversation, what opportunities, what portals, what the, uh, the fantastic possibility, right? The ways in which we can break the acknowledged order through what we offer others, right? And so writing is one portal.

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is one way in which I seek to do that. Photography is another. I'm a photographer. Um, and then I also want to put... want to say teaching, pedagogy. Teaching is absolutely performance. All of us have been in some form of school or another, and you can imagine.

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the teachers who really. Teaching was central. The art, the performance, how they... the way they appeared in class, the way they were able to, even with syllabi, scaffolding material, it is... it is an artful practice, you know, and so the art... I like to think of the art of teaching.

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Yeah. Yeah.

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And I'm always, I think that there's a gravity to that, so I don't just show up to class because I have to show up to class. Like, there are 50 students. There are, in my classes, there are 100 students, right? Anytime you're standing in front of 100 human beings for one hour.

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you performing, right? Whether you want to think about that or not, right? But I think it could be an honest performance, a true performance, but under that gravity. So, for me, uh, I operate under that gravity. So, uh, writing, photography.

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Um, and teaching are the three primary instruments of my art practice.

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There we go, let's get it. Let's get it.

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So so I'm already going off script. the ways that you express yourself around what you witness, around what you want to share. I mean, we're just even just thinking within your scholastic life. We're not even talking about all the other areas of your life.

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Yeah. Yeah.

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Um, that you consider art form. That's... it makes me wonder, um, and this might sound like a cheeky question, I don't know, it might be.

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What training? Did you get to do those respective types of art form? Was it the classroom? Was it life? I mean, what was the training?

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Yeah, great. 1 out of 3, I would say was the, I would say was the classroom, but also as my upcoming book, The Haunted Fantastic really digs into, I think of a term a term that I utilize as crate theorizing. So if we're familiar with music, the idea of the crate

digger, right? So hip hop producers, there's a is a time.

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honored tradition where hip-hop producers go to record stores, and they just... they dig through the crates, right? They spend hours digging through funk archives and jazz archives and old R&B archives, looking for that one.

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Note, right, that they can go back and sample in loop, and that's how we have classic hip hop beats. Well, for me, growing up, I, as a child, I stayed... I stayed in used bookstores. I'm from Dallas, so we have there's a bookstore that I write about that's central to me.

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It's a sacred site for me. Half-price books. And so it's a massive... the flagship store is in Dallas Warehouse, and it's everything. Philosophy, social, social theory, black studies, theology.

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uh, autobiographies, right? Um, all of it's there. So as a child, that was my crate digging. I would just go in the afternoon and spend literal hours just working through philosophy, working through literature, working through science fiction. But the reason why that's important, family.

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Mm-hmm. Yeah.

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Is that that's how I learned. So philosophy was next to theology, which was next to black studies. I didn't know Black Studies wasn't religion.

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I didn't know that religion wasn't science fiction, that was too different. The Academy had to teach me that. And so I was just reading and cross-pollinating, and as a 12-year-old, as a 13-year-old, so imagine going into the university and saying, oh no, this is theology.

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Hmm...

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This is history. This is cultural studies. This is popular culture, and they don't touch. So I was already operating with a sort of embodied refusal because that's not that's not how I learned.

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Hmm.

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you know, they were also... I was putting them in conversation as a teenager, and so for me, the theologian was in conversation with the philosopher. The philosopher was in conversation with the funk... with the funk artist. The funk artist was in conversation with Octavia Butler in science fiction, because I read them all together, and I heard how they were.

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So I didn't see the sort of division as organic and natural. I felt that it was imposed. I feel that it was imposed, and definitely you get to theology, as we'll talk later, the crucifixion of Christ. That's horror! That's haunting, right? And so, for me, being able to read about.

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Hmm.

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What was done to Jesus, right? And the rest of the way in which Jesus was not only arrested and tried, but the violence of that, the gratuity of that, the ways in which empire, you know, is we're in Lenten season, right? Empire thought that everything was finished.

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Right? And then the ways in which that community said, not necessarily, right? So I'm reading all of this, but I'm reading it in conversation with Black history. So, as I'm getting to comb the cross and the lynching tree, I understand the moves that he's making.

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Hmm.

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Hmm.

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He sees the lynching, and he puts it in conversation. See, for me, that's cross... that's cross-pollination. That's crate theorizing. He sees the crucifixion in conversation with the lynching tree, and he's confused why Niebuh doesn't.

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He's confused why the theological evidence... he's confused on why he's taking everybody else so long to put these things in conversation, because as an intellectual, he was always, as an artist, as we can get into as a theopoetician, right, the poetics of his writing, that's why it's so confusing as we get into the Academy. It's so confusing to sit with Cohen.

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Because these moves he's making at the beginning, he's a child not only of Bearden, Arkansas, right? But he's a child of Black Study.

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So for him, coming at it also being in the Harlem of the Black Arts Movement, how can you not be thinking with Amiri Baraka in 1970? How can you not be thinking of Sonia Sanchez? How can you not be thinking with Nikki Giovanni? How can you not think about the spirituals and the blues as you're thinking about Christology and theological anthropology?

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So there. Mm-hmm.

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How can you not? Right? And so for me, I'm just that, that, so just to get back to it, cross crate theorizing would then inform the ways in which I got to the academy. And one thing I don't want to lose before we get to the next point.

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I didn't start out at a research one university, and I've been writing about this a lot more explicitly. My first start off with Bible college, and there's a lot of critiques, and I'm the first one to give the critiques are legion of Bible Colleges.

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Yeah.

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But what I'm saying is, and I know this being at an R1 right now, I wasn't at 18. I wasn't going to Bible college because I knew I was going to make 100,000 a year or because that was even my aim. My students, the students next to me, you had military veterans.

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sitting next to me reading the Greek. You had mothers, you know, taking extension classes next to me, and I'm 18, you know, parts with Hebrew flashcards. That's important for formation, and we're reading theologians as scholarly work. So we're reading, you know.

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Ephesus, and we're reading pastoral theology. So imagine being 18, and the only type of academic writing you know is theology. So you're thinking about writers thinking about the world to really critique the world, and the movement.

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Oh.

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the Jesus movement, so all that's important in my formation, because by the time I get to Northwestern, and I get to the research one, and they're trying to get me in control and telling me what's academic writing, and I know you love this, what scholarship, I already have two degrees in seven years, and I'm like, oh, no, no, no, no, no, no!

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That's not scholarship and real academic writing. That's what y'all do over here. Shout out to the robe in the back, right? That's what y'all do over there. So you can name that that's what you do, and that scholarship for you, and that's academic rigor for you, but don't you put your mouth on James Cohen and say he ain't doing academic writing. Don't put your mouth on bail hooks and say she ain't doing academic writing. Don't put your mouth on Karen Baker Fletcher and say she ain't doing academic writing. It's not the fact that they're not doing.

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academic writing, y'all have made the decision not to respect it over here, and you have to be specific.

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It sounds like this is this is going into the next question around, you know, what is art to you? I'm hearing art is lens that expresses the multiplicity that's already inherent in your being. But what is... what does art to you?

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Yeah, yeah. I have a sentence for that, that it's really the central, the centerpiece family of my... my art practice and my scholarship, which to me are in two different practices, right? But to specify, it's... it's... instrumentally instrumentalizing one's haunting and service to the fantastic, right? And so for me, haunting is these two words I want to situate. Haunting isn't just, you know, ghost and the sort of genre and the way we're trained to think of haunting as scary, as spooky, as the undead, right? All that, that's haunting.

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Absolutely. But theorist Avery Gordon defines haunting as social violences that are interruptive, that mark that it's the past that refuses to be passed, that represents, ultimately, a something to be done. So when you think, so when we... so as a shorthand, when we think of haunting.

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We're thinking about a something to be done. So we think on a political register, if we say the US is haunted, it's not just that

the dead are present. Well, the ancestors are among us and they haunt us. Sure, but also what we're saying is that the... Is that the US is textured by this dangerous memory that you can ban a book, but you're banning a book because you're really trying to police a haunting, right? And you can ban a book, but friend, you can't ban a haunting. And until this nation reckons with itself, it will always be haunted, because of what you did to them indigenous babies by building them indigenous boarding schools, right? You'll always be haunted because of the auction block. You'll always be haunted because of the plantation. You'll always be.

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Because the failure of Reconstruction, Jim and Jane Crow, the emergence of the Klan, the church bombings, right? Tulsa, and you have the opportunity!

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to reckon with all of it! But you've decided you don't have to. So because you have decided, just like in horror movies, you are, you are in that haunted house. You hear the creaking, you see the smashing of the china, you know, plates. You see the deaths smashing against the wall, you see that dead little girl at the end of the room, but you've.

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Hmm.

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convinced yourself that none of this is haunted not because you don't see what you see. Hauntings can't exist for you and we live in a nation that convinces itself every day it's not a haunted nation, not because there's not violence and disturbances and chaos is rupturing all around us.

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We live in a nation that convinces itself that hauntings can't exist, right? And so that's not just a political critique or a political analysis. I'm saying if we're honest, and this is where I really come out, and I really want to talk, as a theorist, many of us show up to these universities haunted.

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Not just because of these political realities, we have haunted childhoods. We got haunted relationships with our families. We got haunted relationships with our churches and with faith. And what does that mean? It's these it's these social violences.

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The things that happen to us by the people who loved us and the institutions that were supposed to protect us. But they did wrong by

us. Right. And we show up to these universities and we show up to these seminaries haunted, suppressing all the things that we've been made to carry.

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Right? And so the point for me of art is that it doesn't go anywhere.

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Hmm. Hmm.

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What your daddy did to you ain't going nowhere. What your mama said to you didn't go nowhere? What that pastor did to you and what those church folks said to you when you came to them vulnerable, you can think of the way that's still coursing through your nervous system and you know it, but you've become professional.

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And you're ordained, and you have to, and you have to tell yourself that you've categorized it. So the art for me, the art for me is, no, no, no, no, no, it's there. And once again, it's that eruption. You know what's there, because it's gonna come up. It's gonna come out. And so, for me as an artist.

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Hmm.

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We have to do something with that. And so that's when that's the lens by which I look at Black music, I look at Black art, because the ways in which the spirituals instrumentalize that haunting, the ways in which the blues instrumentalize that haunting, the way Motown, before the Temptations even sang, the way they dressed, they instrumented.

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You say we're nothing. You say we're savages. You say we're beasts of burdens, but look at all of us on this stage. You've never seen nothing that's clean in your life, and you know it. We hunt you. And so that... so the haunting gives way to the fantastic, and we know the fantastic.

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Right? It's the break in the acknowledged order of things. It's Alice in Wonderland, fantastic literature. Tulips aren't supposed to speak!

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But then you find yourself in Wonderland. Cats, chess cats aren't supposed to grin until you find yourself in Wonderland, right? You ain't supposed to have giant chairs and miniature people until you find yourself in Wonderland. But the invitation for us to consider

family is not just a literary trope.

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Black people are fantastic. We entered the world as nothing according to the world standard. We entered the world as soulless, according to the world standard. We entered the world as not having God in us, or in our people, or on our land, according to the world standards. So when Black people started talking about liberty.

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And black people heard what was going on in France, and what was going on in the colonies, and what happened down in Haiti. And they said this doctrine of the human and this discourse of human rights, that's ours, too. Oh, friends, it is more fantastic for a black person to declare that freedom is theirs than for a tulip to speak in Wonderland, right? And so anytime.

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Black people, or people who have... Black or otherwise, through your hauntings.

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You are not supposed to be here, but here you are.

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Hmm.

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Male, female, trans, non-binary, disabled, whatever, poor, wealthy. You're not supposed to be here.

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And if you somehow survived the world that didn't help you is expecting you to act as if you're grateful that they didn't help you, and you survived. So, you don't have to be grateful to these folks.

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for not helping you right? And I think we and we have resources in our faith tradition that gives us credence to say, we ain't got to play that game.

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Hmm.

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As we break the acknowledged order of things in our work, in our teaching, and if we're nurses, if we're pastors, every time we recognize the acknowledged order.

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Hmm.

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And then we break it, the anti-expected shows up. And when we find the anti-expected, we are in the presence of the fantastic, and every art that is in service to instrumentalizing and naming hauntings in service to breaking loose that which was supposed to remain peripheralized.

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For me, we're in the presence of the fantastic.

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Hmm. Does that also mean that we're in the presence of art as liberationist?

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Yeah, I think... I think it has those properties. I think that, and I love every time we talk, because... and I love this conversation, because I think that.

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Mm-hmm.

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Theological education, we need these conversations because. You can be a liberationist and know your students are suffering and not give a damn.

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Correct.

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You can be a liberationist and know there's all type of injustice in your department, all types of injustice on your campus, and you can get a grant because you're a liberationist and your students are hungry, and you'll never know, because that's not part of your job.

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And so I'm very am I have a Du Bois and unhopeful hope when it comes to liberation, because as a... once again, I'm one of those students. You know, when we were grad students, when I was a grad student and my wife was in her third trimester, bless God, a beloved seminary tried to evict us.

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because they wanted to remodel. They won't have to remodel the apartment, and so they gave us the link to an apartment finder while my wife was in her third trimester.

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And we can just tell the truth and shame every devil. There was a lot of liberationists on that campus.

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Hmm. Hmm.

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Hmm.

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Hmm.

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Our meeting was filled with students. not the liberationist, not the people writing books on liberation, not the people getting fellowships for liberation, not the people going on sabbatical to write more about liberation. The liberationists were offended that I dared make public what was happening to my family. The liberationists told me we should handle this internally.

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left the university handle it in the name of liberation. And so, I feel, once again, I think the framework works.

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Because... These people, who I love to this day.

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It's a critical love. They have the opportunity to break the acknowledged order of that campus on behalf of a student.

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Yeah.

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But that breaking might have cost him something, if only proximity to power, institutional power, departmental power, right? Seminary power, right? And so they were going to let me and my pregnant wife be on the streets to maintain their proximity, maintain their whatever. So once again, that may be.

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Hmm.

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Hmm.

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whatever that is, I'm not even invested in figuring out whatever that

is, but whatever that is, that's what you did. But then, on the other side, you can't come back to me at AAR and talk about how proud of you, how proud of you, you, how proud of me you are as you're promoting your next book on liberation.

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Hmm.

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So, you know, and so I think that once again, if we're honest, even the people here, it may not be a seminary, but you know.

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Hmm.

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Within your denomination. within your college, within your whatever. There are some people who right now have had to bear the cost of policy and procedure. And the thing is, whenever.

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Students go hungry, students go unhoused, people in our communities don't have resources that they need. All of a sudden, all these liberationists can't find a Bible verse. They're not doing what they're doing in the name of Jesus.

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They're doing what they're doing in the name of institutionality, so I... whatever that got to say about liberation is art, that's why I love this conversation about art and theopoetics, and decoloniality, because, once again, as a professor who tarries with other professors, there's a lot of liberationist discourse coming out, you know, around us.

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It's a lot of suffering students. And when the students are suffering, and the students are selling their course books to get some food because they can't eat, and they're already degreed, and already ingrasped in grad school, but the 18-year-olds got coffee, but these 28-year-olds and 38-year-olds and 45-year-olds can go to a coffee store and buy a \$10 cup of coffee, because they're negative \$58 in their bank account, and too embarrassed to say something because the university ain't going to help them.

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Hmm.

00:24:48.000 --> 00:25:00.000

In the name of Jesus. what are we doing? Just be honest about what we're doing. Liberation ain't it. And guess what? In the US, it might

not need to be it.

00:25:00.000 --> 00:25:01.000

Hmm.

00:25:01.000 --> 00:25:09.000

Because when Cohen was writing 50 years ago, he wasn't hoping on getting tenure, but he wrote it because he had to.

00:25:09.000 --> 00:25:12.000

Not because there was a grant and a sabbatical on the other side of it. He had to write that.

00:25:12.000 --> 00:25:15.000

Hmm.

00:25:15.000 --> 00:25:22.000

God wouldn't let him go until he wrote that. We writing it because a job opening is up and they're looking for a liberationist.

00:25:22.000 --> 00:25:23.000

Hmm.

00:25:23.000 --> 00:25:33.000

What's good? Could we need jobs? Good! But as we always need to ask about all of this in our getting, what are we, what is it costing us?

00:25:33.000 --> 00:25:54.000

As they are recognizing us, what do we risk losing as a people, as a community, as a church? When the university favors us for a season and has a line and has a job opening and says we recognize the liberationists, we have a position for decolonial thought. What does it mean for a university to set aside space on campus to think about decoloniality and still be a university?

00:25:54.000 --> 00:25:57.000

That's an oxymoron like jumbo shrimp.

00:25:57.000 --> 00:26:17.000

Like I say, institutions need to be anti-institution. That's the only way for anything such as liberation or decoloniality to make its way and have any type of permanence within those spaces. I mean, so, okay, I'm putting liberation and decoloniality kind of we're thinking about them in the same ways.

00:26:17.000 --> 00:26:19.000

This is me going off script. It sounds like.

00:26:19.000 --> 00:26:24.000

Yeah.

00:26:24.000 --> 00:26:30.000
a liberationist. Let me say it this way.

00:26:30.000 --> 00:26:45.000
A liberationist approach, decolonial approach does not sound like a... dissociated discourse, or anything that one can pick up, take up, study, because study is really interesting.

00:26:45.000 --> 00:27:03.000
Same with, you know, decoloniality. But it sounds like it's an inherent way of being. It sounds core ontology than anything else. You don't... do liberationist or decolonial anything. You are liberationist or decolonial.

00:27:03.000 --> 00:27:09.000
And... What? What?

00:27:09.000 --> 00:27:15.000
Do you imagine? And... can help nurture.

00:27:15.000 --> 00:27:21.000
So you you you realize and understand. Oh, I don't study this. I am this.

00:27:21.000 --> 00:27:22.000
Yeah.

00:27:22.000 --> 00:27:30.000
What can help one? live well in the realization of their identity as.

00:27:30.000 --> 00:27:31.000
Decolonial of their identity as liberationist.

00:27:31.000 --> 00:27:47.000
Yeah. Yeah, beautiful question, family. You know, I say, you know, with the with a grin, but I mean it. I don't... I don't just read about this stuff. I don't just write about it. I don't just specialize in it.

00:27:47.000 --> 00:27:48.000
Hmm.

00:27:48.000 --> 00:28:01.000
No, no, no, I believe I'm a Christian. at at Boston University and the Department of Religion, and the College of Art and Science. No, I am smeared by this thing. I am a Christian, friend. And what I mean by that is, let this mind be in you.

00:28:01.000 --> 00:28:07.000

That was also in Christ Jesus. Oh, my goodness. See, I'm getting happy right now. Let this mind be.

00:28:07.000 --> 00:28:08.000

Yeah.

00:28:08.000 --> 00:28:13.000

That's the... let this mind be in you, and when that mind was in that brother, what did that mind lead him to do?

00:28:13.000 --> 00:28:15.000

Mm-hmm.

00:28:15.000 --> 00:28:32.000

You know, and so when I... when I'm talking about haunted, right? I love that language of haunted. We are haunted by Christ consciousness. And what? And if we're honest, once again, I'm not trying... I'm in my office, I'm contending with the same powers everybody else is contending with, bless God. But what I'm saying is that.

00:28:32.000 --> 00:28:44.000

people will be able to tell. what you're haunted by and who you're haunted by. And so for me, I wanted to be known that.

00:28:44.000 --> 00:28:45.000

Mmm...

00:28:45.000 --> 00:28:54.000

You can be upset with me, just be upset with me for the right reasons, you know? That I... that this mind in me, right, the mind that you hear, the energy that you feel, it's the fact that.

00:28:54.000 --> 00:29:05.000

By the time people told me that I really couldn't follow Jesus like that, I was too far gone.

00:29:05.000 --> 00:29:06.000

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

00:29:06.000 --> 00:29:19.000

Because from Bible college and Sunday school, which is really school, Sunday school, school, like every other school, Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, you can't be putting this... you can't be putting this dispossessed, you know, uh, uh, Jewish brother from the backside of empire who was... who was strung up by empire. You can't be teaching this to a 70-year-old.

00:29:19.000 --> 00:29:39.000

and tell him, go alone to get along. You can't have that cross in the front of a church for 18 years, and then say, you know, you gotta get

yours, which I love, as we're talking about how we can help. There's in fact I was just showing my students in the spirit of Black History Month, and mind you, about 3 or 4 out of 100 students are black. So imagine how this conversation is going. It's great, but it's haunted.

00:29:39.000 --> 00:29:55.000

And in the film Malcolm X, there's a scene where Malcolm, played by Denzel Washington, is in a room with Brother Baines, and for those who haven't seen the film, Brother Baines, I believe is his name, was a brother who, when Malcolm was in prison.

00:29:55.000 --> 00:30:12.000

gave Malcolm first introduced Malcolm to Islam in the film version. It's different in the autobiography, but in the film version, he... Malcolm was in prison, was in jail, was in prison, he was a hustler, didn't want nothing to do with organized religion, didn't want nothing to do with God. And Brother Baines, make a long story short, really introduces him in the film to Islam.

00:30:12.000 --> 00:30:17.000

Malcolm pursues it. He's devoted to it. Then we get to the outside.

00:30:17.000 --> 00:30:22.000

And he realizes on the outside, Brother Baines, in the film, at least, Brother Baines is cashing in.

00:30:22.000 --> 00:30:41.000

And Malcolm's in this room with a few of the ministers, and Malcolm and Brother Baines is explaining to Malcolm why, you know, Allah wants his people to thrive, and Allah wants his people to live well. But what's happening is there's... what the preachers are doing on the backside is not what they're presenting to the people in front.

00:30:41.000 --> 00:30:50.000

And so Malcolm is just sitting there, if you watch the film, and he... he's kind of just Denzel, masterful performance sitting there, and he begins to murmur out loud.

00:30:50.000 --> 00:30:55.000

God's word ain't no hustle. God's word ain't no hustle.

00:30:55.000 --> 00:31:00.000

He said, you remember when you told me that, Brother Baines? Now I'm telling you God's word.

00:31:00.000 --> 00:31:15.000

Ain't no hustle, brother. And I think that if there's any word we can give the people that I I that is that is that is God. I don't I don't care if it was pinned by the words pinned by the hand of Spike Lee. That is God's word for me. Every morning I wake up.

00:31:15.000 --> 00:31:21.000

and get on the tee and leave Quincy for Boston in my head.

00:31:21.000 --> 00:31:32.000

God's word ain't no hustle Hill. God's word ain't no hustle. When you're in that department meeting, remember God's word ain't no hustle. When you're in front of those students, those business majors.

00:31:32.000 --> 00:31:39.000

God's Word ain't no hustle. When you're filling out your mid tenure review and you know what you might be expected to say.

00:31:39.000 --> 00:31:45.000

God's word ain't no hustle here. And so, the words that Malcolm was given to get him out of prison.

00:31:45.000 --> 00:31:46.000

Hmm.

00:31:46.000 --> 00:31:57.000

outside of prison, he has to give it back, and I feel, whether we're talking we're ministers, whether we're talking professors, oh, sometimes we gotta tell the teachers who taught us.

00:31:57.000 --> 00:32:05.000

Sometimes we gotta go back to our theologians. Sometimes we gotta go back to our professors and say, you remember what you told me in that New Testament class?

00:32:05.000 --> 00:32:14.000

You remember what you told me in that minor prophets course before you knew I was going to be a professor, before you knew I was seeking tenure. Remember when you told me about empire?

00:32:14.000 --> 00:32:18.000

Remember when you taught me that dangerous memory of Jesus?

00:32:18.000 --> 00:32:19.000

Hmm.

00:32:19.000 --> 00:32:49.000

What you were teaching me is, God's Word ain't no hustle. And now on the other end, we realize there's a lot of money to make in theological education, despite people saying ain't no money. A lot of people who have homes saying ain't no money. So just... Just be... just be mindful, ain't no money in church, ain't no money in this, and people... oftentimes, the people who say this are those who go back home to their homes that they own while they're telling you ain't no money. So just keep that. Do with that what you will. And so when they realize

that you possibly can make some money doing this, now they want to get... now they want to take you for coffee.

00:32:51.000 --> 00:33:19.000

Now, when they realize you want to be ordained and you have the potential to be to rise up in, you know, the ecclesia, you know, the, uh, the ranking, now they want to tell you how to broker these deals, but they weren't telling you this... when you were actually coming to faith, when they were telling you about this Jesus who stood against empire, and this Jesus who faced his... who set his face like a flint towards Jerusalem, the Jesus who told his brothers, the world can hate you, because you don't testify to its deeds. You don't tell the world that it's evil. The world has to hate me, he told his brothers.

00:33:19.000 --> 00:33:25.000

The world has to hate me, because I tell it that it's evil.

00:33:25.000 --> 00:33:32.000

that this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. But he wasn't trying to climb up no rain. Jesus wasn't trying to get tenured.

00:33:32.000 --> 00:33:37.000

So he wasn't conflicted. He wasn't trying to get emeritus status.

00:33:37.000 --> 00:33:43.000

I am right. So he ain't conflicted. We conflicted in his name.

00:33:43.000 --> 00:33:57.000

And so, I feel like if there's anything that we can offer to help is that I think what, just like my students who go to BU, they pass that King statue on the way to their classes. They want to say they're a friend of Martin, but they ain't learning Kingsley and economic values in their business school.

00:33:57.000 --> 00:33:58.000

Hmm.

00:33:58.000 --> 00:34:05.000

And that's not even an indictment, it's just that we need... we need to deal with those tensions. When we talk about there's multiple interests on this campus.

00:34:05.000 --> 00:34:12.000

That king is someone symbolically we mentioned, but kings and values don't pervade this space. It's managed.

00:34:12.000 --> 00:34:24.000

It's managed. And so, in my courses, we gotta wrestle with that. You a business major, but it's against your interest to truly be Kingsley in your economic framework. It's against your interest to be Kingsleyan.

00:34:24.000 --> 00:34:26.000

be in STEM. When you think about who bears the cost of these data centers.

00:34:26.000 --> 00:34:29.000

Mm-hmm.

00:34:29.000 --> 00:34:34.000

And so you want to be... you wanna be Kingsleyan in January.

00:34:34.000 --> 00:34:36.000

But you want to be professional the rest of the year.

00:34:36.000 --> 00:34:43.000

Well, that's the question. It's still off script.

00:34:43.000 --> 00:34:49.000

saying you want it. and actually wanting it.

00:34:49.000 --> 00:34:54.000

are 2 different realities. Any thoughts?

00:34:54.000 --> 00:34:59.000

on what needs to happen for people to interrogate.

00:34:59.000 --> 00:35:09.000

whether they're ministers and academia, anywhere. saying they want to be decolonial or liberationist.

00:35:09.000 --> 00:35:13.000

Versus actually living it.

00:35:13.000 --> 00:35:21.000

Yeah, yeah, no, like I said, you know, you know, family, I'm churches, so I'm Baptist, you know, I'm raised Baptist, so I'm gonna always go back to the text, the rich young ruler.

00:35:21.000 --> 00:35:23.000

Okay.

00:35:23.000 --> 00:35:31.000

And we can get into the the you know the sort of, you know, the finer points of it. Did Jesus really want him to sell all his... we can get in all that. But what's important is that the rich young ruler said, I agree with you.

00:35:31.000 --> 00:35:42.000

Then.

00:35:42.000 --> 00:35:43.000
everything. Mm-hmm.

00:35:43.000 --> 00:35:51.000
I've seen enough. I'm with you, boss. Jesus says, oh, you sell everything you have and come follow me. The brother, the the brother couldn't do it. And and what do we get? I know we like to preach this. Jesus looked at him and loved him.

00:35:51.000 --> 00:35:52.000
Mm-hmm.

00:35:52.000 --> 00:36:07.000
He loved him. And so, for me, when I think about what can we do is that I want to own. I don't believe in the trope of redemptive suffering, but the reason I talk about haunting, I grew up in a very trouble... I had a troubled upbringing, domestic violence was in the homes.

00:36:07.000 --> 00:36:27.000
people suffering, my father's suffering from the disease of addiction, dealt with housing insecurity, so... Jesus, for me, it... that's once again, it made... for me, I didn't really need a lot of pushing and pulling, because it, oh, it's familiar with suffering, acquainted with grief, foxes have holes, birds have nests, son of man has no place. Oh, I can... I can follow you! I think he'd be looking for someone like me, because he recognized that Hillboy got a lot of talent.

00:36:27.000 --> 00:36:31.000
Hmm.

00:36:31.000 --> 00:36:38.000
Hillboy ain't got much, you know? And so for me, I can the world, the world hasn't benefited me.

00:36:38.000 --> 00:36:41.000
So I don't... I don't really have much stake in that anyway, because in the spirit of Ishmael and Hagar, the world didn't save my mama.

00:36:41.000 --> 00:36:45.000
Hmm.

00:36:45.000 --> 00:36:55.000
the world... my dad served in Vietnam when he was struggling, when he was struggling, I didn't see the world entering our apartment to help my daddy after he risked it all for this nation.

00:36:55.000 --> 00:37:06.000
The world didn't save my daddy. And the world didn't come looking for my mama. And the world didn't come looking for those two boys and my

older sister in San Diego, California. The world didn't have much for the heels.

00:37:06.000 --> 00:37:07.000

Hmm.

00:37:07.000 --> 00:37:21.000

So it don't... so it don't really cost me a lot to critique the world, because the world that wasn't interested in my mama cannot make a bid for my soul, because you... if you wanted to make a bid for my soul, I could give you the blueprint, take care of my mama.

00:37:21.000 --> 00:37:22.000

Hmm.

00:37:22.000 --> 00:37:33.000

help my daddy. Make sure my little brother's okay. Make sure my big sis, right? It's not weary from well doing if you want to make an offer to heal. Guess what? You're telling on yourself because you ain't got nothing for my mama.

00:37:33.000 --> 00:37:50.000

You will let my dad die after he gave you everything. My little brother can rot for all you care. My sister's on her own, and yet you want to take me out for coffee. Put me on a hill and say all this is mine if I just pretend not to be haunted by this Christ consciousness. You have no jurisdiction.

00:37:50.000 --> 00:37:56.000

to make that offering for me. And so I think that in the offering, if we can say anything to help people in the room.

00:37:56.000 --> 00:38:03.000

The challenge that I say to my students, if the world's been good to you on the world's terms, it's going to be tough.

00:38:03.000 --> 00:38:19.000

The rich young ruler. you're gonna have to give up a lot of that kenosis. You gotta empty yourself of the prerogatives of this kind of power.

00:38:19.000 --> 00:38:20.000

We got a mortgage!

00:38:20.000 --> 00:38:41.000

And a lot of us, we love Jesus, but all our positions and our titles, oh, oh, I'm... We can... we can, you know, once again, one hand wash the other, Brother Malcolm, we can, we can, we can be faithful, and... but see, I... that, once again, are you saying that in the name of our elder brother? Now, once again, I'm saying this ain't... we have to manage.

I'm in this office right now! We negotiate! I feel like that's why we need the church, so any type of...

00:38:41.000 --> 00:38:46.000

One last thing I'll say is for me, we need we need the church.

00:38:46.000 --> 00:38:50.000

Because we need... because when I'm saying this as a professor, even as a professor.

00:38:50.000 --> 00:39:06.000

I need to know that you told me on your end, you're holding the line. I need to know the pastor is holding the line. I need to know that, you know, across the economic strata, that the nurses are holding the line, that the teachers teaching our babies are holding the line, so I can go in front of my students.

00:39:06.000 --> 00:39:17.000

and hold the line, because I know that I'm a part of a broader community that's holding the line. So it's not just me as a professor at the top of some type of professional Bostonian hierarchy.

00:39:17.000 --> 00:39:32.000

on this campus doing my best to hold the line and be faithful. I need to know that in this city, that there are other people, whether you're a nurse, whether you work at Target, whether you whether you are cleaning this, right, janitorial services, right?

00:39:32.000 --> 00:39:48.000

Right? Whatever you doing. So that's the beauty of the church is that I might be a professor, but I got more in common with Sister Maria who claims this spot because we can talk and we can celebrate and we can praise God in Jesus name. I have more in common with her.

00:39:48.000 --> 00:40:01.000

Most of these administrators here, because we have a language, and I need her, right? I don't know if she needs me. She may not need me. But the fact that she can come in and she can talk about prayer and she can talk about how God's been good to her. Oh, she don't know every evening when she knocks on that door, how much she blesses me because she don't know what I'm going through.

00:40:01.000 --> 00:40:06.000

Hmm.

00:40:06.000 --> 00:40:12.000

between 10 and 5 and I don't have a lot of people over here who honors that language.

00:40:12.000 --> 00:40:26.000

Honors what it means to prioritize the point. I'm at a prestigious university. What you mean, the last shall be first, and the first shall be last? How many of the last are enrolled here right now?

00:40:26.000 --> 00:40:29.000

What percentage of the last are here right now?

00:40:29.000 --> 00:40:44.000

So if I come from a community that says the last shall be first, and whatever you do to the least of these, you've done unto me, and that's not the culture here, necessarily, then I need all the people. That's why we need the church again.

00:40:44.000 --> 00:40:49.000

We need all the people who reflect those values and say, brother, when you go to class.

00:40:49.000 --> 00:40:58.000

Hold the line, tell the truth. Why? Because over here, we're doing the same thing. And so I think for anyone here.

00:40:58.000 --> 00:41:03.000

to actually hold the line. It's difficult.

00:41:03.000 --> 00:41:16.000

It's because it's supposed to be. You can't live this life by yourself. It's countercultural. The world is going... the world is ravenous.

00:41:16.000 --> 00:41:17.000

Mm-hmm.

00:41:17.000 --> 00:41:24.000

And James Baldwin said the world, James Baldwin put it like this, the world offers a ravenous success. When he was talking about Michael Jackson, he says, Michael Jackson, he says, I hope he has the good fortune to flee the jaws of a carnivorous success, that the success ecclesiology.

00:41:24.000 --> 00:41:35.000

The successes in the church, success in the academy, success in the market writ large. It's a carnivorous success. It'll eat you alive while it promotes you.

00:41:35.000 --> 00:41:50.000

And so and so how do we withstand that? That's why the decolonial turn, that's why the freedom center turn, that's why the Jesus-centered, right? The Christ-haunted turn is so important, because how do you withstand the jaws of our carnivorous?

00:41:50.000 --> 00:41:55.000

success. You have to have an alternative sociality that's not invested in this dying world.

00:41:55.000 --> 00:41:56.000

Hmm.

00:41:56.000 --> 00:42:11.000

It's foolishness to those who are perishing. All of this is foolishness to those who are already dying, and we have to see that, but I think our... I think that this last move to the artist. The artist, at our best.

00:42:11.000 --> 00:42:18.000

are the ones who help us to see that we don't have to go along to get along, because look at, look at what getting along gets them.

00:42:18.000 --> 00:42:22.000

And what is... and what is it about anything over there?

00:42:22.000 --> 00:42:29.000

The world that produced all this mess. The same world that will deport a little 3-month-old baby with bronchitis.

00:42:29.000 --> 00:42:35.000

That world, that world! is offering you something.

00:42:35.000 --> 00:42:47.000

And what is that? Such that you coveted? You don't have to. And I think the artist is a community. We as a community have resources. How do we identify as artists to tell each other in our own idiom?

00:42:47.000 --> 00:42:48.000

Hold the line, family. Hold the line.

00:42:48.000 --> 00:42:58.000

Hmm. We got 2 min, and so we're not going to get to all the questions, but I need you to to to flesh out.

00:42:58.000 --> 00:43:06.000

What holding the line looks like. There are people here who are like, okay, what is that going to mean for me?

00:43:06.000 --> 00:43:07.000

Yeah.

00:43:07.000 --> 00:43:12.000

What is holding the line? You said you said having shared values, shared morals. But flesh that out as much as you can. What is holding the line look like?

00:43:12.000 --> 00:43:27.000

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, no, we don't... you know, I don't need a... I don't need the full 120 for this, tell the truth. And I mean, I can quote one of our dear colleagues who's on campus right here, Emily Town. She just said it in Garrett, on the Garrett, um...

00:43:27.000 --> 00:43:45.000

Video Gear put up. She says, tell the truth, and with the crises that we face right now, we have to tell the truth. And she said, if I don't speak of herself, if I don't like it, if no one else likes it, you have to tell the truth. And she just, to her colleague, our ancestor, James, James Cohen, she says.

00:43:45.000 --> 00:43:53.000

Jim Cohn, she observed firsthand in her mouth, Jim Cohn was never concerned with who was offended by the truth he had to tell.

00:43:53.000 --> 00:44:00.000

He told the truth. And so when I'm saying hold the line, it is, it seems like something that's so.

00:44:00.000 --> 00:44:03.000

If it's so easy, have you tried telling the truth every day?

00:44:03.000 --> 00:44:08.000

In your church, in your community, to your bishop.

00:44:08.000 --> 00:44:13.000

to your department, like, have you actually committed yourself?

00:44:13.000 --> 00:44:29.000

to doing the best you can, and your flawed divinity to actually embody truthfulness. And so I think when we say holding the line, I teach a lot of business majors, bless God, brilliant students, lovely students. I could tell them that they can be Kingsley in their own way.

00:44:29.000 --> 00:44:36.000

That they can... that they can be students of the Black freedom struggle their own way Monday, Wednesday, Friday into religion.

00:44:36.000 --> 00:44:52.000

I don't know how the course eval, but I got to tell the truth. Kingsley and values. You can't just reroute that into whatever your ideal is of capitalistic success in the United States of America. There's a reason why King did. There's a reason why King died, was assassinated, was killed.

00:44:52.000 --> 00:45:12.000

not have... not holding a favorable position in any community if we take the polls. That brother was not favored because you couldn't just reroute those ideas, and so to hold the line means that you tell folks the truth, no matter how they feel, and no matter what's on the other side of your truthfulness. And I think, once again, I'm talking to an audience, that's for me as a home audience.

00:45:12.000 --> 00:45:20.000

Because we have an example of a brother and a community who held the line, and we are only here.

00:45:20.000 --> 00:45:25.000

because they held the line. And the invitation is to go and do likewise.

00:45:25.000 --> 00:45:30.000

tell the truth. It also sounds like be the truth.

00:45:30.000 --> 00:45:34.000

in many ways. We got we got our 1st question.

00:45:34.000 --> 00:45:41.000

from one of our attendees, who are the artists holding the line?

00:45:41.000 --> 00:45:44.000

Yeah, yeah. I think that's a great question. I think for me.

00:45:44.000 --> 00:45:47.000

Many of them, we don't know them because they're not seeking commercial success.

00:45:47.000 --> 00:45:48.000

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

00:45:48.000 --> 00:46:01.000

You know, but I would say, you know, a lot of those that I know, many of those, they wouldn't be artists that we know on the, you know, in this space because they're not commercial, they're underground artists, underground rappers, underground.

00:46:01.000 --> 00:46:04.000

Right.

00:46:04.000 --> 00:46:14.000

R&B artist, um, but I would say we're looking at... I look at, historically, you know, folks like, um, folks like Nina Simone.

00:46:14.000 --> 00:46:34.000

You know, I think folks like Stevie Wonder, you know, I mean, if you... what I love to do, and this may be a spiritual practice for some

people watching, go back and read reviews of some of your favorite artists, the albums that are now universally, you know, considered masterpieces.

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Hmm.

00:46:35.000 --> 00:46:46.000
Read what folks said about inner visions specifically specifically white reviewers. Read what they said about music, you know, you know, the albums in the genius period. They said Stevie was a genius. They said he had a lot of ego. They said it was it was textured by sentimentality, you know, Nina Simone was blacklisted.

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You know, and so I think that, for me, looking at the artist who paid the price for truth telling is important, both historically and then realizing that the artists that are holding the line, they're holding the line.

00:47:02.000 --> 00:47:13.000
hey, that probably means you're not gonna see them as much, because there's a cost to pay for not holding the line, or you ain't never gonna hear them because they're not... they're not paying the price to be in front of us.

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and this is me being doing some cross pollinating, which is part of our second question. Similar to, you know what Annie's telling stack and centers.

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Jessica, she said... the terms were working for you.

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No, don't don't get me going, family. Hey.

00:47:39.000 --> 00:47:40.000
Ooh. Hmm.

00:47:40.000 --> 00:47:58.000
you weren't harmed, were you? So so just because he didn't see it or see it in the way that he thought he should see it doesn't mean that there was not a hedge of protection around him. Just because we're not seeing the artists on CNN or MSNBC or.

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Hmm.

00:47:59.000 --> 00:48:04.000

They're not doing portraits for the Obamas doesn't mean that there aren't people who are creating art that is doing, telling, being the truth.

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Yeah, yeah.

00:48:05.000 --> 00:48:15.000
that have been a hedge of protection around truth telling prophetic witness and and frankly, a sense of sanity.

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That's right. That's right. Brilliant, brilliant.

00:48:16.000 --> 00:48:25.000
So that's so similar. Maybe we should think of art as truth telling art as a type of hedge of protection.

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That produces its own hedge. That's so, oh, family, that's so good that the art itself.

00:48:30.000 --> 00:48:39.000
you know, and and concert and collaboration with the spirit. Spirit and collaboration with the art produces that hedge, right?

00:48:39.000 --> 00:48:42.000
It's not the industry. It's not the industry. My Lord.

00:48:42.000 --> 00:48:50.000
Not the industry. So I appreciate your point. We're not always going to see it, and that's that's the art that we should be paying attention to, because that's the art that has power.

00:48:50.000 --> 00:48:51.000
Ooh, come on now. Come on out.

00:48:51.000 --> 00:49:03.000
Okay, second question. Second question is cross pollinating decolonizing? And that's from Dana.

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Yeah.

00:49:04.000 --> 00:49:16.000
Yeah, I think once again, I think it.. I think for a lot of our questions, family, it has the potentiality, because once again, it's always what are we cross-pollinating, right? Right? And I think, depending on it, you know, like I say, if we're talking art, if I'm saying cross-pollinating, you know, my love for art and pedagogy, then

it could be, right? But then.

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Hmm.

00:49:17.000 --> 00:49:31.000
I know that I have students and members of the community that says, I'm just gonna cross-pollinate what I got from the business school, or any school, right? And then I'm gonna do this over here. That's the way that we can convince ourselves, and I think that's where the haunting comes in, right? There's something to be done. So the piece of haunting can be negative for some people.

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When we're telling ourselves, oh, I'm good, and I'm doing it, right? And you have to have those folks who say, actually, friend.

00:49:37.000 --> 00:49:54.000
I think there's a different conversation you need to have with yourself, right? And I think that's what made Jesus haunting, right? It wasn't the poor. If we go back to the text, it was when he got in front of Nicodemus and said, unless you're born again, brother, you will never see God. What do you mean? You know, you know, so when he's in front of people who are convinced they have power, he haunts them.

00:49:54.000 --> 00:50:11.000
Because he tells them there remains a lot to be done. So if you're cross-pollination, it provides those resources to help you in love and justice, you know, in the spirit of justice, help us all to see that there's so much left to be done that we can do together. Absolutely.

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But if cross-pollination is just another instrument for you to convince yourself that you are right.

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then we have to think deeper about what we pollinate.

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Yeah, I mean, if there's a... if there's this capitalistic aim around engineering a particular result, then that's not cross-pollination. Cross-pollination, it needs to create something new. That is the whole point. You are creating something new, something new that's going to create more new things.

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Hmm.

00:50:37.000 --> 00:50:48.000
I mean, it is a cycle of newness and creation. So if it's not

creating... if it's... if it's reinscribing capitalism just in a different form, is it cross-pollination?

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Or is it genetic engineering?

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Mm-hmm.

00:50:55.000 --> 00:51:02.000

Mmm. There's an ecological dimension real quick. It's not his metaphor, cross-pollination. The bee, that's why we're protecting the bees, right? Because they're... because what? They're helping us!

00:51:02.000 --> 00:51:12.000

It's not just theoretical cross-pollination is in service to the environment. That's why we got all these spaces cordoned off! Don't, don't, don't touch them flowers!

00:51:12.000 --> 00:51:30.000

It's important! Even when you don't see what them bees are doing. There are people, don't miss it, there are people positioned and trained to tell us why you can't mow that field. Something's happening over there. So that... and that cross-pollination, it's in service to the building up of life. So in that cross-pollination, if you're building up life.

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Then there, once again, that hedge, the bees have a hedge, hopefully. The conservation that we can't see. So again, if we're cross-pollinating, the way we know that is because there's a hedge that when these systems try to mow us, there's some people set up that say.

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Right? You can't... you can't touch that over there. And we may not see that hedge, but some of us haven't been mowed down because we've been cross-pollinating and it's been faithful, and we have hedges that we can't see.

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Hmm. Mmm. Um... Pamela wants to know, can you speak about the creative energy that comes from the haunting and the healing?

00:52:09.000 --> 00:52:24.000

Beautiful question. Beautiful. I'll say that the energy, I love that word energy. It's... it's saving. Me, I can speak perfectly. I wrote... I mean, that's why I'm writing a whole book about it. What has saved my life is... my understanding that.

00:52:24.000 --> 00:52:44.000

God has what James Cohen said, I believe it in his gave a talk at Duke, and someone asked the white brother asked about the anger in his many, many people would ask, certain people would ask him his anger. And he goes off. We don't have time to get into all that he said, but what has always stuck with me is at the end, he says.

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God has kept me. I have a lot to be thankful for.

00:52:49.000 --> 00:53:01.000

And so when I think about that energy, like the energy I have when I speak, the energy I have that shows up on the page, everything you hear in this conversation, the excitement, the passion, it's because I'm saying at 37 years old, God has kept me.

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And so the energy that the haunting is that.

00:53:02.000 --> 00:53:06.000

Hmm.

00:53:06.000 --> 00:53:13.000

I am overwhelmed to the point of tears. that I can look you in the eye and say there's something to be done.

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Hmm.

00:53:14.000 --> 00:53:21.000

that that something didn't take me out. The fact that even if we say, you know, we, you know, you know, we're pressed down but not destroyed.

00:53:21.000 --> 00:53:32.000

the fact that the things that could have taken you out didn't. And the fact that as a professor, as a scholar, as an author, you can... God has kept you.

00:53:32.000 --> 00:53:37.000

such that you can look at the world and say... and say with love.

00:53:37.000 --> 00:53:38.000

Hmm.

00:53:38.000 --> 00:53:48.000

There remains a lot to be done. So that energy that the healing and the energy that the haunting... I mean, that the haunting offers is the energy for me, right?

00:53:48.000 --> 00:53:53.000

It's the energy. The energy is the knowledge of being kept.

00:53:53.000 --> 00:54:01.000

I'm haunted, yet I remain. I'm haunted, and I remain, so that energy of the knowledge of your captainness.

00:54:01.000 --> 00:54:02.000

Hmm.

00:54:02.000 --> 00:54:18.000

That God didn't have to keep me. that I don't know, and it's a mystery, because it's not that I'm so great in myself, but because I don't know why I survived this. It's not... I'm not even... it's not about the favor ain't fair, I mean, I'm... that conversation can be had, but what I'm saying is I'm here, and for me, I get happy.

00:54:18.000 --> 00:54:31.000

I have Pentecostal roots as well, like, it becomes a different conversation. If I rest my mind long enough to think about, I'm still here to have this conversation. When I know what I... that that six-year-old wasn't destroyed.

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That 8-year-old wasn't destroyed. That 13-year-old saw what he saw, woke up the next morning, and went to school, and found a reason to laugh at something. And that 13-year-old became 37. And if that 6-year-old could survive, and if that 8-year-old could survive, and if that 14-year-old, with his bear life.

00:54:47.000 --> 00:55:04.000

exposed to the world. powers and principalities. If thou 14-year-old survive.

00:55:04.000 --> 00:55:05.000

Hmm.

00:55:05.000 --> 00:55:12.000

then what's going to take out the 40-year-old? What's going to take out the 30? And so that's that creative energy is that the weapons formed. They were that they were merely that they were formed. They didn't land. They didn't land, and I'm here. And that's what makes you haunted, because folks are looking at you at this university at your office, within your diocese.

00:55:12.000 --> 00:55:18.000

And they're wondering, they don't say it, they're wondering, how in the hell are you here right now?

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And you just look back and say, that's not for me to answer. The thing

we need to consider is that I'm here.

00:55:29.000 --> 00:55:55.000

All right. We're going to try to do this last question. There's a little bit of some some forethought, so I'm going to share. This is from Kalia. Dr. Hill, what you said about the presence as assertion is compelling. I wonder if we can reckon with the fact that Motown ran a literal finishing school.

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Mm-hmm.

00:55:56.000 --> 00:56:03.000

Maxine Powell was teaching The Temptations, the Supremes, Martha and the Vandellas, how to be palatable. Barry Gordon himself said crossover was the goal. So if that presence has been groomed to reduce its threat to white audiences, is it still the unmediated.

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existential statement you've described, or is it a presence that asserts and apologizes at the same time?

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Oh, yeah. Oh, you know, if only somebody was writing a book about that. No, I'm joking, because that literally is the second chapter of my book, um, when I'm on. The book is on... focused on secularism and Michael Jackson, but the, uh, the, the second... the second chapter is on the Jackson 5, and then there's a section where I honor and think critically with.

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Mrs. Powell, the section is entitled Secularization along the Motown Assembly Line, right? And so what I want to do is I want to think critically about everything you're saying, but also, like... We can't reduce what's happening, right? So yes, and that's the thing, like, secularization, you wanted to make them palatable, and you wanted to make them cross over. But also, let's look at the fact that you're also showing to the world.

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Not even on the world's terms, that these black people aren't just as human, the fact that what Motown is saying in my reading of Motown, they're not measuring the whiteness, because who... Who could we measure to the temptations?

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No white group was measured to the... so I think what Maxine Powell was saying, and this is why we deal with her critically, she wasn't measuring Martha and the Mandela to some white girls.

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She wasn't measuring Marvin Gage to some white boys.

00:57:18.000 --> 00:57:23.000

They were in many ways you can see from the race records, they were crossing over to us.

00:57:23.000 --> 00:57:24.000

Hmm.

00:57:24.000 --> 00:57:44.000

So, so, so the finishing school has to be held with complexity, because what they're saying is, in a world that has said that you are not human, in a world that has said that you have no refinement, in a world that has said that you are basically nothing, right? There's a deeper work at play. And so, and so wearing the suits and priming up the hair and learning and going to elocution classes.

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Yeah, we can talk about respectability, but I think we are doing a grave disservice to Motown to say all they were doing is flattening the black experiences so it can be palatable. And it could be so that white folks can metabolize it, because there is something about saying.

00:58:00.000 --> 00:58:16.000

However you say it aesthetically, rhetorically, that we... not only are we humans, but I think a way to read the finishing school against the finishing school is that we're humans, but we're not even... we're not humans on your terms. We have our own standards.

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In our own sense, or in conversation with yours, but to say that it's reducing it to sort of white norms, you gotta find the white boy who's looking like Marvin Gaye.

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You gotta find the white girl who was looking like Gladys Knight. We got to find the white boys. Remember, the Osmans came after the Jacksons. The Osmans didn't come first.

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And so there's a lot to wrestle because we're wrestling with secularism right? And we are wrestling with an assembly line. But let's also remember that for everyone that we're mentioning the white acts have to follow Motown. Motown wasn't following the White Act.

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So there there's something about, once again, how Black folks is offering us an invitation, even Maxine Powell is offering us an... even

through the elocution classes, and through the finishing school, she's inviting the Western world to truly be human!

00:59:05.000 --> 00:59:15.000

So we can say how she's negotiating, but she's not negotiating only on their terms, and that turns Motown is inviting the West to be human for the first time.

00:59:15.000 --> 00:59:29.000

And that's not pure. But it surely ain't reductionistic. Because if it was reductionistic, then we can find a whole bunch of white Marvins. We can find a whole bunch of white Stevys. And you tell me how many white Stevys we have.

00:59:29.000 --> 00:59:47.000

How many Maxime Powells we have. So we can... so we have to honor me, we have to honor our ancestors, and honor what... and honor what they were contending with within an anti-Black world, even when we say there's some things we might have thought differently, but what were you trying to get across, and what were you working with in service of actually attending.

00:59:47.000 --> 00:59:52.000

to the problem of the human.

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There is so much there. Friends, we are at time, but we are hearing a couple things.

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art as truth telling truth being. art as opportunity to create new means of life.

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Those are the core elements around how we can think about art and decolonial and.

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Oh, you.

01:00:18.000 --> 01:00:30.000

maybe even liberationist ways. Thank you so much, Dr. Hill. I will let... and shout out to President Buckland, who's also joined, President of EDS. Thank you so much for being here, but we will let Dr. Crowley... Close us out.

01:00:30.000 --> 01:00:49.000

Thank you so much. Wow, wow, wow, thank you, Dr. Tomi. Thank you, Reverend Dr. James Howard Hill. I could hear that preachment all on the inside of you. I'm a preacher myself, and I was texting my

president, and I was saying, this brother is like a mix.

01:00:49.000 --> 01:01:07.000

between a black preacher, a rapper, and just a flow of consciousness. What a breath of fresh air, what a blessing. Thank you, Dr. Tomi, for inviting this amazing thinker for such a rich and generous conversation.

01:01:07.000 --> 01:01:28.000

Uh, I do want to thank everyone who joined us today. Your presence, your questions, your engagement are what makes these EDS, uh, living spaces of learning and transformation transformative. Before you log off, please take a moment to complete the survey that is being placed in the chat at this moment by my colleague Dustin.

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Your feedback helps us to continue building programming much like what you experienced today. Programs that matter. Until we see you again, thank you for being with us today. Take good care, enjoy great art, and have a wonderful.

01:01:35.000 --> 01:01:50.000

and