



Rooted Woman or Root Woman: At the Intersection of Earth, Faith, and Action

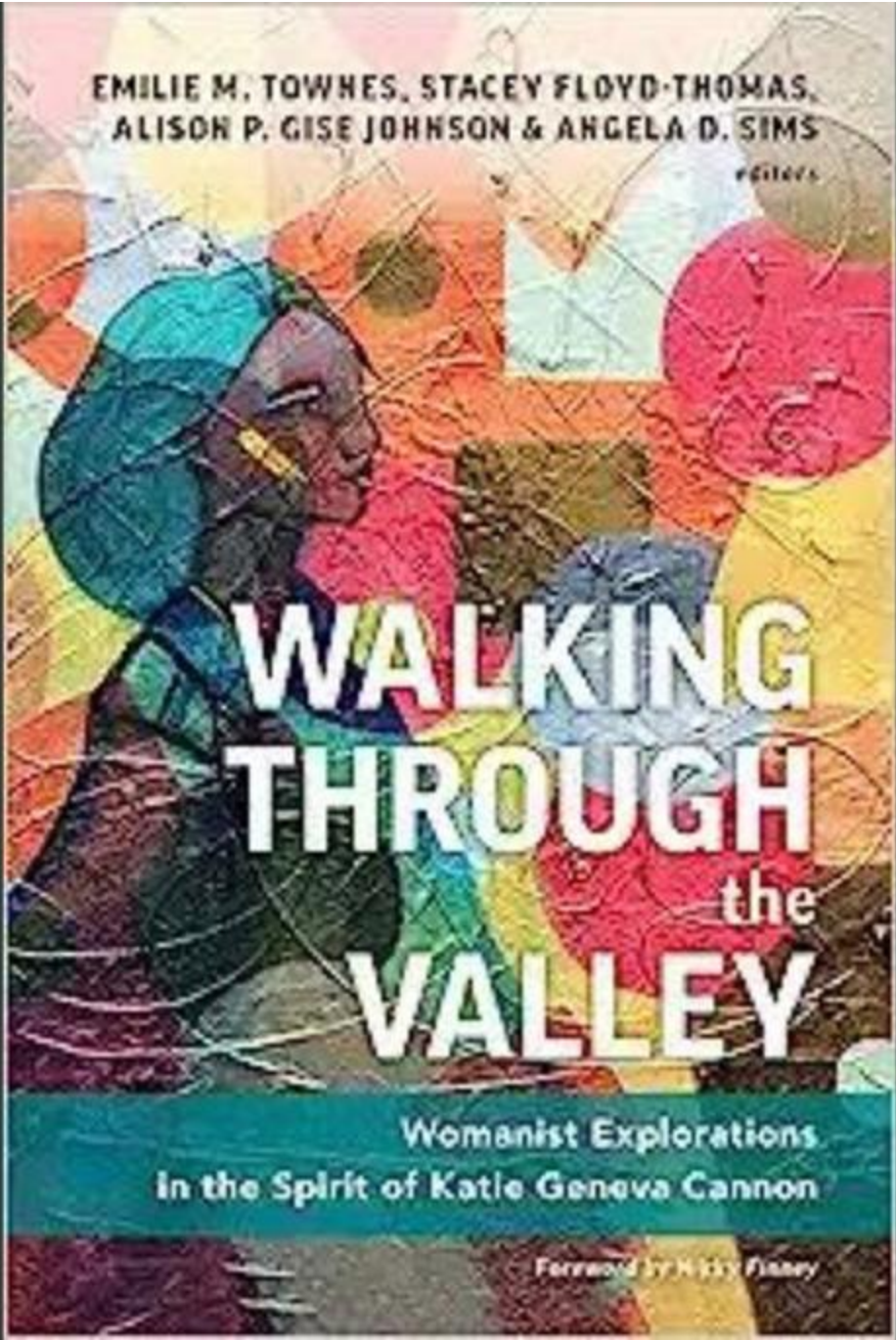
**September 21, 2023
Presbyterian Earth Care Conference
“The Climate Crisis & Inspiring Hope”**

Meditative Moment

Octavia Butler - “Parable of the Sower”

Embrace diversity / Unite— / Or be divided / robbed / ruled /
killed/ By those who see you as prey / Embrace diversity / Or be
destroyed.”

“There is no end / To what a living world / Will demand of you.”



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EDITORS

WALKING THROUGH the VALLEY

Womanist Explorations
In the Spirit of Katie Geneva Cannon

Foreword by Nikki Fishery



Ecowomanism

**African American Women and
Earth-Honoring Faith
Melanie Harris**

Ecowomanist Paradigm for – African American Women/Earth



A collective memory of family, faith, and safety as well as the acts of resistance to domination and subjugation



A sense of home and reconnection to the earth



Relationship with the land despite the trauma of slavery and the era of Jim Crow laws and practices of lynching/legalized white supremacy

Ecowomanism - Method for the Recovery of African American Environmental History

- Metanarrative of environmental history and the environmental movement is missing the experiences and contributions of African and Native peoples.

Great migration paradox - leaving the terror of the south meant leaving "home" and many arrived in northern cities losing their identity, sense of belonging, respect for the land, and communities

Beauty to burden paradox - the gulf between the horrors of lynching bridged with spiritual intimacy to the earth

Home to homeless paradox - being ripped from homelands in Africa with the struggle to forge connections to home and land in the Americas

Ecowomanist Paradoxes

Belonging

Birthplace

Home

Respect for land

Community

Ecowomanist Themes

Ecowomanism Theorizes

Self love and freedom requires knowing one's identity on earth/with earth

The goal of self determination is supported by social environmental enterprise

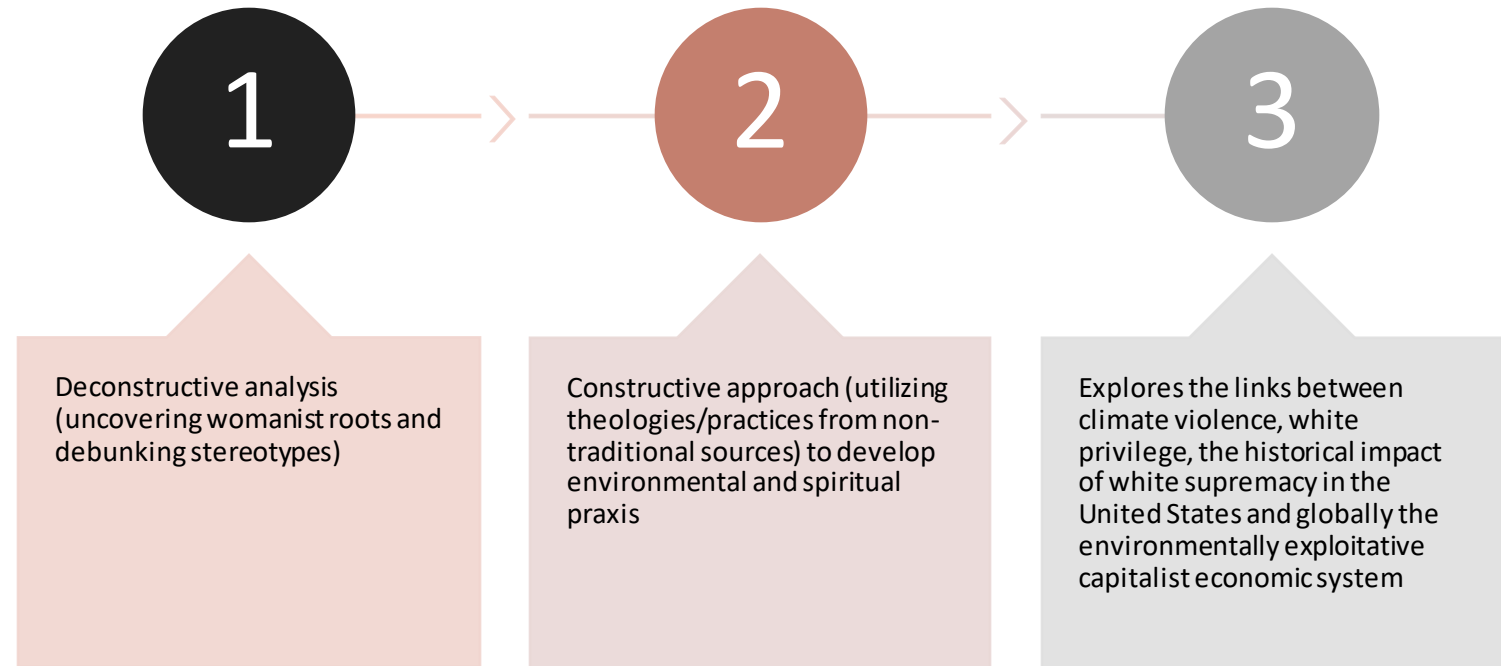
It is necessary to uncover one's environmental familial roots and spiritual connections to be whole, that is, to be healthy physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually

Ecowomanist
Ethic
Employs
African
Cosmology

Spirit, nature, and humanity are connected in an interdependent web of life

A deep respect for the earth, spirit world, of ancestors, and the Creator as normative among many indigenous Africans who prioritized an ethical mandate to live in harmony with nature

Embodies Theory and Practice



Race/Class / Gender Critique

Racism shapes environmental policy, perspective, and understanding

Assumptions about economic class privilege shapes environmental outlook

Gendering the earth as mother/feminine fosters domination and subjugation

Feminine in the culture and environment are parallel oppressions

Analysis uncovers innate solidarity between women and the earth

The way black bodies of enslaved women were raped, dominated, exploited and the way the earth is dominated, exploited, and raped

Ecowomanist Methodology

01

Loves the Spirit - acknowledges and leaves room for the mystical while maintaining a critical interdisciplinary analysis

02

Connected to intellectual lineage and history of African American mysticism and folk religion

03

Prophetic Spirit and prophetic wisdom which give voice to the speaker, reader, student and scholar of ecowomanism

Honoring Experience/Story is the first step and source for ecowomanist ethics and theology

Ecostories, ecotheologies, earth stories, and ecomemories - black women's experiences with nature



Ecospirituality, earth-honoring faith, or earth spiritual activism are valid epistemologies for environmental discourse they reveal earth justice as a primary value often passed down from one generation to the next as a family and communal legacy



Exploring Eco-autobiography

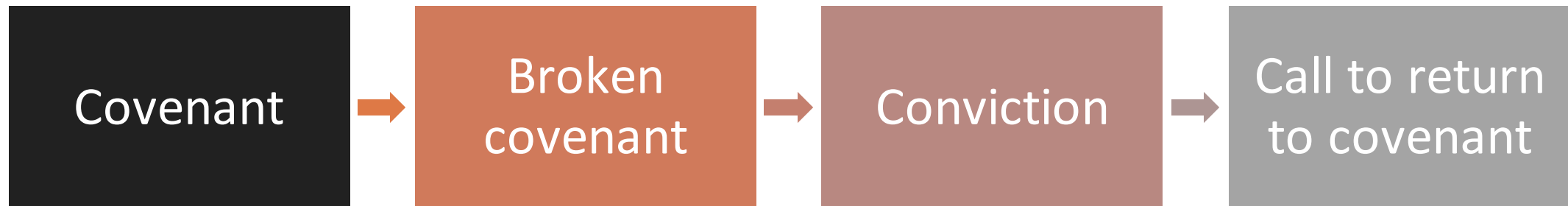
Filling in the gaps of environmental history or it is reconstituting history by challenging false generalizations and gross stereotypes found in U.S. history

Counteremory centers African American perspectives, voices, and experiences in environmental history

Interdisciplinary analysis weaves in art, literature, ethics, geography, and agriculture

Ecomemory/Counteremory

Employs a Prophetic Justice Hermeneutic
Black folk reading of biblical narrative pattern links social justice and divine justice



Critical reflection of African American Women's Ecomemory Surfaces

Two meanings of bound

- bound as tethered/trapped to never ending toil of the earth
- bound as connected to a divine relationship through the earth

Beauty and burden paradox

- connection to the calming healing rhythms of the earth at the same time marked by horrors of lynching, enslavement, oppression

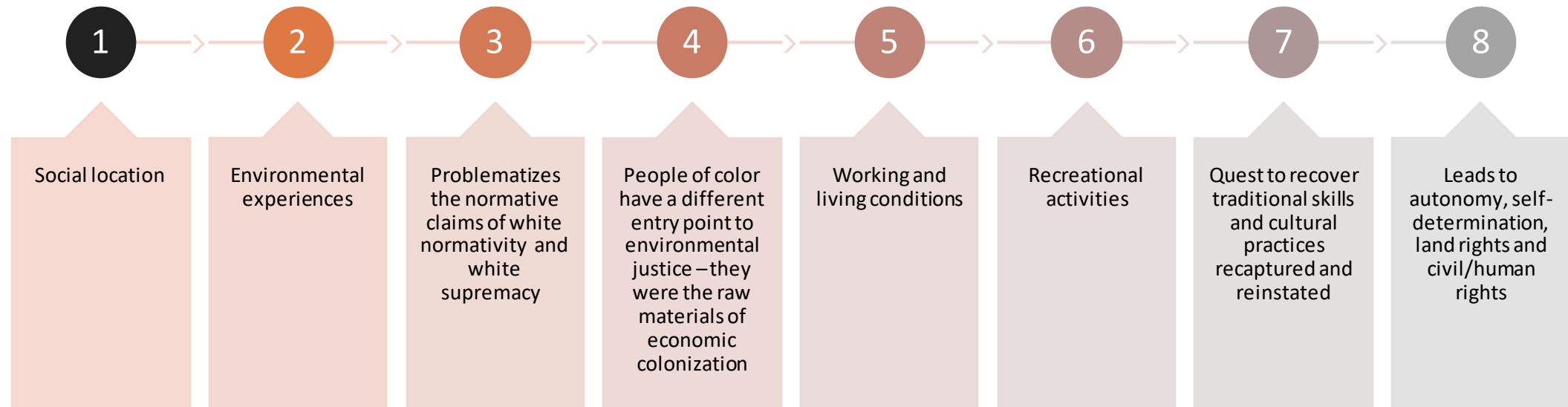
Community

- as primary Ecowomanist value

Improvisation

- the genius of African peoples to persist, survive, and thrive

Ecomemory - Tools and Critique/Analysis



Lakota Proverb

- “The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man’s heart away from nature becomes hard; he knew the lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect of humans too.”