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THEA BOWMAN

In My Own Words

*Compiled and Edited by
Maurice J. Nutt, C.Ss.R.*



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“GOT A HOME
IN THAT ROCK”
The Black Family



*I've got a home in a-that Rock.
Don't you see? Don't you see?
I've got a home in a-that Rock.
Don't you see? Don't you see?
Between the earth and sky,
thought I heard my Savior cry,
I've got a home in a-that Rock.
Don't you see?*

AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUAL



If we are not family, we can't become Church.

FAMILIES: BLACK AND CATHOLIC,
CATHOLIC AND BLACK

This book...assumes that the Black family is alive and well. It assumes further that we as a people need to find ways old and new to walk and talk together; to bond more surely; to extend family more widely and effectively, so that no one is fatherless, motherless, sisterless, or brotherless; so that no one lacks the life-sustaining human support of family.

FAMILIES: BLACK AND CATHOLIC,
CATHOLIC AND BLACK

Too often, [other] people come to us with answers to our problems. They don't bother to try to find out who we are, how we think, and what we're about. Too often, people who come to help do not realize that black family is alive and well and that even when broken, even when hurting, it fosters deep faith and forges strong bonds.

FAMILIES: BLACK AND CATHOLIC,
CATHOLIC AND BLACK

Families

giving life
nurturing, nourishing
supporting, sustaining
encoding values
breaking bread
giving
forgiving

Black Families

understanding our
black history
treasuring our
black heritage
rejoicing to be who
we are
teaching black values to
black children in
black ways
living, loving, talking, walking
shucking, jiving, laughing
playing, dancing, singing
thinking, doing as
black folks
can and do

Black Catholic Families

worshiping the Lord with
heart and soul
sharing bread and Eucharist
strengthening family unity
through Faith and
Sacrament
witnessing the Good News of
Christ the Liberator
working to bring about
the coming of
the Kingdom
feeding the hungry
sheltering the homeless
walking in solidarity with
the oppressed and poor
signaling the eschatological
reality of God's
love
challenging one another and
challenging the
CHURCH to be
truly Christian
truly Catholic

FAMILIES: BLACK AND CATHOLIC,
CATHOLIC AND BLACK



“GIVE ME THAT
OLD TIME RELIGION”
On Being Black and Catholic



Give me that old time religion.

Give me that old time religion.

Give me that old time religion.

It's good enough for me.

AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUAL



When we know who we are and claim the history, we claim the struggle, the pain, the challenge, the purpose, the journey, and the dream. We are who we are and whose we are because of all our journeys, and the children that belong to our communities are enriched because of a pluralism that reflects life in a world that is pluralistic. Do we know all we can know, of ourselves, of our history, of our arts, and of our experience, of our goals and of our values, the full range of what has made us a people. When we know and understand, then we can do what we need to do to help ourselves.

“BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE”
U.S. CATHOLIC HISTORIAN

Where black culture and spirituality are alive and well in our hearts and homes and neighborhoods, we bring them easily and joyfully into our churches. Where black culture is alive in our churches, its vitality spills over into our communities. It becomes a source of energy and vitality.

Some of us say we don't need black culture. We're comfortable. Do you hear me? Are you with me? I'm from Mississippi. I don't know how to deal with a quiet audience.

“BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE”
U.S. CATHOLIC HISTORIAN



“O MARY,
DON'T YOU WEEP,
DON'T YOU MOURN”

Hope



O Mary, don't you weep, don't you mourn,

O Mary don't you weep, don't you mourn;

Pharaoh's army got drowned!

O Mary, don't you weep.

AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUAL



An amazing number of people are looking for forgiveness. They are looking to forgive themselves. They are looking for ways to let go of the mistakes of the past and the realization that no matter where I come from or what I have done, I am still a good person, and I can still move forward. I need to find the strength and support so that I can make that journey toward my dream and my goal.

INTERVIEW WITH JOE SMITH
WMTV, MADISON, WISCONSIN, 1988

My goal is to share good news. I want people to know that happiness is possible.

INTERVIEW WITH JOE SMITH
WMTV, MADISON, WISCONSIN, 1988

You see, if the voice goes, there are other ways of communication. I would hope that I would have the strength and faith to find them. I am accused of communicating with more than a voice.

INTERVIEW WITH MIKE WALLACE
"60 MINUTES," CBS, 1987

I feel sometimes that I have something I want to do. I have something that I want to say before it's all over.

SR. THEA: HER OWN STORY

Many of us, as we get to a certain age, look back over our lives and we say, “What have I accomplished?” And we ask, “Is it enough?”

SR. THEA: HER OWN STORY

I'm a Franciscan. I want to be an instrument of peace. I want to be an instrument of hope. I want to be an instrument of faith and joy.

SR. THEA: HER OWN STORY

When we remember from whence we came, then we can look into our souls, our Black souls, and testify to that we have seen with Black eyes, heard with Black ears, and understood with African hearts. We can embrace the culture that has enabled us to survive. We can't turn around. We've come too far.

“BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE”
U.S. CATHOLIC HISTORIAN

Our history is power. We can learn from it. We don't need to make all the mistakes ourselves. If we remember the misery of slavery, the struggles for freedom and Civil Rights, the joys of the past, if we remember how far we have come, our memory is power.

“BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE”
U.S. CATHOLIC HISTORIAN