

Curriculum Vitae
Ralph Basui Watkins
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Atlanta, GA 30331
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Education:

PhD, Sociology
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA, 1994 - 1997
Dissertation: "The Institutionalization the African Methodist Episcopal Church"
Committee Chair: Dr. Norman Hummon
Committee Members:
Roland Robertson
Laurence Glasco

DMin, African American Church Studies
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Pittsburgh, PA, 1990 - 1993
Project: Strategic Planning in a Small African American Church
Advisor: Ronald Peters

MFA, Photography
Savannah College of Art and Design
Atlanta, GA, 2014 - 2016
Thesis: Faith in Sweet Auburn: The Next Chapter
Committee Chair: Forest McMullin
Committee Members:
V. Elizabeth Turk
Suellen Parker-Shockley

MA in Religion
The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
Dubuque, IA, 1988 - 1990
Concentration: Theology / Black Theology
Advisor: Gwinyai Muzorewa

BA, Political Science with Honors
Sacramento State University
Sacramento, CA, 1986 - 1988

AA, Social Science with Honors
American River Junior College
Sacramento, CA, 1983 - 1985

Academic Appointments:

Peachtree Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth
Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA (July 2020 - Present)

Peachtree Associate Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth
Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA (July 2011 - June 2020)

Affiliate Associate Professor of Society, Religion and Africana Studies
Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA (2011 - 2013; 2016 - Present)

Associate Professor of Society, Religion and Africana Studies
Assistant Dean, African American Church Studies
Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA (July 2005 - July 2011)

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology
Augusta State University, Augusta, GA (July 2003 - July 2005)

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
Augusta State University, Augusta, GA (July 1998 to June 2003)

Assistant Director, Black Church Studies
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA (July 1997 - July 1998)

Adjunct Professor, Sociology and Religion Department
Community College of Allegheny, Pittsburgh, PA (July 1995 - July 1998)

Assistant to the President for Social Equity
Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion PA (1992 - 1994)

Director of Minority Student Affairs
Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion, PA (1990 - 1992)

Director of Minority Student Affairs
University of Dubuque, Dubuque, IA (1988 - 1990)

Produced / Directed Full Length Documentaries / Television Shows:

“Seeing the Future of the African Church in the Rainbow: A Year in the Life of Real Inspiration Ministries” - short documentary 41 minutes - Producer, Director and Editor. 2023.

“Talk it Out with Dr. Ralph Basui Watkins,” Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA bi-weekly (1 x 30) talk show. October 2016 to December 2018 (58 episodes) - Co-Producer, Host and Writer

“Out of Egypt I Have Called My Son: A Son’s Journey Black to Africa,” Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA (2 x 30 minutes) television documentary -

Producer, Director, Writer, Cameraman and Editor. 2017
<https://vimeo.com/355109032>
<https://vimeo.com/355118012>

“The 46th Delegation of the Interfaith Peace-Builders in Palestine / Israel,” Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA (1 x 30 minutes) television documentary - Producer, Director, Writer, Cameraman and Editor. 2013
<https://vimeo.com/355147058>

“She is the Pastor,” Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA (1 x 30 minutes) television documentary - Producer, Director, Writer and Editor. 2012.

“Religion Roundtable,” Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA (38 x 30 minutes) bi-weekly television show - Host, Writer and Co-Producer. 2011 - 2014.

Ongoing Documentary Projects:

“Black Faith in the Rainbow: Becoming Bishop Troy Sanders, (feature length documentary) Producer, Director, Writer, Cameraman and Editor. forthcoming 2024

Photography Exhibitions:

Atlanta Mayor’s Pride Exhibit 2024: Celebrating Atlanta’s LGBTQ+ Art & Artists, Atlanta, 2024

Seeing the Future of the African Church in the Rainbow, Spelman College, Atlanta, 2024 (solo / show)

Seeing the Future of the African Church in the Rainbow, Harrington Gallery, Atlanta, 2023 (solo / show)

Again and Again, Christians in Visual Arts International Traveling Exhibition, 2021 - 2022

“The Spirit of Jazz: The Music I See,” Apex Museum, Atlanta, 2016 (solo show)

Open Studio, Savannah College of Art & Design, Atlanta, 2015

“Faith in Sweet Auburn,” Apex Museum, Atlanta, 2015 (solo show / thesis show)

Transitions, Peachtree and Pine Studio, Atlanta, 2014

Open Studio, Savannah College of Art & Design, Atlanta, 2013

Artist Residences:

Artist in Resident, Pride in the Pews, Spelman College, 2024

Artist in Residence, The Velvet Note Jazz Club, Atlanta, 2015

Authored Books:

(with Bill Brown) *The Word Made Image: Scripture, Photography, and the Creativity of Justice*, Fortress Press, projected, Fall 2025.

(with Justin West) *The Future of the African American Church: An Invitation to Dialogue*. Judson Press, 2014.

Hip-Hop Redemption: Finding God in the Rhythm and the Rhyme. Baker Academic Press, 2011.

Leading Your African American Church Through Pastoral Transition. Judson Press, 2010.

(with Benjamin Stephens) *Jay Z to Jesus: Reaching and Teaching Young Adults in the African American Church*. Judson Press, 2009.

The Gospel Remix: Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation. Judson Press, 2007.

I Ain't Afraid to Speak My Mind: Old School Meets New School. Unity Council Press, 2003.

Chapters:

Edited volume by Anthony Bradley. *Why Black Lives Matter*. "Gangsta Rap Made me Do It" Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021.

Foreword in *African Origins of Monotheism* by Gwinyai Muzorewa. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014.

"From Black Theology and Black Power to Afrocentric Theology and Hip Hop Power: An Extension and Socio-Re-Theological Conceptualization of Cone's Theology in Conversation with the Hip Hop Generation" in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship Volume 2* Edited by James Abbingdon. GIA Publications, Inc, 2014.

"The Hip Hop Church Ain't Big Mamma's Church: The Faith Remixed" in *The Future of Faith* Edited by Ryan Bolger. Baker Academic Press, 2012.

"The African American Church's Challenge to Evangelism" in *Aliens in the Promised Land* Edited by Anthony Bradley. P& R Publishers, 2012.

"Gangsta Rap Made Me Do It: What's Really Going On?" In *Keep Your Head Up: America's New Black Christian Leaders, Social Consciousness, and the Cosby*

Conversation. Edited by Anthony Bradley. Good News Publishers, 2012.

“Nimrod and Dead Prez: Walking Like a Warrior” in *African American Religious Life and the Story of Nimrod*. Edited by Anthony Pinn and Allen Callahan. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

“Teaching African American Religions at a Traditionally White Institution in the South” in *Mining the African American Motherlode: Teaching African American Religions*. Edited by Theodore Trost and Caroline M. Jones. Oxford University Press, 2005.

“Rap, Religion and New Realities: The Emergence of a Religious Discourse in Rap Music” in *Noise and Spirit: The Religious Sensibilities of Rap Music*. Edited by Anthony Pinn. NYU Press, 2004.

Articles:

“Ministry, Marriage and Love” in *The Bearings* https://www.thebtscenter.org/bearings/september_2019/ministry-marriage-and-immigration/

“Out of Egypt: Revisiting the Roots of African American Christianity” in *The Bearings* <https://www.thebtscenter.org/bearings/2019-june/out-of-egypt/>
<https://vimeo.com/355109032>
<https://vimeo.com/355118012>

“From Black Theology and Black Power to Afrocentric Theology and Hip Hop Power: A Extension and Socio-re-theological Conceptualization of Cone’s Theology in Conversation with the Hip Hop Generation,” in *Black Theology: An International Journal*, Volume 8, Issue 3. Fall 2010.

“The Re-Radicalization of Black Theology: From Cone to Hemet,” in *The A.M.E. Church Review Scholarly Journal* 124, no. 416, 2009: pp.43-58.

“From a Firm Foundation to a Settled Future: The Bishops’ Council and the Role of Education 1880 to 1908, Part III,” in *The A.M.E. Church Review Scholarly Journal* 124, no. 405, 2007: pp. 41-71.

“Building a Firm Foundation: Complexity in Search of Security and Establishment of the AME Church, 1860-1972, Part II,” in *The A.M.E. Church Review Scholarly Journal* 133, no.404, 2006: pp. 29-49.

“Loss of African Centeredness in the African Methodist Episcopal Church: Leaders, Leadership, Transition and Loss: The Next Generation of AMEC Leaders 1839-1860,” in *The AME Church Review Scholarly Journal* 122, no. 401, 2006: pp. 12-37.

“The Demise of Rap Music: From Resistance to Rhetoric,” in *Ideaz: An Interdisciplinary Social Science and Humanities Journal* 12, no 1, 2002: pp.17-37.

“Bringing Africa Black to Augusta: A Public Diary of a Private Journey (words and pictures),” in *The Augusta Focus* 21, no. 1065, 2002: pp. 1-6

Dictionary Article:

“Sociology of Religion, Culture and Hip Hop,” in *Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church* edited by William A. Dyrness, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Juan F. Martinez and Simon Chan. IVP Academic, 2008.

Selected Scholarly Presentations:

An African American Photographic Aesthetic: Introducing an Afrocentric Way of Seeing
Society for Photographic Education, St Louis, Missouri, 2024.

Seeing the Future of the African American Church in the Rainbow: A Year in the Life of
Real Inspiration Ministries (documentary screening and panel), American
Academy of Religion, San Antonio, Texas, 2023.

“Teaching with Film for Social Change Learning: Workshop with Odyssey Impact,”
American Academy of Religion, San Diego, 2019.

“Teaching with Digital Media,” American Academy of Religion, San Diego, 2019.

“Digitally Integrated Teaching,” Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology
and Religion, Annual Program Leaders Leadership Development, Indianapolis,
2019.

“Teaching in the Visual Age,” Alfred S. Palmer Lecture, Seattle Pacific University,
Seattle, 2017.

“The Church in the Now: Live or Die,” Virginia Union Theological Seminary, Richmond,
2016.

“Teaching through Art: Activism in the Classroom,” American Academy of Religion,
Atlanta, 2015.

“Dyson Rules: The Pedagogy of Michael Eric Dyson,” Black Religious Scholars at the
American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, 2013.

“Socio-Theological Ethnography: The Watkins Approach to the Study of Hip Hop
Culture,” American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, 2013.

“Hip Hop, Theology and the Future of the Church,” Howard Thurman Lecture, Candler
School of Theology, Atlanta, 2012.

“The Virtual Becomes the Real via a Connected African and African Diaspora as African
Theology Becomes Public Theology: A Method of Sharing Our Story and

Recovering Our History Real Virtually,” American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, 2011.

“From Black Theology to Africana Theology: A Methodological Shift in the Construction of an African-Centered Theology,” American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, 2010.

“Understanding the Real that is Virtual: Theological Education in the Age of the Internet: Clicking in and Clicking Over,” Warren Lecture, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA, 2010.

“From Black Theology and Black Power to Afrocentric Theology and Hip Hop Power: An Extension and Socio-re-theological-conceptualization of Cone’s Theology in Conversation with the Hip Hop Generation,” American Academy of Religion, 40th Anniversary Celebration Panel of James Cone’s Black Theology and Black Power, Montreal, Canada, 2009.

“An Africana Theological Framework for Doing Black Theology,” American Academy of Religion - Western Region, Santa Clara, 2009.

“Preaching to the Hip Hop Generation,” Styberg Preaching Institute Lecture, Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, 2008.

“The Re-Radicalization of Black Theology,” American Academy of Religion, San Diego, 2008.

“Hip-Hocrypha Hip Hop as Sacred Text,” American Academy of Religion, San Diego, 2008

“Lady Sings the Blues: From Ma Rainey to Lauryn Hill - Blues Queens in Dialogue with Hip Hop Divas,” American Academy of Religion - Western Region, Berkley, 2007.

“Just What the Doctor Ordered,” Annual Martin L. King Jr. Lecture, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, 2007.

“A Father’s Story: Reaching the Hip Hop Generation,” National Church Leaders Conference, Myrtle Beach, 2006.

“Its Dark and Hell is Hot: Exodus through the eyes of DMX,” American Academy of Religion - Western Region, Claremont, 2006.

“The Loss of African Centeredness in the African Methodist Episcopal Church,” American Academy of Religion, Philadelphia, 2005.

“The Revolutionary Rap of Dead Prez: The New Black Nationalism,” National Council of Black Studies, Atlanta, 2004.

- "Teaching for the Inclusive Classroom," American Sociological Association, Atlanta, 2003.
- "The Black Nationalist Urge in Rap Music," National Council of Black Studies, Atlanta, 2003.
- "W.E.B. DuBois: Soul-to-Soul," American Academy of Religion, Toronto, Ontario, 2002.
- "Another Look at Tupac Shakur: Rap, Politics and Rhetoric," Association of Black Sociologists, Chicago, 2002.
- "Looking Blackward: C. Eric Lincoln, Black Nationalism, Black Identity and Black Religiosity," Association of Black Sociologists, Chicago, 2002.
- "Teaching to Transgress: A Grassroots Approach that Leads to an Inclusive Classroom," American Sociological Association, Garden Grove, 2001.
- "Rasta's Time: The Parallels between Rastafarianism, Neo-Black Nationalist Religious Movements, Rap and the Raging Next Generation," Association of Black Sociologists, Garden Grove, 2001.
- "Rap Religion: Shadows of a New Religious Movement," Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion, Atlanta, 2000.
- "The New Paradigm for an Indigenous Black Theology of the 'Hood: Method, Praxis and the Implications of Theological Ethnography," American Academy of Religion, Nashville, TN. 1999
- "The Demise of Rap Music: From Resistance to Rhetoric," American Sociological Association, Chicago, 1999.
- "A Black Theology for the Future: Reflections on *My Sister, My Brother.*," American Academy of Religion, Orlando, 1998.
- "The Black Theology of the 'Hood," Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Montreal, Canada, 1998
- "Applied Sociology and the Black Church: Opportunity and Challenges," Society for Applied Sociology, Denver, 1998.
- "Lost in Space: The Religious Space of the 'Hood," American Academy of Religion - Eastern Region, Toronto, Canada, 1998.
- "Organizing the Unorganized: The Black Church in the 'Hood,' American Humanist Sociologists, Pittsburgh, 1997.

“J. Deotis Roberts and a Paradigm for a Black Theology of Dialogue: Implications for a Black Inner City Street Corner Theology,” American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, 1997.

“The Black Church and Urban Sociology: Taking it to the Street,” Society for Applied Sociology, Chicago, 1997.

“The Role of the African American Church in Present Day Social Change,” American Sociological Association, Toronto, Canada, 1997.

“Bridging the Gap Between Black Theology and the Theology of the ‘Hood,” American Academy of Religion - Eastern Region, Buffalo, 1997.

“The Historical Role of the African American Church and Its Further Implications: Black to the Future,” National Conference of African American Culture and Heritage, Indiana, PA 1997.

“Keeping Christian in Christian Community Development,” National Christian Community Development Conference, Pittsburgh, 1996.

“African American Student Retention on Predominantly White Campuses,” Mid-Atlantic College and University Housing Officers Annual Conference, Lock Haven, 1992.

“African American Students: Success, Stamina and Survival,” Pennsylvania Black Conference Higher Education, Harrisburg, 1992.

“The African American Success Tradition in Higher Education,” Pennsylvania Black Conference in Higher Education, State College, 1991.

Service to the Academy:

Member Film, and Visual Culture Unit Steering Committee, American Academy of Religion, 2024 to Present

Vice Chair, Southeast Region, Society for Photographic Education, 2024 to Present

Board Member, Journal on Teaching, Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, 2017 to present

Leader, Wabash Early Career Workshop, 2020, 2023 & 2024

Cohort Leader, Doctoral Cohort, Louisville Institute, 2017 to 2021

Leader, Wabash Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, Teaching with Digital Media Workshop, 2019

Team Leader, Wabash Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, Workshop for Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty of African Descent, 2015 - 2016

Board Member, Wabash Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, Digital Media Journal, 2016 to 2020

Professional Associations:

College Art Association

Society for Photographic Educators

International Documentary Association

American Academy of Religion

American Society of Media Photographers

Grants and Awards:

Auburn Seminary Aegis Scholar Leadership Cohort, Rwanda, Summer 2024

Distinguished Alumni for Academic Excellence, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 2023

Louisville Institute Sabbatical Research Grant \$40,000, 2021 - 2022.

Calvin Institute, Worship Grant \$15,000, 2019.

Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network \$2,500 for travel to Egypt, 2018.

Savannah College of Art and Design, Honors Scholarship and Educators Scholarship, 2013 to 2015.

Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network \$2,000 for documentary to Palestine / Israel, 2013.

Greater Atlanta Presbytery travel to Palestine / Israel with Interfaith Peace-Builders, 2013.

Columbia Theological Seminary, Study Grant for field research in Egypt, 2012.

Fuller Theological Seminary, Study Grant for field research in Egypt, 2008.

University Teaching Grant, Technology Upgrade and Improvement, 2003.

Fulbright Hayes Fellowship, Study in Ghana, 2003.

University System of Georgia, Chancellor's Award, East Africa: Culture, Environmental Conservation, Economic, Political and Social Development in Kenya and Tanzania, 2001 - 2002.

University System of Georgia, Governor's Teaching Fellowship, 2000 - 2001.

Wabash Teaching Fellowship, Mining the African American Motherlode - Book Project, 2001 - 2003.

National Lilly Foundation, Lilly Teaching Fellowship: Mining the African American Motherlode, 1999 - 2000.

Augusta State University, BellSouth Faculty Development Colloquium, 1998 - 1999.

Augusta State University, Faculty Research and Development Grant, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002.

Augusta State University, Most Valuable Faculty Member Award, Student Ambassador Board, 1999 - 2000.

University of Pittsburgh, W. E. B. DuBois Scholar Fellowship, 1994 - 1997.

University of Pittsburgh, Summer Research Grant, 1995 - 1996, 1996 - 1997.

Courses Taught at Columbia Theological Seminary:

Recasting Caste: An Afrocentric Theology of Freedom
Leading the Church in the Visual Age: Social Media and Social Justice
Social Media and Activism
Southern Civil Rights Pilgrimage
The Inclusive Congregation: The Church and the LGBTQIA+ Community
Leading Change in the Church
Reaching Young Adults in the Digital and Media Age
Explorations Atlanta
Urban Evangelism
Evangelism via Storytelling & Multi-Media
Leading, Growing and Developing a 21st Century Church
Emergent to Missional: Shaping a 21st Century Church
Theological Grounding for the Virtual Church
From Ministry to Mission: The Externally Focused Church
21st Century Christians: From Evangelism to Discipleship
Evangelism, Photography and Social Media
Introduction to Christian Leadership
Imagination and Resilience
Turnaround Congregations thru Evangelism and Social Justice
The Future of Ministry: Being the 21st Century Church
Evangelism & Videography: Story as Witness and Outreach
21st Century Church: Church in the Networked World
Crossroads Capstone Course

Courses Taught at Fuller Theological Seminary:

Introduction to Black Theology

Theology and Hip Hop Culture
The African Roots of Black Theology
Urban Evangelism
Soul Force: The Music of the Civil Rights Movement

Courses Taught at Augusta State University:

Social Theory
African American Religions
Introduction to Sociology
Urban Social Problems
Sociology of Religion
African American Religion
Social Movements
Sociology of Hip Hop
Social Problems
Sociology of Organizations
Race and Ethnicity
Introduction to African American / Africana Studies
Black Nationalist Movements