Preface

My Approach to Feminist Criticism

Elijah curls up in a cave like a fetus tucked in its mother's womb and prays for a show of divine power to protect him from Ahab and Jezebel, the rulers of Israel. A powerful wind roars across the mountain, but YHWH was not in the wind. An earthquake shakes the mountain, but YHWH was not in the earthquake. Lightning strikes the mountain, but YHWH was not in the lightning. Instead YHWH comes as gentle breeze—a "still small voice" carrying the wailing of women searching battlefield below for their dead (1 Kgs 19:9–18).[1] YHWH comes not as a male warrior who puts the powerful to death but as a female mourner who laments those they have slain.

Elijah's image of YHWH as a still small voice continues to inspire marginalized people today. Advocates for the ordination of women, for infertility and reproductive healthcare and for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender rights often embrace Elijah's still small voice as a motto for their struggle.[2]

Most studies of Deuteronomy today—including the landmark studies of Jeffery H. Tigay—listen primarily to its powerful male voices.[3] At least one commentary on Deuteronomy—the pioneering study by Andrea L. Weiss—listens to its female voices and what women of faith since have said about these ancient voices as well.[4] My goal is to listen not only to the still small voices of women—daughters, mothers, wives, and widows—but also to those of children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature (1:9–18; 20:10–20) about whom the loud male voices in Deuteronomy are speaking. I want to position feminist criticism of the Bible within the larger concerns of liberation theology, which

1. **Further Reading (Still, Small Voice):** Lust, "Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound"; Robinson, "Elijah at Horeb, 1 Kings 19:1–18."

2. Schmidt, *A Still Small Voice*; Lebacqz, "The Weeping Womb"; Loughlin, *Queer Theology*.

3. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*.

4. Weiss, "Deuteronomy."

reads the Bible through the eyes, not only of women, but of all those who are poor. With the help of parallel traditions from the world of the Bible as well as archaeology and anthropology I want to better understand and appreciate not only how elite males portray the powerless in Deuteronomy, but also more about the daily lives of the poor themselves.

Reconstructing the daily lives of the powerless in the traditions of the powerful in Deuteronomy requires both a "reading against the grain" and "hermeneutics of suspicion"—strategies now central to feminist criticism of the Bible—but which developed and are also applied in other fields of study.

Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) coined the phrase "hermeneutics of suspicion" to describe the shared genius of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud.[5] The method assumes that no written or any other cultural artifact is objective. All conceal undisclosed interests that the hermeneutics of suspicion work to identify. Marx suspected employers used religion to relieve the pain of the workers they exploited. Nietzsche suspected the wealthy used religion to idealize poverty so that the poor would not compete with them. Freud suspected believers used religion to fulfill their undisclosed need to have a divine parent care for them. Scholars in a variety of disciplines, like Juan Segundo and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in their work as liberation theologians and historians, use hermeneutics of suspicion.[6]

Literary critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) inspired the term "reading against the grain" in *Theses on the Concept of History*.[7] He declared that history is the work of the powerful celebrating their massacre of the powerless: "There has never been a document of culture which is not simultaneously one of barbarism," he writes. To listen to the voice of the victims, historians must . . . "brush history against the grain"—a subversive approach using the histories of elites to recover the worldviews of their victims that the powerful never intended to preserve. The powerful often inadvertently preserve the worldviews of their victims in the words they use to celebrate their own power. For example, powerful males tell the story of *Two Shrewd Midwives* (Exod 1:12–21) to shame Pharaoh as a fool gullible enough to believe the midwives' shrewdly worded report that "Hebrew women are different from Egyptian women. They are strong enough to birth their children before we arrive" (Exod 1:19). The midwives know, even if Pharaoh does not, that unaided childbirth is not a normal practice in any culture, no

5. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*.

6. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*; Segundo, *The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action*.

7. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History."

matter how strong its women may be. This strategy for reading against the grain listens for words of the powerless in the traditions of the powerful.

Cultural critic Natalie Zemon Davis, religious studies scholar Robert Orsi, and micro-historian Carlo Ginzberg are among those who read against the grain.[8] In *The Cheese and the Worms,* Ginzberg reads Inquisition transcripts against the grain by pushing past the words of the inquisitors and listens for odd phrases, grammatically incorrect sentences, and unique explanations embedded in the transcripts, to recover the worldview of Domenico Scandella, a villager indicted for heresy.[9]

Reading against the grain has also inspired projects like StoryCorps, founded in 2003 by David Isay to listen to ordinary people.[10] Inspired by oral histories collected by the Works Progress Administration (1935–1943) and Studs Terkel (1912–2008), StoryCorps records 40–minute conversations between two friends or family members who talk with each other about their life experiences and moments of joy and sorrow. When the StoryCorps recording booth in Grand Central Terminal opened in 2003, Studs Terkel remarked: "We know who the architect of Grand Central was. Who laid these floors? Who built these walls?" StoryCorps tells their stories.

Although reading against the grain and the hermeneutics of suspicion are important strategies for recovering the contributions of women and other minorities to theology and biblical studies, they are not a definitive solution to the complicated problem of religiously endorsed sexism. Both strategies focus only on institutional sexism, yet today even people affiliated with faith communities often have too little experience or understanding of their theology and understanding of the Bible.[11] Likewise religiously unaffiliated people—the *Nones*—consciously choose to ignore theology and biblical studies altogether. They do not shape their religious imagination or experience with either theology or the Bible.

My Intellectual Autobiography

Biblical scholars all bring their beliefs and personal journeys to their work. Their own assumptions influence the questions they ask and the way they ask them. Biblical studies developed in a cultural context that assumed the world view and values of Christian males in Western Europe and North America. Therefore, feminist criticism asks scholars like me to describe

8. Davis, *Women on the Margins*; Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*.
9. Ginzberg, *The Cheese and the Worms*.
10. Isay, "StoryCorps." Isay and StoryCorps, *Listening is an Act of Love*, 284.
11. Soelle, *The Silent Cry*; Scholz, *Sacred Witness*, 1–26.

my world view and values—*location* or life experiences—so that readers can decide for themselves just how well or poorly I have avoided imposing Christian, male, Western European and North American worldviews and values on my interpretation of Deuteronomy.[12]

I did not come to feminist criticism from a conviction that women in the Bible and women biblical scholars were not getting their due, but because I found the work being done by feminist scholars like Letty Russell, Phyllis Trible, Renita J. Weems, J. Cheryl Exum, and Rosemary Radford Ruether to be groundbreaking.[13] In *Old Testament Story: An Introduction*, I integrated the work of these pioneers in feminist criticism into a standard—not a feminist—introduction to the Bible.[14]

When I was teaching at Rice University, Toni Craven (Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University)—who would later co-edit *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuteronocanical Books and the New Testament*—introduced me to feminist criticism.[15] We were at a regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, and I asked her what she was reading. "Letty Russell!" She told me. "You need to get a copy of her *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*."[16]

Carol Meyers (Duke University) has had the most influence on my own use of feminist criticism. I continue to find her on-going work on the principles of feminist biblical criticism, and her focused research on the lives of both ordinary women and female characters in the Bible to be truly innovative. For example, in her landmark study: *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*—now thoroughly revised and updated as *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*—she introduced me to her carefully nuanced distinction between "patriarchy"—a social structure, and "sexism"—an abuse of power. The terms are still often used as synonyms which they are not.

Throughout *The Social World of Deuteronomy: A New Feminist Commentary* I also include samples from others who have influenced my work.

12. **Further Reading (Contextual Interpretation):** Segovia and Tolbert, eds., *Reading from this Place,* 2 vols.; Hays, *From Every People and Nation*; Patte, ed., *Global Bible Commentary*; Vander Stichele and Penner, *Her Master's Tools?*

13. **Further Reading (Feminist Biblical Scholarship):** Bellis, "Feminist Biblical Scholarship"; Russell, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*; Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 206; C. L. Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*; Fulkerson and Briggs, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*; Bird, *Faith, Feminism, and the Forum of Scripture.*

14. Benjamin, *The Old Testament Story.*

15. C. L. Meyers, ed., *Women in Scripture.*

16. Russell, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible.*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a pioneering first-wave feminist, was one of the first to understand just how the Bible was misused to disenfranchise women. John W. Baker, M. Daniel Carroll R., Victor H. Matthews, Francoise Mirguet, Beth Alpert Nakhai, and Carolyn Pressler—and I—are all biblical scholars. Nakhai is also a field archaeologist. Their contributions expand on what I am doing in this commentary; some agree with my interpretation, others provide alternative readings. Florence Morgan Gillman is a New Testament scholar, but her contribution recalls a powerful moment of shared marginalization with the biblical women who are the focus of her life's work. Laura Kelley is a chef who brings the women in the world of the Bible to life by studying and then preparing the meals which they fed their households. Christie K. K. Leung is an artist who tells the story of artistic women in China who created *Nushu*—a finger-language to embroider their hopes and dreams into their handwork just as women in the Bible may have used their fingers to teach the women and children in their households the values reflected in the Ten Commandments. M. Daniel Carroll R., Gina Messina-Dysert, and Leah Sarat are—as I try to be—academic professionals with strong commitments to use their scholarship to bring about social change. Carroll and Sarat focus on immigrants from Latin America; Messina-Dysert focuses on women who have survived sexual violence, a concern also shared by Pressler. The reflections by Betty Campbell and Emilia Requenes Garcia of Tabor House are particularly dear to me because they demonstrate that Deuteronomy is not simply of interest to scholars, but also finds a place in the faith-based lives of those who serve the poor.

As a feminist critic I am particularly interested in what Deuteronomy reveals about power and authority in ancient Israel.[17] *Power* is the ability to do something; *authority* is the permission to do something. It would be easy to assume that cultures would give authority only to those who have ability. Not so. For example, only women have the power to reproduce. Yet cultures repeatedly give men authority over reproduction. Men determine with whom women may have sexual intercourse; how often they may have intercourse and how many children they will bear. When the Federal Drug Administration approved the birth control pill of G. D. Searle & Company (May 11, 1960), authority over reproductive power in many sectors of western industrial cultures passed from men to women.

My interest in power and authority developed during the fifteen years I worked as a community organizer in Washington D.C. and South Central Los Angeles. The first step in bringing about change is to do a power analysis and find out who has the power to make a difference. Organizers never

17. Moore, "Divine Rights."

assume that those with authority have power. Just because it says *Supervisor* on the door does not mean that the person actually runs the organization. The person who actually has that power may be an administrative assistant down the hall.

The pill today is not the first time that women had authority over reproduction. Between 1550–1070 BCE Egyptian women used vaginal suppositories of acacia gum, dates, plant fiber, and honey to prevent pregnancy. Greek women used sap from *silphium* fennel as a seasoning and in syrups to prevent and terminate pregnancies. Fennel production was a major industry on Cyprus, which minted a four-drachma coin showing a woman touching the fennel plant with one hand and her reproductive organs with the other. Over-farming destroyed *silphium* fennel production by 500.

Focusing on power and authority rather than exclusively on gender allows me to acknowledge the critique which some anthropologists since 1990 have offered cross-cultural, feminist scholars for assuming that gender is a universal social status.[18] Ancient or non-Western cultures do not always derive gender status from male and female biological characteristics. Although I view the world as a Westerner, I try not to assume that my Western categories are universal, or that the worldviews of biblically based Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities today are identical with the worldviews of the biblical Hebrews.[19]

The Hebrews in Deuteronomy lived in Syria-Palestine. A long-standing tradition of interpretation associates the Hebrews with the "people of Israel" in a *Hymn of Merneptah,* and calls them "Israelites"—members of the tribes or citizens of the state of Israel. "Hebrews" is a social-scientific label and better describes their social status as "displaced households."[20] These Hebrews who founded the villages in the mountains west of the Jordan River Valley and north of Jerusalem were mostly displaced from the states along the coast.

The *el-ʿAmarna Letters* of Egypt's governors in Syria-Palestine describe the mercenaries hired by their fellow governors to raid their caravans, plunder their harvests and rustle their cattle as *ʿapiru.* They also accuse fellow governors of being *ʿapiru* because of their disloyalty to their pharaoh. Abraham as an *ʿapiru* delivers Sodom from Elam (Gen 13:5—14:24). When Gilead expels Jephthah, he joins the *ʿapiru* and supports himself raiding (Judg 11:1–40). Nabal accuses David of being an *ʿapiru* because he extorts payments from households to protect their herds (1 Sam 25:2–43).

18. Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women*; Scholz, *Sacred Witness*, 1–26.
19. Kessler, *The Social History of Ancient Israel*.
20. **Further Reading (Hebrews):** Lemche, "Hebrew as a National Name for Israel."

Nonetheless, little linguistic or archaeological evidence identifies the *ʿapiru* in *el-ʿAmarna Letters* with the Hebrews in the Bible. Still, the social unrest in Syria-Palestine during the reigns of Amenophis III (1398–1361 BCE) and Akhenaton (1352–1335 BCE), to whom the *el-ʿAmarna Letters* were addressed, is equivalent to the social unrest in Syria-Palestine described in Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges.

What the ancestors of the biblical Hebrews had in common with one another was that they were social survivors who fled the famine, plague, and war that ended the Bronze Age. Most were not warriors; they were farmers and herders. They left their centralized, surplus states and created a decentralized, subsistence village federation called "Israel."[21]

The fathers of households in ancient Israel have authority—high social status; most women, mothers, wives, widows, children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature do not. Yet in Deuteronomy high-status males teach one another how to manage the low-status members of households to protect their own authority. In the Middle Assyrian Palace Decrees elite males use a similar defensive strategy.[22] They view competition for status between women in the royal household as a threat to their own authority, and issue the decrees to educate other elite males how to manage these women, who although technically powerless, have the ability to put the authority of the fathers of their households in jeopardy.

Therefore, I assume that women, mothers, wives, widows, children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature in Deuteronomy were not without power, and did present a real or perceived threat to the authority of the fathers of households. Otherwise, these fathers would not need to deal with them so carefully. In ancient Israel women did not overthrow dominant males; they learned how to manage them.

My practice of feminist criticism has been shaped by my graduate education in form criticism, and by my post-graduate specialization in social-scientific criticism. Rolf P. Knierim (Claremont Graduate University), my *Doktorvater*, was a form critic and, like Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971), his teacher at Heidelberg University, a biblical theologian. Form critics like folklorists study the word art of traditional cultures.[23]

21. Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis*; Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II*.

22. Roth, "The Middle Assyrian Laws (2.132)"; Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*; Tetlow, *Women, Crimes, and Punishment in Ancient Law and Society*, 1:142–46.

23. **Further Reading (Traditional / Tribal / Oral / Primitive / Savage Cultures):**

Enlightenment cultures are confident that the human mind, properly disciplined, can accurately understand and manage their worlds. Nothing is taken for granted; every decision is supported by evidence and experiment. In contrast traditional cultures have less confidence in the human mind. The mind uses the senses to collect data necessary for decision making and these senses are easily deceived. Therefore, decisions based on such faulty sensual data cannot be trusted.

Traditional cultures respect the world around them. Trees, rocks and water reveal the divine whom they acknowledge by daily rituals—repeated patterns of meaningful human behavior, often accompanied by words.[24] Significant investigations of behavior in traditional cultures were published in 1962 by Claude Lévi-Strauss who studied marriage and totemism. In 1966 Mary Douglas applied this structural anthropology to pollution and taboo rituals including ancient Israel, and in 1990 Howard Eilberg-Schwartz continued the study of ritual behavior in ancient Israel.[25]

Traditional cultures also prefer to hand on their world views orally in performance, rather than silently in writing.[26] To better understand and appreciate these oral traditions form critics ask three questions. What is the form of the tradition? What is its social setting? What is its intention? My *Deuteronomy and City Life: A Form Criticism of Texts with the Word* City *in Deuteronomy 4:41—26:19* uses form criticism to study traditions in Deuteronomy, which I argue developed in cities of early Israel.[27]

My work in social-scientific criticism began in the Social World of Ancient Israel sessions pioneered by Norman K. Gottwald (New York Theological Seminary) and Frank S. Frick (1938–2011) at the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature. My collaboration with Victor H. Matthews (Missouri State University at Springfield) on *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE* and my own *Stones & Stories: An Introduction to Archaeology & the Bible* use social-scientific criticism to reconstruct not only the social institutions where the Bible developed, but also the social institutions that appear in the Bible.[28] In *Social World of Deuteronomy: A New Feminist*

Vaughan, "Social and Political Organization in Traditional Societies"; Cruikshank, "The Potential of Traditional Societies and of Anthropology, Their Predator"; Turner, "State, Science and Economy in Traditional Societies"; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 358; Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*.

24. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 162–213.

25. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 188; Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism*.

26. R. D. Miller II, *Oral Tradition in Ancient Israel*.

27. Benjamin, *Deuteronomy and City Life*.

28. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE*; Benjamin, *Stones & Stories*.

Commentary I reconstruct not only the social institutions where Deuteronomy developed, but also the social institutions that appear in the traditions in Deuteronomy as well.

Some social institutions of traditional cultures—like *herem* war (see 7:1–26; 20:10–20), slavery (21:10–14) and caning (25:1–3)—shock people today. In *Leviathan* Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) canonized this negative reaction by describing traditional cultures—as "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish . . . where every man is Enemy to every man. There is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death."

Others today idealize some social institutions of traditional cultures—like interest free loans (see 23:19–20; 24:17–18), feeding travelers and widows (23:24–25; 24:19–22) and charitable giving (26:1–15). Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) canonized this positive reaction to traditional cultures in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* and *Social Contract*. He argued that early humans possessed a natural and uncorrupted goodness. For Rousseau . . . "nothing is so gentle as man in his primitive state, when placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man." For Rousseau traditional cultures did not have competitive social classes based on education, ability or wealth. He argued that Enlightenment cultures were destructive because they crushed the creative freedom of early human communities and replaced it with material progress that undermined human friendship, by sowing the seeds of jealousy, fear and suspicion.

Unlike Hobbes, I do not assume that Deuteronomy reflects barbaric practices, but also, unlike Rousseau, I do not assume the Hebrews were idealists who anticipated Renaissance humanism. I assume traditional cultures are neither better, nor worse, than Enlightenment cultures. They are simply different. To indict traditional cultures as barbaric is as inappropriate as it is to celebrate them as noble. To indict Enlightenment cultures as degenerate is as inappropriate as it is to celebrate them as technical and moral giants. I try to approach the Hebrews and their neighbors with respect, seeking to better understand and appreciate their ways of living. I assume that Deuteronomy reflects the desire to hand on experience that the Hebrews found valuable. I try to focus on the good that the Hebrews were trying to do in their own time, rather than on the harm that any given instruction may have, in fact, done—then or now. Religious studies scholar and author, Karen Armstrong,

describes the approach I try to take toward the dominant voices of fathers in Deuteronomy, and to the still small voices of the women, mothers, wives, widows, children, the ill, the disabled, liminal people, slaves, prisoners, outsiders, livestock, and nature of their households.

. . . from Karen Armstrong

Quite early in my career I was struck by a footnote in a book referring to the science of compassion *that should characterize the work of a religious historian.*[29] *This was not science in the sense of physics or chemistry, but a method of acquiring* knowledge *(Latin:* scientia*) by entering in a scholarly, empathetic way into the historical period that is being researched. Some of the religious practices of the past may sound bizarre to modern ears, but the historian has to* empty *herself of her own post-Enlightenment presuppositions, leave her twentieth-century self behind, and enter wholeheartedly into the viewpoint of a world that is very different from her own. A religious historian must not* substitute his own or his readers' conventions for the original, *the author explained; rather, he should* broaden his perspective so that it can make place for the other. *He must not cease interrogating his material until* he has driven his understanding to the point where he has an immediate human grasp of what a given position meant *and, with this empathetic understanding of the context,* could feel himself doing the same.[30]

I assume that the world of the Bible was a real world. The Hebrews faced life challenges shared by all humans, and Deuteronomy reflects strategies for addressing them. The Hebrews explained their strategies using different language and different assumptions than are common today, but my intent is to treat them as both real and realistic. People today may fantasize about living in a world where choices could be made simply by summoning a prophet, but in reality that ancient institution may not have made the choices any simpler than seeking the advice of a life coach or a financial adviser today.

Biblical traditions explain and interpret human experience. Every biblical tradition is not necessarily a direct response to a specific problem in the community to which it is addressed. Chaos theory points out that

29. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:379.

30. Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, 116–17.

human creativity is not always rational, but sometimes whimsical or irrational. Nonetheless, the storytellers who developed these traditions were not simply trying to entertain or distract their audiences from the challenges they faced. Their traditions were focused on helping their audiences survive and make a difference in their worlds.

What audiences in the world of the Bible, and in the worlds after the Bible, did with biblical traditions was and is not always logical. Humans are not always rational, especially when it comes to their sacred values.[31] Rituals based on biblical traditions can be both unhealthy and expensive, even though they contribute significantly to the cultural identity of those who practice them.

For observant Muslims the month-long fast at Ramadan—not eating or drinking water for up to twelve hours each day for a month—is a defining ritual that they practice with devotion. They are well aware that nutrition experts who recommend five small meals at regular intervals consider such fasting to be a health risk. Similarly, the research of Filipe Compante and David Yanagizawa-Drott revealed that the fast reduces gross domestic product in Muslim countries as much as 0.7 percent. Nonetheless, Muslims testified to the World Values Survey that the fast made them happy and satisfied with their lives.[32] Therefore, I allow for the possibility that some behaviors in Deuteronomy do not logically respond to human needs, but do contribute to the general happiness of these ancient peoples.

I have lived my life not only studying the traditional cultures of the world of the Bible, but also surrounded by traditional cultures. As a child I lived in rural Japan immediately after World War II. There were no other Americans nearby, and the villagers who cared for me and who were my playmates lived as the Japanese had lived for centuries, almost unaffected by twentieth-century technology or worldviews. For ten years, at the beginning of my career, I lived and worked in South Central Los Angeles. Seven out of ten families were African American—some from Louisiana, where I was born, some from elsewhere in the Deep South. Two out of ten families were Hispanic—most from rural Mexico. During the last fifteen years, I have lived and worked in Arizona, home to some twenty-one federally recognized Native American tribes, and where students in just one school district speak more than sixty languages other than English. I continue to be inspired by my work on ancient Israel, and by the people from traditional

31. Baron, *Morality and Rational Choice*; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, *Reasoning and Choice*.

32. "World Values Survey"; Campante and Yanagizawa-Drott, "Does Religion Affect Economic Growth and Happiness?"

cultures around me, and continue to learn much from them to enrich my own Enlightenment lifestyle.

Early on during my time in South Central Los Angeles, the mother of one of my high-school students brought her children to meet me. She introduced each using a different family name! I did not understand why a mother would announce so publically that her children had different fathers. I said nothing at the moment, but, in time, she became a valued interpreter of Black culture in South Central for me.

When I finally came to a place where I could ask, I said: "Do you remember the day we first met, and you introduced me to your children? Of course, she did. Did you have any idea how shocked I was to hear you call each of your children by a different family name?"

She looked at me sympathetically: "Honey, that look was all over your face!" She patiently continued. "Each of my babies has a daddy. Their daddies may not be around, but they exist. I could not make them stay in their lives, but I could give them their daddy's name. At least they can have that much of them to grow up with."

I was absolutely inspired. What a remarkable—and courageous—ritual of childrearing. It was only one of many gifted moments when I learned to see and respect the world from the perspective of a culture other than my own.