

RALPH BASUI WATKINS

Curriculum Vitae

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ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

2020–Present	Peachtree Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA
2011–2020	Peachtree Associate Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA
2011–2013; 2016–2023	Affiliate Associate Professor of Society, Religion and Africana Studies Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA
2005–2011	Associate Professor of Society, Religion and Africana Studies; Assistant Dean, African American Church Studies Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA
2003–2005	Associate Professor, Department of Sociology Augusta State University, Augusta, GA
1998–2003	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology Augusta State University, Augusta, GA
1997–1998	Assistant Director, Black Church Studies Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA
1995–1998	Adjunct Professor, Sociology and Religion Department Community College of Allegheny, Pittsburgh, PA
1992–1994	Assistant to the President for Social Equity Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion, PA
1990–1992	Director of Minority Student Affairs Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion, PA
1988–1990	Director of Minority Student Affairs University of Dubuque, Dubuque, IA

EDUCATION

MFA, Photography, Savannah College of Art and Design, 2016.

Thesis: *Faith in Sweet Auburn: The Next Chapter*. Committee Chair: Forest McMullin.

PhD, Sociology, University of Pittsburgh, 1997.

Dissertation: “The Institutionalization the African Methodist Episcopal Church.” Committee Chair: Dr. Norman Hummon.

DMin, African American Church Studies, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1993.

Project: *Strategic Planning in a Small African American Church*. Advisor: Ronald Peters.

MA, Religion, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, 1990.

Concentration: Theology / Black Theology. Advisor: Gwinyai Muzorewa.

BA, Political Science, with Honors, Sacramento State University, 1988.

AA, Social Science, with Honors, American River Junior College, 1985.

PASTORAL AND ECCLESIAL APPOINTMENTS

Oct 2017–Feb 2020	Senior Pastor Wheat Street Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA
Feb 2016–Sep 2017	Interim Senior Pastor Wheat Street Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA
Dec 2008–Jul 2011	Executive Pastor First African Methodist Episcopal Church, Los Angeles, CA
Dec 2007–Dec 2008	Executive Pastor / Director of Ecclesia The City of Refuge Church, Gardena, CA
Aug 2005–Nov 2007	Pastor for Young Adults and Director of Christian Education First African Methodist Episcopal Church, Los Angeles, CA
Aug 1998–Jul 2005	Director of Ministry Development Beulah Grove Baptist Church, Augusta, GA
May 1997–Jul 1998	Pastor of Education and Evangelism Macedonia Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, PA
Nov 1994–Apr 1997	Pastor Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh, PA
Nov 1993–Nov 1994	Pastor Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church, Aliquippa, PA
Feb 1991–Oct 1993	Pastor Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Clearfield, PA
Jun 1985–Jan 1988	Associate Minister Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Sacramento, CA

SCHOLARSHIP

Books

(with Bill Brown) *The Word Made Image: Scripture, Photography, and the Creativity of Justice*. Fortress Press, forthcoming Spring 2027.

Inclusive Love: Seeing the Black Church in the Rainbow. Judson Press, March 2026.

(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.

Book Chapters and Contributions

"Nobody Is on the Outside with God: A Theology of Inclusion and the Politics of Belonging." In *Joy Comes in the Morning: Preaching, Civic Culture, and the Black Prophetic Tradition*, edited by Richard Pitt. Forthcoming, 2027.

"Is Christianity the White Man's Religion? Returning Our Faith to Our Roots." In *Holistic Theology for Modern Black/African Churches*, edited by Esther Acolatse. Forthcoming, 2027.

"Gangsta Rap Made Me Do It." In *Why Black Lives Matter*, edited by Anthony Bradley. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021.

Foreword to *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-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 Abbington. GIA Publications, 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 and Essays

- “Photography in Worship.” *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching and the Arts* 58.4 (2024): 59–61.
- “Worship at the Margins: Revival and Freedom.” *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching and the Arts* 58.3 (2024): 81–85.
- “God Is Yet Creating a More Just World.” *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching and the Arts* 58.2 (2024): 58–62.
- “Ministry, Marriage and Love.” *The Bearings*, 2019. https://www.thebtscenter.org/bearings/september_2019/ministry-marriage-and-immigration/
- “Out of Egypt: Revisiting the Roots of African American Christianity.” *The Bearings*, 2019. <https://www.thebtscenter.org/bearings/2019-june/out-of-egypt/>
- “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.” *Black Theology: An International Journal* 8, no. 3 (Fall 2010).
- “The Re-Radicalization of Black Theology: From Cone to Hemet.” *The A.M.E. Church Review Scholarly Journal* 124, no. 416 (2009): 43–58.
- “From a Firm Foundation to a Settled Future: The Bishops’ Council and the Role of Education 1880 to 1908, Part III.” *The A.M.E. Church Review Scholarly Journal* 124, no. 405 (2007): 41–71.
- “Building a Firm Foundation: Complexity in Search of Security and Establishment of the AME Church, 1860-1972, Part II.” *The A.M.E. Church Review Scholarly Journal* 133, no. 404 (2006): 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.” *The AME Church Review Scholarly Journal* 122, no. 401 (2006): 12–37.
- “The Demise of Rap Music: From Resistance to Rhetoric.” *Ideaz: An Interdisciplinary Social Science and Humanities Journal* 12, no. 1 (2002): 17–37.
- “Bringing Africa Black to Augusta: A Public Diary of a Private Journey (words and pictures).” *The Augusta Focus* 21, no. 1065 (2002): 1–6.

Reference Work

- “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.

CREATIVE SCHOLARSHIP AND MEDIA

Documentary Film and Television

2023. *Black Faith in the Rainbow*. Short documentary, 41 minutes. Producer, director, writer, cameraman, and editor.
- 2016–2018. *Talk It Out with Dr. Ralph Basui Watkins*. Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA. Bi-weekly 30-minute talk show, 58 episodes. Co-producer, host, and writer.

2017. *Out of Egypt I Have Called My Son: A Son's Journey Black to Africa*. Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA. Two-part, 30-minute television documentary. Producer, director, writer, cameraman, and editor. <https://vimeo.com/355109032>; <https://vimeo.com/355118012>
2013. *The 46th Delegation of the Interfaith Peace-Builders in Palestine / Israel*. Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA. 30-minute television documentary. Producer, director, writer, cameraman, and editor. <https://vimeo.com/355147058>
2012. *She Is the Pastor*. Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA. 30-minute television documentary. Producer, director, writer, and co-editor.
- 2011–2014. *Religion Roundtable*. Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network, Atlanta, GA. Bi-weekly 30-minute television show, 38 episodes. Host, writer, and co-producer.

Photography Exhibitions

2024. *Atlanta Mayor's Pride Exhibit 2024: Celebrating Atlanta's LGBTQ+ Art & Artists*, Atlanta, GA.
2024. *Seeing the Future of the African Church in the Rainbow*, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA. Solo exhibition; Pride in the Pews Conference.
2023. *Seeing the Future of the African Church in the Rainbow*, Harrington Gallery, Atlanta, GA. Solo exhibition.
- 2021–2022. *Again and Again*, Christians in Visual Arts International Traveling Exhibition.
2016. *The Spirit of Jazz: The Music I See*, APEX Museum, Atlanta, GA. Solo exhibition.
2015. *Open Studio*, Savannah College of Art and Design, Atlanta, GA.
2015. *Faith in Sweet Auburn*, APEX Museum, Atlanta, GA. Solo / thesis exhibition.
2014. *Transitions*, Peachtree and Pine Studio, Atlanta, GA.
2013. *Open Studio*, Savannah College of Art and Design, Atlanta, GA.

Artist Residencies

2024. Artist in Residence, Pride in the Pews, Spelman College.
2015. Artist in Residence, The Velvet Note Jazz Club, Atlanta, GA.

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND HONORS

- Auburn Seminary Aegis Scholar Leadership Cohort, Rwanda, Summer 2024
- Distinguished Alumni for Academic Excellence, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 2023
- Louisville Institute Sabbatical Research Grant, 2021–2022.
- Calvin Institute, Worship Grant, 2019.
- Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network for travel–Egypt, 2018.
- Savannah College of Art and Design, Honors / Educators Scholarship, 2013–2015.
- Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting Network Palestine / Israel Travel Grant, 2013.
- Greater Atlanta Presbytery travel–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.

SELECTED SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS, LECTURES, AND WORKSHOPS

- “Imagining a Ministry: The Power of the Image in Envisioning a Future” Williams Institute Lectures, Methodist School of Theology, Delaware, Ohio, 2025
- 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—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–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–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–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–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 Sociologist, Chicago, 2002.
- “Looking Blackward: C. Eric Lincoln, Black Nationalism, Black Identity and Black Religiosity,” Association of Black Sociologists, Chicago, 2002.
- “Teaching–Transgress: A Grassroots Approach that Leads–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–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–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–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.

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Member, Film and Visual Culture Unit Steering Committee, American Academy of Religion, 2024–2025

Vice Chair, Southeast Region, Society for Photographic Education, 2024–2025

Board Member, Journal on Teaching, Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, 2017–2025

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

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

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, 2016–2020

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

College Art Association

Society for Photographic Education

International Documentary Association

American Academy of Religion

Professional Photographers of America

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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: Montgomery, Selma, Birmingham and Memphis
- 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

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

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