

Forged
in the
Fiery Furnace

African American Spirituality

DIANA L. HAYES

ORBIS  BOOKS

Maryknoll, New York 10545

Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.maryknollsociety.org.

Copyright © 2012 by Diana L. Hayes.

“My People” from THE COLLECTED POEMS OF LANGSTON HUGHES by Langston Hughes, edited by Arnold Rampersad with David Roessel, Associate Editor, copyright © 1994 by the Estate of Langston Hughes. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.

Published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545-0302.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

Manuscript editing and typesetting by Joan Weber Laflamme.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher. Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to: Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, New York 10545-0302.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hayes, Diana L.

Forged in the fiery furnace : African American spirituality / Diana L. Hayes.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 978-1-57075-472-2 (pbk.)

1. African Americans—Religion. 2. Spirituality—United States.

I. Title.

BR563.N4H3788 2012

248.089'96073—dc23

2011037787

Contents

Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction: Forged in the Fiery Furnace	1
1. What Is Africa to Me?	
<i>African Roots</i>	9
African Origins	9
African Religious Systems	11
African Traditional Religion	13
Life in/as Community	16
Sin	17
African Spirituality	19
Creation Stories	20
Sacred Ritual	22
Human Agencies	25
Out from Africa	26
2. Lord, How Come Me Here?	
<i>Building Community</i>	29
Unity in Diversity	29
Africanisms in the United States	31
Roman Catholic Influences	35
Protestant Influences	37
An Enslaved Understanding of Scripture	41
3. Say Amen, Somebody	
<i>Emergence of African American Spirituality</i>	49
Spirit Possession and Being Slain in the Spirit	51

The Conversion Experience: Protestant	55
The Conversion Experience: Roman Catholic	58
Slave Resistance	63
Slave Narratives	66
A Paradoxical Faith	68
4. Yet Do I Marvel	
<i>An Oral Spirituality</i>	69
The Sorrow Songs	70
The Role of the Spirituals: Compensatory or Revolutionary?	72
Social Consciousness	80
Rechristianizing Christianity	83
Post-Civil War/Post-Reconstruction	85
5. Oh, Freedom!	
<i>The Emergence of the Black Church</i>	89
Freedom's Beginning: Slavery's End	89
Freedom's Spirit: The Black Church	93
Development of Independent Black Churches	98
What Is the Black Church?	100
Freedom's Betrayal: The Rise of Jim Crow	102
The Black Church: Post-Reconstruction	104
Freedom Deferred: An Alternate Spirituality	106
6. My Soul Is Rested	
<i>The Struggle for Justice</i>	111
"A Change Is Gonna' Come"	111
A Movement of the Spirit	115
Martin Luther King Jr. and the Struggle for Civil Rights	120
Black Power and the Nation of Islam	125
A Liberating Black Theology	128
The Praxis of Black Catholics	132
How Far We've Come	134

7. Beautiful Are the Souls of My Black Sisters	
<i>The Spirituality of African American Women</i>	137
Daughters of Africa	137
Building Community	142
African American Women and the Bible	144
Womanist Theology and Spirituality	152
African American Catholic Women	161
Strong Women Keep a'Comin'	166
8. We Who Believe in Freedom	
<i>Spirituality in Action</i>	169
Walter Earl Fluker: Spirituality as a Basis for Ethical Leadership	171
James H. Evans, Jr.: Spirituality and Social Transformation	174
Peter J. Paris: Spirituality of a People	176
Carlyle Fielding Stewart III: Soul Survivors	177
Cornel West: Combative Spirituality	180
Gayraud S. Wilmore: Pragmatic Spirituality	181
Robert M. Franklin: A Diversity of Traditions	183
Bryan N. Massingale: Lamentation and Compassion	184
Alternative Spiritualities	186
The Faith Journey Continues	187
Notes	191
Selected Bibliography	213