



Journal of Liberal Arts and Humanities (JLAH)
Issue: Vol. 2; No. 4; April 2020 pp. 33-40
ISSN 2690-070X (Print) 2690-0718 (Online)
Website: www.jlahnet.com
E-mail: editor@jlahnet.com
Doi: 10.48150/jlah.v2no4.2021.a4

A DISCURSUS Reflections on Connections: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Understanding of Suffering and His Paradigm of Protest for Social Justice

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Introduction

This brief Discursus represents the published form of a “lecture” which I presented to Rhodes College student scholars in the Spring Semester, March 26, 2020. **Rhodes College Professors Kendra Hotz and Duane Loynes** invited me to address student scholars during a 75-minute session in a Course they were Team-Teaching entitled, “**The Bible and Black Lives Matter**”.

Profs. Kendra & Duane asked me to specifically address the class on the relationship between the work of **Martin Luther King**, the challenges and insights of black suffering in the work of Black theologian **James Cone’s** book, The Cross and the Lynching Tree, and the contemporary justice work of the **Black Lives Matter Movement**.

I accepted their invitation and presented a session entitled, “**MLK, Suffering and Black Lives Matter**”. This session, in keeping with the discursus approach, was simultaneously wide-ranging, at times serendipitous, provocative, raucous, pastoral, and fun!

The document which follows represents a written accounting of what I offered to the best of my recollection. I believe it to be true to the full experience, although the document does NOT duplicate the event as an actual, real time, audiovisual accounting of that experience.

I have changed some of the document’s wording and included footnotes in order to offer more clarity and less ambiguity in some areas. However, the document is unabridged. It is virtually the very same Summary Document which I sent to the Profs Hotz and Loynes via email attachment upon completion of that session.

It is my hope that this document will somehow be of assistance to you as you continue to journey on your path to deeper understanding of reality, greater self-awareness, and maturity as a radical lover.

L. Ivory, Millington, TN. July 2020

DISCURSUS¹ - Salient Points for Your Consideration: Martin Luther King (MLK), Suffering, and Black Lives Matter

¹**Discursus** is a term that I use to describe the type of public discourse that I am employing in the classroom setting. A nominal definition of discursus places emphasis on argumentation, ratiocination, or discursive reasoning. I use the concept to suggest an instructional methodology that is less argumentation (although argument is definitely in the mix of things) and more collaborative in its aim. **By discursus, I mean a shorter, focused, succinct exchange of information.**

A discursus **AIMS at sharing** smaller, more concentrated slices of information that are believed to be germane to grasping key elements of a specific aspect of a broader investigation. It **seeks to guide** scholars’ efforts toward a more nuanced understanding of a particular aspect of study. In this way, a discursus is **designed to contribute** to scholars’ increased clarity of larger, more complex issues under scrutiny in a session.

Scholars, since I left you with a wide-ranging stream-of-consciousness sharing of MY own experiences of suffering, MLK's notions on suffering, and a quasi-template for addressing suffering, I am "vibrating" that no doubt:

- a) I did leave you with LOTS of assertions to navigate
- b) I tend to talk f-a-s-t!!
- c) I could be confusing even in my AIM to deliver clarity.
- d) I used "colorful" language which may have impeded your capacity to "hear" me. *Here, I wanted to present such a hard topic as suffering, the cross and lynching in a way that would be heard as a pejorative, uncomfortable experience that would circumvent any of our tendencies to hear discussions about these important issues as sterile, academic research essays lacking pathos. I confess that my approach may have gone over like a lead balloon! ☹️ and resulted in being a barrier or block which prevented your openness to actively listen and hear me. I take FULL responsibility for this approach scholars! If you were offended, my bad! I apologize SINCERELY! K?!

Given ALL the above, scholars, please allow me to offer a **brief synopsis** of what I was intending to say relative to MLK, suffering, and Black Lives Matter. I will do this through a series of talking points below:

#1) First, suffering in multivariate forms and contexts occurs on a large scale and depth EVERY DAY of OUR lives. Ya'll helped to speak out loud & identify some of these forms during our session. This suffering might be thought of as **UNIVERSAL** (FORMS that are common to ALL humans in some manifestation) and **PARTICULAR** (FORMS that are specific to certain humans, groups, communities, etc.)

#2) For MLK, suffering that does NOT result from some type of natural disasters (such as floods, hurricanes, drought, tornadoes, etc.).. BUT which DOES result from some type of **PURPOSIVE human action** (such as violence, racism and other "isms" of separated-ness, targeted brutality, poverty, domestic abuse, etc.) represents a **MORAL SICKNESS**. It is morally problematical!

#3) Why? Because for MLK, this FORM of suffering represents a DE-humanization or DE-valuation, of other humans, and this is NOT the intention of GOD for her Created order, including humans. Its toleration represents a failure to acknowledge the **VALUE** of others, and signifies indifference, apathy, and callousness towards the **BROKENNESS** in human relationships.

#4) This is important to MLK because, for him, ALL humans are made in the Divine Image (**Imago Dei**). Therefore, EVERY person is to be VALUED. EVERY person's worth must be recognized. EVERY person deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. EVERY Human!! Period!!

#5) This sounds **the UNIVERSAL note** in MLK's perspective! MLK is NOT offering an EXCLUSIVIST theology that privileges Black ontology. In fact, MLK's anthropological assertion avoids privileging ANY persons, groups, or communities. His belief certainly INCLUDES black people! Although, for King, it is NOT limited solely to black people!... And it even includes those whom MLK considers moral opponents!

#6) Now for MLK, whenever humans encounter such acts which generate suffering, **THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF RESPONSE!!!** The ONLY question is, "WHAT KIND of response there will be.....?"

A discursus is **jazz-like in nature**. It represents a composition that can only be played by collaboration among contributing artists. It requires the input of every listener present, and relies upon the collective knowledge and experience of ALL those present.

It **AIMS to offer relevant information through a mixture of approaches** – repetition, syncopation, the Socratic method of Q&A, the black religious tradition's emphasis on "call and response", story-telling, reinforcement tactics, sermon address, polished oratory, sociodrama, audio & visual resources, etc. It is **"running about to & fro" in performance mode with an underlying purpose or objective in mind**. It involves **transdisciplinary tactics** often digressing & dipping quickly into the wells of other perspectives, but with a view to avoid verbal transgression (assaulting others' perspectives by deliberately misrepresenting them or reducing their contribution by failing to acknowledge the full scope of their viewpoint).

#7) Now MLK is an ordained pastor, evangelical liberal preacher, Christian minister, theologian, ethicist who holds as NON-negotiable, some **CORE values – namely love, justice, and peace. WHATEVER response that is given, for him, MUST be in ALIGNMENT with these VALUES.** These values were, for MLK, deeply embedded in the universe that God has created, and which God continues to sustain, govern, and redeem.

#8) In light of this, the very presence of the universe amounts to a Divine imperative that humans **MUST** make a responsible moral response to suffering. This constitutes **the MILITANT aspect of the response.** However, one's thoughts/judgements, behaviors/actions, and policies/laws must be morally in alignment with the values AND moral LAWS by which God governs the universe. This constitutes **the MORAL aspect of the response.**

#9) Therefore, one **MUST hold BOTH militancy AND morality in tension/balance.** Therefore, the resister **MUST** be attentive to the idea that the **MEANS** one uses in one's response to suffering, must be **CONSISTENT** with the **END or AIM or VISION** that one is seeking to achieve. (**moral coherence**)

#10) Now MLK uses this approach to hold to his belief in the **“redemptive nature of Unearned or Unmerited suffering”.** He gets this idea from the Black religious tradition/Black church, liberal Christianity, and Gandhian nonviolent resistance. MLK RE-works and applies this concept in the MCRM.²

#11) So MLK believes that **one must act in ways that are morally coherent and consistent with Divine Intent and the universe's moral foundation** (check out MLK's quote scholars..”**the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice**”).

#12) As one acts in response to suffering, injustice, etc.. one must be acutely aware that suffering in some form/s **WILL** occur. **Power** is in play here, and MLK is fond of paraphrasing Frederick Douglass, **“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will”.**

#13) Therefore, **IF** the resister is going to respond to suffering, then the response **MUST** hold together militancy AND morality. **One must certainly use power in SOME form** – power to resist, challenge, confront, demand, protest, etc. However, **power (militancy) must be “CHECKED” by AGAPE LOVE (morality) in order to be effective.** If not, power will be conscienceless and immoral and result in succumbing to the same dehumanizing relational arrangements and set of conditions that one is struggling **AGAINST** and seeking to transcend.

#14) So, for MLK, **the resister MUST ACCENT THE MORAL DIMENSION in struggle.** In this way, **the AIM of the action** is reconciliation, friendship, healing, restoration, redemption. This means that like Jesus and the Cross (resurrection emerging out of unmerited suffering) which demonstrates God's willingness to go to ANY lengths (morally consistent ones, that is) to **RESTORE** human brokenness, humans (esp. Christians) **MUST** be able to endure suffering in the struggle against suffering. Why? Because, for MLK, somehow, somehow such gratuitous suffering will be redemptive in the hands of God (God as Waymaker).

#15) So, the **efforts of the resister** --- to stop lynching, to eliminate poverty or domestic abuse and other forms of violence, or racism, or sexism, or homophobia, or hunger, or dis-ease, etc., **WHEN DONE SO WITH A VIEW TO ABSORB...or TAKE ON SUFFERING NONVIOLENTLY, WITHOUT RETALIATION -- will ultimately be redemptive!**

#16) Therefore, **for MLK it is SUFFERING THAT ONE EXPERIENCES IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SUFFERING that is redemptive – NOT the experience of suffering as such.** In situations of injustice & suffering, one must struggle **AGAINST** that suffering in a way that is morally consistent with the heart of God. So in one's response to suffering, it is **ALWAYS** better to **RECEIVE** suffering in the struggle rather than acting in ways that **CAUSE** suffering. This is the **ONLY** way that healing of relationships can occur or in other words, the only way that the resistance efforts will have redemptive value, ultimately.

²MCRM = Modern Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s-1960s.

#17) In the end, there is **NO quietism or apathy or indifference** in the face of suffering for MLK; there is NO accommodationism that is promoted in his ethic; there is NO notion of suffering as somehow romantic (and therefore should be valorized); there are NO illusions about the COSTS that most likely will have to be paid or the BURDENS that the resister will have to bear through pain, blood, sweat, tears, & human life.

#18) AND MLK's approach **DOES privilege the VOICES of those who are suffering**; the marginal' the poor; the brutalized; the abused victims; the "truly DIS-advantaged".

#19) This is THE primary point of James Cone's theological agenda, and it appears as a constant, relentless beat in ALL of his works. Cone is interested in an intense examination of the question, **"What does the Christian gospel have to do with the struggle of Black people to achieve justice and to be accorded full humanization in America?"** In this way, Cone's theological perspective is highly CONTEXTUALIZED and specific to Black peoples' centuries-long struggle against white supremacy ideology and practices throughout American history.³

In the text, **The Cross and the Lynching Tree**⁴, James Cone pushes this agenda by considering a **pejorative SYMBOL – the Lynching Tree** – and its relationship to the way/s in which Christianity and its beliefs, rituals, and symbols has functioned to either legitimate or challenge the lynching tree and its symbolic meanings. **The lynching tree, for Cone, represents THE quintessential SYMBOL of America's (and American Christians') toleration and legitimation of the dehumanization of Black people.** This delegitimation has taken multivariate FORMS throughout history which we can identify concretely through an examination of Slavery and Jim Crow segregation. The lynching tree offers a symbolic, visual accounting of American Christianity's duplicity with moral evil and death. For all the life-affirming values which American Christianity mouths and promotes, the lynching tree tears the cover away from the moral HYPOCRISY that American Christianity IS.

Cone is pushing a hard analysis here. **He is challenging American Christians especially to RE-think the relationship between the lynching tree AND Christianity's most powerful and cherished SYMBOL – the Cross.** The Cross, Cone argues, is ALSO laden with a long-running historical system of beliefs, rituals, and symbolic meaning. Generally, the Cross, is invested with positive content, as a symbol of triumph over everything that humans have done and continue to do to work at "cross-purposes" with God's intent for humanity. And what IS this Diviner Intent? For Cone, the Cross' ultimate meaning is clear. The Cross represents God's active presence in a world of brokenness, divisiveness, and estrangement seeking to bring about the Kingdom of God (KOG). The content of Cone's understanding of the KOG is best expressed by Martin Luther King's notion of the Beloved Community (BC). In the BC, relationships are characterized by the normative values of love, justice, and peace. The BC AND the Cross, for Cone, represents God's willingness to go to ANY lengths to RESTORE fragmented human relationships in BOTH interpersonal AND institutional-structural Forms.

The stage is now set intellectually for Cone **to stand these two (2) SYMBOLS – the Cross and the Lynching Tree - side-by-side** and invite all of us to "read and interpret" each symbol's meaning with new eyes. The payoff, for Cone, materializes when we accept the challenge to interpret each symbol's meaning IN LIGHT OF and IN CONVERSATION with the other. **Cone is arguing for the SYMBIOTIC relationship that exists between these two symbols.** We can not adequately understand one without an acknowledgement of the other. The Cross, in fact, can NOT be fully understood in American Christianity until and unless it is "read" in the shadow of the lynching tree. When this is done, argues Cone, America will be forced into a reckoning with its own past involvement with ideas and practices that constitute an offense to the Christian gospel. American Christians have long held to the practice of wearing crosses around their necks as a badge of honor. Cone invites American Christians to consider why there is NO wearing of lynching trees around the neck as a badge of shame? In fact, the suffering (and redemptive HOPE?) that is referenced by the TENSION that exists between BOTH symbols will be more genuinely confessed and dramatized. In this way, Cone argues, human suffering and the attempts to name it, resist it and struggle against it will be more forthcoming in American Christian thought and practice.

³ In fact, this theological agenda is clearly stated from Cone's first published work in 1969 until this latest work on the cross and the lynching tree in 2011, prior to his untimely death.

⁴ See The Cross and the Lynching Tree, James H. Cone, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York, 2011.

The conjoining of these two symbols, for Cone, not only problematizes the totality of American Christianity's system of belief and ritualistic expression, it also exposes its ethical blind spots and forces an agonizing reappraisal of its trumpeted values and life practices.

#20) With regard to the Black Lives Matter Movement and ALL other Movements for love, justice, and peace, I put forth the claim that King and Cone MAY offer some clues about the ethical approach these movements are utilizing. While there is, admittedly, variations in the ways in which contemporary activism is conceptualized and enacted, I believe that at the heart of ALL these movements is a sincere desire to achieve JUSTICE in concrete social, political and economic terms. I also believe that these movements are on target in their emphasis on deconstructing and restructuring the institutions which incarnate those systemic/cultural dynamics that perpetuate injustice. In this way, I DO see a PARADIGM that is basic to ALL of these movements for equity.

#21) I identified and highlighted, what I refer to as 3 'Scopic Dimensions of ALL liberationist/justice – oriented approaches as follows:

- a) **PERI-sopic= raising critical awareness** about the REALITY of an issue. This dimension AIMS at honesty in disclosing & acknowledging what is actually happening in the current situation or **"As IS" Condition**.
- b) **MICRO-sopic= an analysis that accounts for WHY** the current set of conditions are operating as they are.. This analysis must proceed from "below", and NOT "above". In order to be truthful and to "keep it real", those who are the primary beneficiaries of the system that privileges some and brings suffering on others, have to actively listen to those voices that have been historically disregarded and discounted. The analysis, to have any transformative value, MUST allow those who are victimized and suffering to speak for themselves, in their own ways, and on their own terms. The voices of the suffering MUST be privileged and given primacy in the discourse. If not, those operating from positions of privilege and power will merely perpetuate analyses that will axe revolutionary sensibilities, and inevitably protect the status quo arrangements of power and privilege.
- c) **TELE-sopic= praxis (emancipatory action or justice-oriented action)** which involves some forms of risk, sacrifice, service, suffering. This praxis is **done in light of a compelling moral VISION** that highlights the **Moral OUGHT** (the way we want the community to BE). This action, to be sustaining, must avoid "lone ranger" approaches and mentalities. This is business that is TOO big for any ONE person or GROUP. This action must also be catalyzed/generated by an attitudinal disposition that is restless, nonconformist, dissatisfied, maladjusted with the CURRENT state of affairs.

#21) As I see it, The PARADIGM for activism which these liberationist or justice – oriented movements employ, at bottom, operates something like the diagram below:

Existential IS	I-----I	Moral OUGHT
("As Is" Condition)	Gap of Estrangement	(like-it-to-be Vision)
(G.O.E.)	(the way things	(the way-things-ARE)
		OUGHT to be)

- a) The **G.O.E. MUST be "closed" or "bridged"** IF you are seeking improvements in relational health and communal wholeness. If you want the current state of things to be changed, then **the Gap** which exists between the way things ARE, on one hand, and the way things OUGHT to be, on the other hand **MUST BE CLOSED**. When this occurs, the way things actually ARE and the way things OUGHT to be become **coterminous** --- one in the same!!
- b) An individual's or organization's **analysis** will lead to an **ETHICAL⁵ approach which, in turn, will lead to the employment of a specific set of skills and approaches (a Path)** by which an individuals or organizations will seek to "close" or "bridge" the G.O.E.

⁵**Ethics** seeks an answer to the question, "What ought I to do?" or "How ought I to act?" or "How should I conduct myself in light of how I interpret/understand what is happening around me?". An **ethical approach** incorporates specific beliefs, interpretations, analyses to make a determination about WHAT is going on and WHY it is going on. Once this determination is made, a particular VISION is identified and highlighted as an AIM or END for what

#22) I believe that when we apply **the paradigm for activism** above to MLK's ethical approach, his **tactical agenda** as well as his **underlying, guiding values and beliefs** will be made clearer. In actuality, the **paradigm for activism** or 3 "Scopic" dimensions promote certain "**habits**"⁶ of **thinking, acting, and being** which guide, orient, and motivate the consciousness and actions of liberationist or justice-oriented moral agency.

#23) When viewed in light of the paradigm for activism above, MLK's strategy and tactics for social transformation utilized a **FOUR (4) Step Nonviolent Direct Action process** that was designed to close the Gap of Estrangement between the "AS IS" and "Ought To Be" conditions. MLK identified these steps in his classic "**Letter from a Birmingham City Jail**"⁷ as:

Step #1: Collection of Facts to determine the prevalence and multivariate forms of injustices operating in the current situation.

Step #2: Negotiation with power structures to change the way things are operating in the situation.

Step #3: Self-Purification as a preparatory stage for activism phase. Here the aim is to purge oneself of hidden or ulterior motives that may be harbored and are operating at cross-purposes with the objective of communal change for justice.

Step #4: Direct Action whereby moral agents offer some form /s of service or sacrifice, and risks one's life by placing one's body on the line in service to a greater cause (namely, justice).

#24) MLK's ethical approach above was undergirded by specific principles which offered MORAL guidance for the strategies and tactics that were employed. MLK identified **SIX (6) such PRINCIPLES of Nonviolent Resistance**⁸:

Principle #1: The means one uses must be as pure as the end one seeks. Ends and means must cohere.

Principle #2: One must follow a consistent principle of noninjury. One must refuse to inflict injury upon another human. The love ethic ought to guide the resister's actions.

Principle #3: One must seek to defeat the unjust system rather than individuals who happen to be caught up in that system.

Principle #4: **Suffering can be a most creative and powerful social force. Suffering has certain moral attributes involved....** BOTH violence AND nonviolence believe that suffering can be a powerful social force.... But there IS a difference: **violence** believes that suffering can be a powerful social force by inflicting suffering on another. **Nonviolence** says that suffering becomes a powerful social force when you willingly accept that violence upon yourself... so that you suffer in a creative manner... **you believe that UNEARNED suffering is redemptive and ... may serve to transform the social situation.**

Principle #5: The resister ought to embrace the idea that there is within human nature, an amazing potential for goodness. There is within human nature something that can respond to goodness.

Principle #6: The nonviolent resister believes that there is as much a moral obligation to refuse to cooperate with evil as it is to cooperate with good. Noncooperation with evil means that one must embrace the idea of

OUIGHT to be going on. Finally, an individual or organization hammers out a PLAN OF ACTION which is designed to close the Gap between the way things ARE and the way things OUGHT to be. [An Ethic is expressed concretely through a Policy, an Act, or a Judgement.](#)

⁶By **habits**, I mean the Aristotelian notion of "habitus" that understands a habit as a kind of "second nature" or an "acquired power" which operates as a determinative factor to influence an individual to behave in a specific way. Habits foster a type of thinking and acting by cultivating particular virtues, and by molding a person's passions towards a view of seeking the good and the just. "Habitus" represents "virtues" acquired over time through repeated practice or usage.

⁷See James M. Washington, ed. **Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.** 1986, p.290.

⁸These principles provide the guidance for MLK's activism. For a fuller explication of MLK's theory of and approach to social change, see his essay, "**Love, Law and Civil Disobedience**", in **Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.**, James Melvin Washington, editor, 1986, pp.43-53.

civil disobedience....and this means that one must obey some laws which are just and DISobey other laws which are UNjust.

#25) The strategies and tactics which MLK employed, and the principles which undergird them **represent only ONE approach** that justice-oriented persons and movements can take to address injustice in the community. There are **MULTI-VARIATE ways** of interpreting situations, selecting guiding principles, strategies and tactics for working towards social change and the achievement of justice in society. **No single approach is to be valorized and held sacrosanct as THE sole form to employ.** This includes MLK's approach. **There ARE, however, lessons to learn from EACH approach, including valuable cues about potential pitfalls to avoid.** We would do well to remember this important point.

#26) In our current situation in America 2020, the present brutalizing of black bodies, including State-sanctioned police killings of black people; the profiling and killing of black males in America (*a self-described Judeo-Christian nation); the design, creation, and continuing perpetuation of systemic-structural-institutional racial inequality; ALL of this ... and its accompanying violence and painre/presents a reality that is as serious and as devastating as the reality of the lynching of over 5,000 black people by private white citizens (*publicly self-confessed Christians!) in our nation's history (*over time, lynching became a national spectator sport akin to baseball). This is a heavy point that Professor Cone wants us to chew upon, digest, and grasp.

And this is why Professors Hotz and Loynes are offering this course of study in academia – a course which focuses on **the Black Lives Matter Movement**. They are saying to us that this matter is SO important that it requires SERIOUS examination by the nation's best and brightest minds. For the purpose, not merely of acquiring knowledge ABOUT it, BUT! in order to actually ADDRESS it, participate in doing something about it in concrete social, political, economic, moral terms. To move from periscope through microscope and ultimately to telescope!

d) Can ya'll dig it scholars??!!!! Hope so! ☺ Thank you very much, Prof. Ivory, March, 26, 2020.

Luther D. Ivory is a native of Memphis, growing up in the North Memphis community of Douglass where he completed his High School Diploma in 1971; He was elected as Senior Class President, Honor Society President, and graduated as Class Salutatorian. He was awarded the Colonel John T. Morehead Gold Medal as the #1 ROTC Cadet in the city of Memphis and served as the first Black Corps Commander of Memphis City Schools in 1971. Ivory was voted Most Likely to Succeed and Mr. Mathematics in 1971.

Ivory received his B.S. at University of Tennessee in Knoxville; Doctor of Ministry at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond; and his Doctor of Philosophy in Systematic Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. Ivory's military service includes the U.S. Army (Tanks, Fort Knox KY) and U.S. Navy (Neonatal Intensive Care Specialist, Balboa hospital, San Diego) and Fire Control/Missile Officer - COMDESRON 28 Destroyer Squadron Newport, R.I.)

Ivory served as a Full Time Professor at Rhodes College from 1996-2018. He has taught at several academic institutions in a full time capacity or as Visiting Scholar, Resident Theologian – including Union Theological Seminary (Richmond, VA); Bluff City Christian College (Academic Dean and Professor-Memphis, TN); Centenary College (Shreveport, LA); Oklahoma Univ. and Oklahoma City Univ., both in Oklahoma City, OK);

Ivory has served the Pastoral Office in several Protestant denominations including Presbyterian; National Baptist Convention; Lutheran; and CME -- as Organizing Pastor, Designated New Church Development Pastor, Pulpit Supply Pastor, and Interim Pastor. He also conducts workshops on leadership training, faith development, teacher enrichment, and has guided church growth and revitalization processes as a Church Growth Consultant.

Ivory's scholarly work includes philosophies of religion, spirituality, faith systems, Christian thought and practice, socially active faith, prophetic imagination, theology, and ethics.

Ivory has written and lectured extensively on the life, thought, practice, and relevancy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and has authored several books and Monographs including, **Reflections On Connections:**

Martin Luther King's Understanding of Suffering and His Paradigm of Protest for Social Justice (2020); **The Contribution of Martin Luther King, Jr. to the Fields of Christian Theology and Christian Ethics** (2019); **Rhythm of Discipleship (socially active faith)** (2008) and **Towards a Theology of Radical Involvement: The Theological Legacy of Martin Luther King** (1997).