

## Do You Not Perceive It?

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*"I am about to do a new thing. Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"*

In today's reading from the forty-third chapter of Isaiah, God promises the people of Israel, who had been living in exile in Babylon without either land or Temple, that God was about to do a new thing in their lives. Something radically and wonderfully new -- something *chadash* -- was about to happen, like the work of a skilled artisan or weaver, a shoot from the stump of a tree, or a valley filled with bones coming back to life.

In reflecting upon this passage from Isaiah, I was struck by how the imagery moves from Exodus to Wilderness: from making a "way in the sea" to making "rivers in the desert." For me, this movement from Exodus to Wilderness recalled the radical and wonderful emergence of womanist theology in the 1970s and 80s.

While at Union, Delores Williams, Katie Canon, Jacquelyn Grant, and Kelly Brown Douglas realized that neither Black male theology nor white feminist theology fully addressed their experiences. They were BOTH Black AND women -- Black women. By moving from the Exodus liberation experience of Black men and white women, to the Wilderness survival experience of their African-American sisters, womanist theology was born.

Similarly, something radically and wonderfully new has emerged in recent years for those of us in the Fierce Caucus. It is the realization that, theologically speaking, we are neither just queer people on the one hand, or just people of color on the other. Rather, we are BOTH queer AND people of color -- queer people of color.

We are the living incarnation of a radical and wonderful new thing that I like to call "Rainbow theology." By living at the postcolonial intersections of sexuality and race, we are uniquely gifted by God to confront and critique not only the existence of racism in the queer community but also homophobia in communities of color.

*"I am about to do a new thing. Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"*

A few weeks ago, God did an amazing new thing right here in New York City. For the first time ever, the annual Chinatown Lunar New Year parade had an openly queer Asian contingent marching in it. This was a big deal, especially in light of the

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recent marriage equality debates that stereotypically pit LGBTQ people on the one hand against communities of color on the other.

The event, which was called “Lunar New Year For All,” was organized by Q-Wave, the Asian American lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women’s organization in New York City. For those of us that participated in the march -- including my 70-year-old mother who is sitting right over there -- this was a chance to show our straight Asian-American brothers and sisters as well as our white LGBTQ siblings that we were BOTH proudly Asian American AND proudly queer. Like the jackal, the ostrich, and the wild animals, we are loved by God in ALL of our created queerness and complexity; we are loved, just as we are.

*“I am about to do a new thing. Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”*

I first heard these words from Isaiah in James Chapel nearly eleven years ago, during new student orientation in September of 1999. I had recently decided to leave my practice as a Wall Street lawyer to pursue an M.A. at Union. It seemed completely irrational at the time -- it was a blind Kierkegaardian leap of faith in the truest sense, and God was about to do a new thing in my life.

Fast forward eleven years. I have finished not only my M.A. degree, but also my M.Phil. and my Ph.D. I am about to leave Union for a teaching position at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I have gone from lawyer to theologian, from lay person to ordained minister, from student to professor. (Well, almost.) But most importantly, I have gone from being a queer person on the one hand and a person of color on the other hand, to a *queer person of color*, a beautiful rainbow spirit -- queer, Asian, AND spiritual -- who is made in God’s trinitarian image.

As I go forth from Union into the “real world,” I will miss my intellectual, theological, and spiritual home for the last decade. But the good news is that God will continue to do amazing new things here, just as God has done for nearly 175 years. Like the Fierce Caucus, new things are springing forth all the time. Something’s coming! The question is: Will we not perceive it? Amen.

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### Benediction

God of radical and wonderful new things, bless us as we go forth into the world. Help us to perceive and to rejoice in all that springs forth from you, in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier. Amen.