The Reverend Eboni Marshall Turman, Ph.D.

The Reverend Eboni Marshall Turman, Ph.D. teaches theology, ethics, and African American religion at Yale University Divinity School in New Haven, CT. A first-career concert dancer and ordained National Baptist preacher, her research interests span the varieties of 20th century US theological liberalisms, most especially Black and womanist theological, social ethical, and theo-aesthetic traditions. She co-chairs the Black Theology unit of the American Academy of Religion, serves on the executive committee of the Society for the Study of Black Religion, and is a founding member of the Black Church Collective for which she served as lead author of “On Black Lives Matter: A Theological Statement from the Black Churches.”

An author, minister, professor, and public theologian, the Reverend Dr. Turman is a refreshing addition to our most pressing national discussions of faith, race and gender. With a decidedly womanist point of view, hers stands out as one of very few scholarly millennial voices offering moral perspective on issues facing the Black community. At a time in our history when the Black church and Black lives are once again under constant siege, Dr. Turman has committed her research, scholarship and platform to a nuanced exploration of the most marginalized among us.

A trailblazer in the church and academy, her pioneering spirit has earned her many rare distinctions. She is the youngest woman to be named Assistant Minister of the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City (2002-2012), and the second woman to preside over the ordinances in its 212-year history. She formerly served as Director of Black Church Studies at Duke University Divinity School (2013-2016).

She is the only womanist theological ethicist on faculty at Yale Divinity School, the recipient of the 2018 Yale University Bouchet Faculty Excellence Award for research and teaching; the 2018 Inspiring Yale award; a 2017-18 Yale Public Voices fellow; one of Ebony Magazine's Young Faith Leaders in the Black Community; included on the Network Journal's prestigious 40 Under 40 List; named as one of the “Top 5 Young Preachers in America” by ROHO; and Auburn Theological Seminary's 2017 “Lives of Commitment” honoree.

A highly sought after speaker and thinker, Dr. Turman is featured in the acclaimed 2018 documentary film, The Gospel According to André Leon Talley, where she discusses the intersection of faith and fashion in the Black Church. She has shared her ideas at Fordham University, Princeton Theological Seminary, Candler School of Theology at Emory University, McCormick Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary, among other colleges and universities, as well as regularly from pulpits around the world. In 2014, Dr. Turman was inducted into the Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr. Collegium of Scholars. Her opinions on race, faith, and gender have been published by the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, the Huffington Post, and Dallas Morning News among others.

Tackling the taboo topic of sexism in the Black Church, Dr. Turman owns her millennial sensibility and is unflinchingly honest in her critique of our most revered institutions. She dispels the notion of “a woman’s place” in church and society. Building upon the literary, intellectual, activist foundations of Alice Walker, W.E.B DuBois, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett in 2013 Dr. Turman published her seminal work Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church and the Council of Chalcedon. The first womanist book-length treatment of conciliar tradition in relationship to black Christian life, in it she explores the sexism that pervades the black church and chips away at the moral justification for black women’s social subordination.

She is currently completing her second monograph tentatively titled, Black Women's Burden: Male Power, Gender Violence, and the Scandal of African American Social Christianity, and she has recently begun preliminary research for her third monograph titled, In My Flesh Shall I See God: Black Womanist Theological Aesthetics. Through her research and scholarship, Dr. Turman is transforming the way we frame the Black experience, the contemporary movement for Black lives, and the moral significance of the Black community specifically the 21st century black church.

Beyond academia, Dr. Turman is passionate about helping Black women rise above and function through systemic gender bias, racism and exploitation. She offers women tools for vocational, professional, and personal success, empowering them to step into leadership and assert themselves more fully in male dominant environments. As a justice advocate, Dr. Turman challenges how the Black community is represented and engaged in the public square. As a gifted teacher, she empowers Black people from the heart and shows them how to interpret Christian teachings to transform their lives, change their communities, and create healthier relationships, brighter leadership prospects and personal fulfillment.

Dr. Turman’s unapologetic passion for the Black community is perhaps only matched by her passion for young minds. As the face of womanist theological ethics at Yale University Divinity School, she is pushing the boundaries of scholarship, while training the next generation of moral leaders and expanding their vision for what is possible in church and society.

Dr. Turman holds degrees in philosophy, theology, and Christian ethics from Fordham University and the Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, respectively. Her favorite scripture is found in Luke 1:45, “And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” She lives in New York City with her wonderful spouse, Rossie E. Turman III, Esq., and their beautiful daughters, Haarlem and Kroux.

Follow Dr. Turman on Twitter and Instagram @ebonithoughts.
Order of Service
Presiding
Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D.
President of the College

PROCEDENTIAL
African Drumming
Metropolitan Atlanta African Dancers & Drummers

ORGAN PRELUDE
"Be Thou My Vision"
Eric Thiman

THE OCCASION
President Mary Schmidt Campbell

HYMN
Come, Thy Fount of Every Blessing
Robert Robinson

Come thou fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise:
And teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the Mount! I’m fixed upon it, Mount of Thy redeeming love.

O to grace, how great a debtor Daily I’m constrained to be!
Let Thy grace, Lord, like a fetter, Bind my wand’ring heart to Thee:
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love Here’s my heart, Lord, take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.

PRAYER
The Reverend Neichelle R. Guidry, Ph.D.
Dean of the Chapel

HEBREW TEXT
Ms. Jennifer D. Woodyard, C’2021
Vice President, Senior Class of 2021

THE HOLY QUR’AN
Ms. Pheonix E. Pittman, C’2021
2020 – 2021 WISDOM Scholar

THE EPISTLE OF THE SON
Ms. Alexis V. Prescott, C’2021
2020 – 2021 WISDOM Scholar

OF THE WOLF
Ms. Meredith L. Watt, C’2021
2020 – 2021 WISDOM Scholar

THE BHAGHavad GITA
Ms. Lauren J. Davis, C’2021
Lead Sisters Chapel Assistant

NEW TESTAMENT

MUSICAL SELECTION
As the Deer Pants
arr. Rosephanye Powell

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER
President Mary Schmidt Campbell

BACCALAUREATE SERMON
The Reverend Eboni Marshall Turman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Theology and African American Religion
Yale University Divinity School

MUSICAL SELECTION
We Shall Overcome/Keep the Faith
arr Kevin P. Johnson

BENEDICTION
The Reverend Neichelle R. Guidry, Ph.D.

RECESSIONAL IN C
Hal H. Hopson

Reverend Neichelle R. Guidry, Ph.D., Dean of the Chapel
Kevin Johnson, D.M.A., Director, Spelman College Glee Club
Joyce F. Johnson, D. Mus., College Organist
The Baccalaureate Service

Custom dictates that there are two graduation ceremonies—Baccalaureate and Commencement. The Baccalaureate service is religious in nature and is held annually on the day before Commencement. It is an occasion for delivering a farewell sermon to the senior class whose members are prepared and qualified to enter the world of graduate and professional school, as well as the world of work. The Baccalaureate service is a reminder that this world is spiritual as well as secular, and that religion and faith play critical roles in adding meaning and depth to the human experience.

Spelman College, a historically Black college and global leader in the education of women of African descent, is dedicated to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences, and the intellectual, creative, ethical and leadership development of its students. Spelman empowers the whole person to engage the many cultures of the world and inspires a commitment to positive social change. In order to fulfill our mission in the midst of an increasingly multi-faith community, we seek to embrace our common understanding that we are not our own work of art, but are God-created and God-sustained. We, therefore, seek to express in community this understanding in ways that are respectful of our religious differences as well as differences in ability, personal background, ethnicity, age, class and sexual orientation. We welcome all to this Baccalaureate service and hope all will feel included.

Spelman College
Commencement Exercises
Sunday, May 16, 2021
Class of 2020 – 9:30 a.m.
Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech)
Bobby Dodd Stadium, 177 North Ave NW, Atlanta, Georgia, 30313

Sunday, May 16, 2021
Class of 2021 – 3:00 p.m.
Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech)
Bobby Dodd Stadium, 177 North Ave NW, Atlanta, Georgia, 30313

Note: This is an outdoor venue, and the ceremony will be a rain or shine event. Attendees should be weather aware and plan accordingly.

Tickets will be required.