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Deep like the Rivers: Black Women's Use of Christian Mindfulness to Thrive in Historically Hostile Institutions

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Abstract: Historical literature demonstrates that Black women have exhibited a deep commitment to wellness and social change. Black women engage in various forms of mindfulness to sustain themselves as they make changes. There is a dearth of literature on the ways in which Black women in academia who identify as Christians describe Christian mindfulness and their applications of such to promote their own health and wellness in hostile environments. Autoethnography and narrative inquiry were used to describe and analyze the principles and practices a Black academic used to thrive in a historically hostile Christian institution. These findings suggest Christian mindfulness is vast and focused on God's perspectives and applications of Godly wisdom.

Keywords: mindfulness; Christian mindfulness; Black women; Black women's historical wellness; health; feminist theory; misogynoir

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1. Introduction

Ride on, King Jesus, no man can a-hinder me.
Ride on, King Jesus, ride on.
No man can a-hinder me,
No man can a-hinder me.

In that great getting' up morning,
Fare ye well, fare ye well.
In that great getting' up morning,
Fare ye well, fare ye well.
No man can a-hinder me. (Allen et al. 1867)

This African American spiritual was composed when people of African descent were enslaved. Based on scripture, it helped those attempting to escape or survive slavery to visualize a king, not made of flesh, living in them or with them—a king powerful enough to rescue them from the horrendous conditions of slavery. The use of call and response, fast and rhythmic movement, and a slow melody made the singers aware of the majesty of God and eased the pain of their circumstance. Black people have long relied on forms of mindfulness that are attuned to suffering and God's promises of hope and rest (Bryant et al. 2022; Evans 2021).

Throughout history, Black women, such as Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Joy DeGruy, and bell hooks used mindfulness, and meditation as a form of mindfulness, to manage stress and increase their inner peace. Black women are exposed to persistent and toxic levels of stress related to gendered violence and structural racism. An interdisciplinary approach to understanding how Black women thrive in the academy in the face of such contempt and hostility is needed in order to fully understand this topic. Contemporary literature indicates that many Black women today who likewise encounter antagonism

and adversity also use Christian forms of mindfulness to cope and thrive in the academy (Evans 2021).

Mindfulness is purposeful awareness, paying attention in particular ways, and non-judgment (Shapiro et al. 2006). It rests on the values of acceptance, not striving, letting go, gratitude, and generosity. Essential components of mindfulness are intention, attention, and attitude (Steidle 2017; Trammel 2017). It employs practices, such as breath awareness, mind-body movement, contemplation, and meditation.

The term "mindfulness-based stress reduction" (MBSR) was coined by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1990s. Since then, a growing body of research and theory has confirmed the effectiveness of contemplative approaches to stress reduction and overall wellness (Magee 2019), and mindfulness practices have been used with increasing frequency in clinical and non-clinical settings to promote psychological and physical wellbeing. As practiced for centuries in non-clinical settings, mindfulness involves meditation, connects movement and breath, and strives for oneness with self, a higher power, and others (Bryant-Davis et al. 2015; Evans 2021; Magee 2019). Mindfulness is increasingly being used in connection with racial justice and social change (Magee 2019), topics that are very important to many Black women in the academy.

Mindfulness practices have sustained people for hundreds of years. Although a number of mindfulness practices can be traced to Buddhism, a growing body of evidence suggests that many civilizations with no connection to Buddhism, including African civilizations dating from at least 16 BC, have utilized forms of mindfulness in their everyday lives (Evans 2021). Historical documents on the Yoruba peoples suggest various applications of mindfulness including the use of drums, stomping, and clapping, all forms of grounding. The contemporary literature suggests that these ancient practices fall under the category of MBSR, and specifically discharging or grounding (Bryant et al. 2022; Mayo Clinic 2020). These practices, as well as attention to the breath, spending time in nature, paying attention in particular ways, artistry, and raising consciousness of a higher power, are common for Yoruba people, and part of their everyday culture.

Why is this important? The Yoruba diaspora extends into North and South America. An analysis of more than 4000 DNA samples from Africa, Europe, and America revealed that "the ancestors of current-day Yoruba people from West Africa (one of the largest African ethnic groups) provided the largest contribution of genes from Africa to all current-day American populations" (Montinaro et al. 2015). This connection suggests that today's African American women still carry and benefit from the mindfulness practices that sustained their ancestors.

1.1. Black Women's Perspective on Mindfulness

> "My fullest concentration of energy is available to me when I integrate all parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves, without restrictions of externally imposed definition." (Audre Lorde 1984, pp. 120–21)

Conventional applications of mindfulness promoted in health and social work do not always reflect the cultural and spiritual knowledge, values, and experiences of Black and Indigenous individuals, as well as other people of color. The practices most often associated with mindfulness—guided meditation, attending to and controlling the breath, paying attention in the moment, accepting self, and living in the present (Mayo Clinic 2020)—fail to capture the culturally and spiritually informed ways Black people, especially Black women, view and practice mindfulness. For Black women, mindfulness practices include, but are not limited to, prayer as mindful meditation, guided or free-style meditation, reflective or justice-centered writing, the use or creation of music, music and movement, yoga, community, stillness, creating rituals focused on wellness, opening their minds, "saluting the sun,", and the collective pursuit of liberation and justice (Evans 2021; Magee 2019). These qualities are discussed in the following extract:

> "I awoke while it was dark. I reached my arms towards the ceiling, bent over, then pushed out my legs. Lowering my torso to the floor, I lifted my head and neck while laying on my stomach." This salutation to the sun, Deborah Santana writes, awakened her to her inner connections and gave her peace. (Evans 2021, p. 291)

In their extensive work on Black women's physical and mental health, Evans (2021) and Evans et al. (2019) researched what Black women consider to be mindfulness. Mindfulness for Black women includes, but is not limited to, remembering through autoethnography and memoirs, practicing yoga and self-care, remembering to breathe, and participating in wellness activism. A close examination also reveals Black women's use of positive affirmations, prayer, the study of history, understanding of trauma and wellness, writing, and meditation as mindfulness practices. The goal of mindfulness for some Black women is inner peace through integration and acceptance. From the Black feminist perspective, mindfulness is a lifestyle of paying attention in particular ways, living in the present, and becoming integrated with self, all for the benefit of self and others (Woods-Giscombe 2010).

1.2. Christian Applications of Mindfulness

Although the literature on mindfulness is dominated by Buddhist or secular models, there is a growing interest in Christian applications of mindfulness. Hathaway and Tan (2009) suggested that religious accommodative treatments increase therapeutic effectiveness by adapting the mindfulness-based interventions to incorporate the worldview of the client. Overlaps exist in terms of principle and practices, but the intentions are worlds apart (Hathaway and Tan 2009; Kopel and Habermas 2019). According to Hathaway and Tan (2009), both Buddhist and Christian forms of mindfulness use breath meditation. The Buddhist is reminded of self, and the Christian is reminded of God's presence. Music, words, scriptures, and thoughts centered on Jesus Christ are often used in Christian mindfulness to be attuned to God's breath in oneself and the gift of life (Bryant-Davis et al. 2015).

Christian mindfulness practices "are based on the doctrine and teachings from the Holy Bible" (Trammel 2017, p. 4). Hathaway and Tan (2009) suggested that Christian mindfulness is rooted in Christian contemplative practices. Adapting mindfulness to a Christian worldview requires the consideration and application of the following key doctrines: God is near, God is in us and separate from and greater than us, God is gracious and merciful towards us, God is all knowing and all powerful, and it is imperative to not serve other gods (Garzon and Ford 2018). Hathaway and Tan (2009) recommended that present-moment living be balanced with the hope of what God has promised to do or what is to come (according to the Bible). Hathaway and Tan (2009) offered presence of mind, acceptance, and internal observation as a model for tenets of Christian mindfulness. Presence of mind is resistance to mindlessness. When people mentally reflect or have a narrative focus, they leave the present moment. Here, memories and future plans may elicit sensations of worry, fear, or anxiety. Mindful meditation activates the here and now, interrupts rumination, and places attention on the uniqueness of each moment (Farb et al. 2007).

Christians have examples from the scriptures to inform ideas about mindful meditation (Bryant-Davis et al. 2015). For example, Matthew 12:23 draws a picture of Jesus going into seclusion to be alone with God in order to be present and attuned to him. David, "a man after God's own heart" (I Sam. 13:14), followed a similar pattern, in that he rose early, secluded and stilled himself, and surrendered to God. Practices that can be seen as mindful meditation are making time throughout the day to be present with God, stilling oneself, secluding oneself, and exerting control over one's heart, mind, and body (Bryant-Davis et al. 2015; Stanley 2021).

Presence-of-mind skills increase one's capacity to be aware of God's presence and leading (Hathaway and Tan 2009). Acceptance embraces non-resistance, non-judgment, and flow. It sits with uncomfortable feelings, such as fear, anxiousness, and sadness, without trying to judge the feelings or escape them. It de-emphasizes mastery and evaluation. It

aligns with an act of surrender to Jesus Christ. The feelings and experiences are released into God's hands. Lack of acceptance has been pinpointed as a source of internal struggle and torture (Forsyth and Eifert 2016). Acceptance of feelings is associated with an increased ability to tolerate a range of emotions (Forsyth and Eifert 2016). Acceptance of feelings requires internal observation, the ability to watch one's feelings, thoughts, and reactions. Observing feelings and reactions non-judgmentally enables people to separate who they are from how they feel or react. Christian mindfulness requires these feelings and thoughts be aligned with God's word. This alignment may require interrupting some thoughts, confessing sins or offenses, and taking on new ways of thinking based on biblical principles (Garzon and Ford 2018). These actions enable people to become more non-reactive and make conscious choices about how to respond to what is happening internally or externally (Steidle 2017; Magee 2019). They can help Christians surrender to God and stay focused on biblical principles, practices, and values.

1.3. The Unique Position of Black People in Society

Living in the present moment is a hallmark of mindfulness, including Christian mindfulness; it is essential to achieving and maintaining a state of peace. However, for Black people, much of the present moment is anything but peaceful. Historically, Black people have been targets of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, and psychological violence. This violence has been perpetuated through chattel slavery, Jim Crow laws, integrated schools, the criminalization of Black children, mass incarceration of Black people, voter suppression, and eugenics movements. Historical documents evidence characterizations of Black people as "inherently/genetically inferior to Whites" (DeGruy 2005). This perception has been presented as scholarship and "documented" as fact in highly respected journals and textbooks in almost every major discipline including social work, medicine, psychology, and education (Hill 2003). During the educational process, many people are indoctrinated to view Black people as inferior and detrimental to themselves and others. They may not be aware of these implicit biases, but the biases impact perceptions of and interactions with Black people and are embedded in structures, policies, and practices that create racialized outcomes. Long-term exposure to this structural racism and identity-based threats, without proper interventions, results in decreased perceptions of safety, increased depression, and toxic stress for Black people (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.; DeGruy 2005). These conditions often manifest as high blood pressure, diabetes, and other auto-immune deficiencies within Black people's bodies (Morsy and Rothstein 2019; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.).

1.4. Black Women and HWCIs

The stress endured every day by Black women in American society is magnified for those working in historically White Christian institutions (HWCIs). There are over 140 Christian colleges in the US that are part of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Although students need not have a specific religious affiliation to attend many of these colleges, the faculty, staff, and leadership often make attestations of faith and are required to integrate specific biblical doctrines into their teaching, research, mentoring, and service. These institutions have the potential to be resources for health and racial reconciliation (Hathaway and Tan 2009; Trammel 2017). However, rampant structural racism in these organizations has created racialized and gendered outcomes for Black women. This racism impacts Black women's tenure, promotion, retention, compensation, and student evaluations, as well as their overall sense of safety on campus and their perceived value in the discipline (Edwards et al. 2011). Hostility and lack of support are reinforced through practices and policies that claim to be colorblind but actually close their eyes to the unique positioning of Black women (Barna Group 2020; Giles 2010; Green 2003; Nzinga 2020).

Unfortunately, hostile HWCIs have protected, maintained, and used structural racism to oppress and exploit Black women (Edwards et al. 2011; Nzinga 2020). These institutions

fail to demonstrate value for the experiences, knowledge, and lifeways of Black women. Rather, they stereotype Black women as highly emotional, angry, strong and tough (not feminine), and as prioritizing "products and outcomes" over relationships (Cox 2008; Hine et al. 2008). These stereotypes create a unique distance and strain between colleagues and with superiors—the people likely voting on promotion, tenure, and contract renewal decisions. Structural racism is pervasive in the everyday policies, practices, laws, and structures of hostile HWCIs (Powell 2008), and contributes negatively to the job satisfaction and mental health of Black women in these organizations (Finkelstein et al. 2016).

Typically, a shared religious background would be a source of strength and protection for women. However, misogynoir and racism present complexities to relationships in many organizations (Green 2003). A study conducted by the Racial Justice and Unity Center found that 38% of White Christians believed the US had racial issues, whereas 78% of Black Christians believed racism was an issue. Furthermore, 61% of White Christians believed race to be an individual issue stemming from personal beliefs and prejudices, whereas 66% of Black Christians believed that racial discrimination is built into the structures of US society and all of its institutions (Barna Group 2020). Findings from the American Values Survey showed that White Christians were twice as likely as White respondents not affiliated with religion to believe that killings of Black men by police were isolated incidences (Vandermaas-Peeler et al. 2018). Compared to non-religious White people, White Christians registered higher median scores on the racism index, with evangelical Protestants having the highest median score (0.78) (Vandermaas-Peeler et al. 2018). This is an important fact, given the study setting was a liberal arts private evangelical Christian university.

Normal responses to the stress of hostile environments are to fight, leave, not do anything, find new friends, or mend broken relationships. Racial stress causes "existential angst" or hypervigilance. It may present as anxiety. People experiencing racial stress engage in constant mental gymnastics and censoring (Bryant et al. 2022). Black women in the academy often think about other people's perceptions of their hair, family arrangements, speech patterns, intelligence, research interests, research agendas, or approaches to teaching (Edwards et al. 2011; Nzinga 2020). Black women censor their speech patterns, tone, body language, questions, research agendas, and how they interact with others on campus in an effort to avoid stereotypes (Steele 2011). This process of overthinking and constantly scanning rooms to identify indicators of safety or threat creates mental exhaustion and weathers Black women's minds, bodies, and souls (Crenshaw 1991; Bryant et al. 2022). It also contributes to depression, eating disorders, and suicidal ideation in Black women (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.).

As a means of coping, Black women may leave the institution, underperform, or leave the profession altogether (Nzinga 2020). Those who choose to stay must find ways to mitigate the toxic environments (Edwards et al. 2011). Many have done so with regular use of religious or spiritual practices, academic and reflective writing, meditation, movement, Kemetic yoga, music, service, mentoring, clinical therapy, teaching, advocacy, activism, storytelling, and other culturally adapted, values-based practices (Hall et al. 2007). Many Black women identifying as Christians tend to adapt strategies to incorporate culture and religion/spirituality (Bryant et al. 2022). Black women commonly use prayer and affirmations of faith with yoga and other mind-body or movement-based activities. Black women's strategies tend to also be more collective in nature. For example, Black women partner with friends, family, or community in their efforts towards wellness by sharing their goals, inviting others to participate, or joining others in prayer or mindfulness activities.

Many of the strategies used by Black women to cope and thrive in hostile environments fall under and extend the large umbrella of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Bryant et al. 2022; Magee 2019). The use of MBSR and meditation as mindfulness are associated with increased health and wellness. Specifically, MBSR has been linked to decreases in blood pressure, reductions in the production of cortisone, and increases in oxytocin, serotonin, endorphins, and dopamine. Furthermore, regular use of these practices

is also associated with enhanced activism and social change (Evans 2021; Magee 2019; Steidle 2017), which are important to many Christian people.

Sensorimotor and strengths-based interventions have been recommended for dealing with racial stress and trauma. Explicit and intentional conversations about race, journaling, and discussions about how to navigate have been shown to be effective for healing racial trauma (Anderson 2017; Bryant et al. 2022). Clinicians working with people of color have identified a process of having clients recall and discuss strategies they have used in the past to get through or overcome challenges as a strengths-based intervention for racial stress and trauma (Bryant et al. 2022).

Clinical settings dominate the health and wellness literature, but the clinical literature has not always respected ways of knowing other than the scientific method. Many of the cultural practices associated with Black people tend to be demonized in both religious and clinical settings (Hill 2003). Not until recently has science caught up with the fact that many of the cultural and spiritual attitudes and behaviors of Black Christian women have been shown to promote health and wellness (Bryant-Davis et al. 2015; Kabat-Zinn et al. 1992). We find one such example within predominately Black Christian churches.

Black people attend church or engage in religious activities at three times the rate of other groups (Pew Research Center n.d.). Evidence suggests that participation in these activities protects against poor mental health and dysregulation (Bryant-Davis et al. 2015; Kabat-Zinn 2013). Predominately Black churches have historically integrated storytelling, hand clapping, foot stomping, body tapping, rocking, affirmations, faith, physical embrace, and a focus on welcoming its members (Bryant et al. 2022). Embedded within these activities is an emphasis on education, liberation, and justice (Evans 2021).

According to findings from the National Survey of American Life, the social-emotional and, at times, physical and financial support found in churches positively benefits the mental health of those attending regularly, and it has been determined that "Frequency of contact with church and family members was inversely related to symptoms of depression" (Chatters et al. 2018). Negative church interactions, on the other hand, were associated with depressive symptoms. Unfortunately, even in churches and race- or culture-based groups, Black women are often the recipients of racialized and gendered violence (Crenshaw 1991; Evans 2021). Despite these truths, literature on mindful meditation and MBSR considers some of the practices within Black churches to be effective in reducing long-term anxiety and stress, and in promoting bonding and self-regulation, two important aspects of a regulated nervous system (Clond 2016; Denison 2004).

As a Black woman who has struggled, nearly given up, and eventually thrived in the world of Christian higher education, this author illustrated and examined the use of mindfulness for sustaining wellbeing in the face of gendered and racialized violence commonly associated with hostile HWCIs. To describe and analyze my personal feelings and experiences, I used an autoethnographic and narrative inquiry approach, in which the author is both the subject and the interlocutor. Autoethnography and narrative inquiry make insider experiences available to larger audiences and allow for the sharing of experiences unique to individuals in specific cultural settings to the larger cultural group.

Other Black scholars have used autoethnography and narrative inquiry to explain, describe, and analyze their experiences with mindfulness and with educational institutions (Evans et al. 2017). Anderson (2017) used autoethnography and feminist theory to analyze her self-care, relying on her travel journals as a primary data source. Black women scholars use autoethnography to disrupt commonly held stereotypes and myths about Black women as strong, passive, aggressive, stoic, and lacking intelligence (Burack 2004; Panton 2017). Autoethnography is also an effective tool for speaking out against the everyday violence perpetrated against Black women at the intersection of race, gender, religion, and the academy (Crenshaw 1991; Evans 2021).

2. The Study

2.1. Context

Research is often criticized for lacking context (Latunde 2017). To best understand the conditions in the which the study took place, contextualizing is critical. I first learned of the term "mindfulness" when I was going through a tumultuous time at a predominately and historically White Christian institution in the western United States. At this point in my career, I had completed my fifth or sixth year in the academy and, based on my scholarship, contributions to the field, good teaching evaluations, and service to the academy, the discipline, and the community, had been promoted to associate professor. By this time, I had seen structural racism in the academy, primarily the repeated narrative of an "achievement gap" between Black and White students, and inferences that the gap was the result of Black parents not caring about their children's academic success. I recognized this deficit-based perspective as a denial of fact and truth, a wile of the devil. This wile—the perpetuation of lies—kept my department and the college from focusing on ways we could use spiritual gifts and skills to interrupt racialized outcomes for our students and the students they would serve.

In my first five to seven years at the HWCI, I witnessed no interventions that would counter the deficit thinking about people of color, no practices or policies that would disrupt the racialized and gendered outcomes that continued to play out in student support, hiring practices, wage gaps, and a general sense of a lack of belonging in the college and university. I also observed that when initiatives were developed to disrupt or intervene, they were fragmented, under-resourced, and those persons affiliated with the initiatives were often demonized, accused of being secular, and eventually demoted or displaced.

I came to work one day to find that a leader, a woman of color, had been replaced. A few months later one provost, then another, then an associate dean, and others were either demoted or left the university altogether. In the span of 18 months several key people were gone and most of the programs around inclusion and diversity they had developed or supported were dismantled. All of these people who were demoted or displaced had been foundational in the progress the university was beginning to make in terms of inclusion, diversity, equity, and university reputation and ranking. Consequently, I found myself, along with many others, the recipient of toxic leadership, racial harassment, and nearly impossible working conditions.

A university-wide study at the HWCI revealed that faculty and leaders of color often felt unsupported, unwelcome, and pushed to the margins. Students of color reported a less than satisfying experience on the campus in general, citing instances of racism and gendered discrimination. Conversations about race were avoided and were, when they occurred, over-spiritualized. Statements, such as "we are all in Christ so there is no division", conflicted with the racialized and gendered findings from our internal and external studies of our programs, colleges, and university. Data showed a lack of ability to hire and retain Black, Latino, Asian American, and native/Indigenous leadership and faculty.

Almost immediately after a new leader was assigned to my college, I began to experience microaggressions and racial harassment that created a hostile work environment for me. I was accused of submitting the same application for an internal college grant that I had previously submitted for another grant. Although I provided evidence that this was not the case, my application was not accepted for review and no further discussion was permitted. Black people are frequently suspected of lacking integrity and being unwilling to work hard. The criminalization of Black people that is common throughout the country is also present in Christian spaces.

The scholarship and service of Black women in the academy is often minimized, scrutinized, and devalued (Edwards et al. 2011). In a review of my yearly goals involving teaching, service, and scholarship, my immediate supervisor commented, "We like to see more academic service." At that time, I was on several university-wide and college-wide committees, a mentor for first-generation college students, a spiritual mentor to a number of people, editor of a professional journal, and a reviewer for several highly competitive

and well-cited peer-refereed academic journals and conferences. The message stung; a Black woman's performance can never be good enough. However, this was a lie.

Actually, the institution was steeped in lies—lies that said White was supreme, Black was evil, and culture and race did not matter. I recognized these falsehoods as wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11), tricks, ploys, and schemes Satan uses to divert attention from what is true and good. Navigating the hostile HWCI was complex and difficult for me because the religion and spirituality that were used to unite people against sin and spread the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ were also being weaponized against faculty, staff, and students of color in covert and destructive ways. Meetings that started in prayer proceeded to microaggressions, racialized and gendered violence, exploitation, and a general lack of love and hospitality.

I knew my time with this particular university needed to end when I published a single-author book through Palgrave Macmillan. A direct supervisor dismissed my accomplishment, stating, "At the level you are at, you should be publishing with Harvard and Oxford Press." This supervisor had made several attempts to characterize my scholarship as not meeting our university's and college's standards, and refused to apply my book towards the college and university scholarship requirement for that year. Oddly enough, neither this supervisor nor anyone else from my college or university had ever published a book with Oxford or Harvard Press.

Whereas White Christians in academia are assumed to be virtuous and provided immunity in questionable situations, the university system is not set up to notice or intervene in situations not involving racial slurs, bodily harm, or unequal treatment based on gender or race (Crenshaw 1991). Higher education leadership tends to lack knowledge of intersectionality, the impact of stereotypes, or patterns of racial harassment towards Black women (Harding 2004). Therefore, although my HWCI's human resources personnel were able to clearly see that I had met the scholarship requirement and had not been recognized for it, they could not see the equally clear pattern of misogynoir.

The impact of the racism and misogynoir in a Christian institution on my health and wellbeing was layered and wide. When I had conflict with another believer, I felt awful. I wanted to be at peace with this person, so I asked her to mentor me. I sought her professional and career advice and made every attempt over a period of time to heal the relationship. Things would quiet down for a time, then new racialized incidents would occur, usually in our one-to-one meetings. She inferred that I was ill-prepared or ill-suited for higher education or that my service and scholarship did not meet the "standard." The inference ignored the fact that I far exceeded the standards for service, teaching (above the national average), and scholarship as outlined in the university's handbook. This is important because it illustrates the ways people have been socialized to think about Black people.

Over time, I became so anxious I began to make mistakes that were not normal for me. I lost my keys, overbooked myself, and forgot simple steps in work processes. For two or three months I was unable to sleep more than a few hours a night. I could not digest my food and my stomach hurt during 60% of a day. I became extremely angry and frustrated because my attempts to resolve the issues in the relationship through meetings, prayer, and other interventions were not changing the situation. I began to overwork to earn my mentor's acceptance, which made me impatient with my children and burned out at work. At one point, I wished something terrible would happen to her. Eventually, my skin was covered in large sores and my hair started to thin. I cried as I drove to work for about a year. As the sole income earner for my family and a mother to two young children, I felt immense pressure to keep my job. Although years earlier I had seen myself remaining at this very fine institution until retirement, I began to look for other places to share my gifts. At one time, I would have accepted any offer. This set of circumstances led me to seek professional medical, spiritual, and mental health interventions.

It was at this point that I was introduced to mindfulness. I eventually discovered that practicing mindfulness helped alleviate some of the stress. The first thing I learned was that

if mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment and Christian mindfulness demands truth in that moment, understanding present reality is foundational to Christian mindfulness. That meant recognizing lies wherever they are asserted. For Black Christian women in hostile HWCIs, remembering that certain widely accepted assumptions are lies of Satan and intentionally rejecting those lies is an essential mindfulness practice.

It is important to state that my experiences in the hostile HWCI occurred in the context of being a Black woman in US society. As such, I was active in schools, partnering with teachers and administrators to improve student services and protect my own children from structural racism. I attended board meetings and met with teachers and school leaders to discuss how to more effectively serve students from diverse backgrounds. As one of a few (12% or less) Black parents in the schools, I was often labeled aggressive. I was regularly isolated by teachers and other parents. There were times when my movement on campus was monitored and restricted. Our family was dealing with a huge wage gap. Although I had a terminal degree and worked at a university, I made less than most new K-12 teachers with MA degrees. The low wage made finding adequate housing difficult. And the location of the home dictated the quality of the schools and the safety of the neighborhoods.

These things raged unchecked—whether interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal issues, or societal injustices—and ravaged my body, mind, and spirit. They heightened my awareness of the need for some way of restoring peace and wholeness. I found that way in Christian mindfulness.

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks

This study used Black feminist and standpoint theories because they allowed me to share my feelings, everyday experiences, and knowledge of hostile HWCIs while describing my use of Christian mindfulness. The findings are presented in the context of my social position, which is disadvantaged in society but privileged in Christ. Standpoint and Black feminist theories help to contextualize the complexities of my experiences, feelings, and knowledge in a highly racialized and gendered society. Biblical principles help the reader understand what influences my thinking, attitudes, and practices as they relate to mindfulness and making change in the institution and the world.

In Black feminist theory, attributed to Patricia Collins, writing and reflection are encouraged (Collins 2005). Writing is a common and everyday practice for many Black women in the academy (Collins 2005; Hardaway and Williams 2018). Autoethnography enables Black women to use their writing to describe and analyze their experiences and understand why they may respond to life in particular ways. "Black women writers have used writing to define their ideological positions" (Evans 2021, p. 204), some of which are universal to all Black women. Black women write as a means of self-care, as therapy, to be productive, to meet academic requirements for promotion and tenure, to advocate, to encourage, and to challenge (Latunde 2022). Evans (2021) observed that the Black feminist practice of writing and talking about everyday experiences aligns with the commonness and consistency of breathing, thinking, and acting most often associated with mindfulness and meditation.

Standpoint theory, on the other hand, coined by Sara Harding to categorize sources of knowledge that center women's knowledge and later theorized by Dorothy Smith and Patricia Collins, places me, a Black woman, at the center of the study to develop a particular Black feminist epistemology. Standpoint theory is a tool for understanding collective group discourse (Collins 2005). It assumes all women have similar experiences, and this is why it is paired with Black feminism and intersectionality (Harding 2004). Black women's experiences in the academy are unique. Standpoint theory provides an intersectional insight focused on the social positioning of Black women at the junctures of race, class, and gender, but also situates me as a credible source of knowledge.

2.3. Research Methodology

2.3.1. Setting

This study took place at a university offering bachelor, master's, and doctoral programs on campus and at seven regional centers. The university enrolled 3800–4500 full-time undergraduate students and approximately 4500 graduate students from 2013 to 2018. For the past 11 years, the undergraduate enrollment was approximately 5700, of which 44% were White, 4% were Black, 29% were Latino/Hispanic, and 9% were of Asian descent. Because more than 25% of students are from Hispanic, Chicano, Mexican, or Latino backgrounds, the institution has the designation of a "Hispanic Serving Institution.". The demographics of the state where the school is located were as follows from 2010 to 2020: 5–6% Black, 13–15% Asian, 38–39% Latino/Hispanic, and 35–40% White (Public Policy Institute of California 2022). Approximately 75% of the university's students are from within the state in which it is located. The tuition, depending on the program, is between $45,000 and $66,000 per year.

2.3.2. Research Design

This study used Black feminist theory, autoethnography, standpoint theory, and narrative inquiry to explore the stories of a Black woman in the academy and their connection to the experiences of other Black women. These methodologies are acceptable when the researcher's story is intrinsic to the study and when the researcher is a full member of the group researched, a visible member of the group in terms of published text, and committed to a research agenda focusing on improving theoretical understandings of the broader phenomenon (Anderson 2006, p. 375). In this study the researcher did not create distance between the narrator and researcher, but rather was an interactive voice. The study was guided by the following questions: How do Black women describe Christian mindfulness? What applications of Christian mindfulness do Black women use to promote health and wellbeing in hostile HWCIs?

Autoethnography was used to describe and analyze the stories of a Black woman to better understand her ideas about Christian mindfulness and how she used and continues to use Christian mindfulness to cope and thrive in the academy. Autoethnography allows for varying levels of description. Garza (2008) used it to critically interpret and reflect on his first year as a school district superintendent. His primary data source was a personal journal. He presented journal entries chronologically with no interpretation but concluded with lessons learned. Autoethnography requires personalization; first-person voice is used to recount context, purposeful activities, and planned behavior. Autoethnography allowed me to be reflexive, and to examine my feelings, behaviors, and motives. The process was an intersectional strategy of resistance against "hegemonic power, economic exploitation, patriarchy, racial domination and gender oppression" (Esposito and Evans-Winters 2021, p. 17). Descriptive research methodologies, such as surveys or interviews, would not have allowed me to be both subject and examiner, to be reflexive, or to use first person. Autoethnography acknowledges my subjectivity while permitting critical interpretation.

Narrative inquiry was first used to describe the personal stories of teachers (Connelly and Clandinin 1990). Since then, it has been used by Black women to describe and analyze their experiences in academia (Walkington 2017; Nzinga 2020). Narrative inquiry is based on a belief that people understand and give meaning to their lives through stories. It involves gathering written and oral narratives while focusing on the meaning the researcher ascribes to the experiences presented in the stories; thus, it provides insight into some phenomenon or experience (Esposito and Evans-Winters 2021). Researchers using narrative inquiry attend to the ways the story is constructed, as well as the "cultural discourses that it draws upon" (Trahar 2009, p. 5).

Narrative inquiry and autoethnography make great companions because the blending of the two methodologies permits flexibility in how stories are gathered and analyzed while being mindful of the audience. Some researchers have criticized both narrative inquiry and autoethnography on the contentions that storytelling is not academic or analytic, that they

lack supporting evidence, or that they exhibit Cartesian dualism. Patricia Collins (1986), in her extensive work using autoethnography, and Stephanie Evans in her significant works analyzing Black women's memoirs (Evans 2021; Evans et al. 2019), described autoethnography and narrative inquiry as essential to understanding Black women's experiences in highly racialized and gendered societies.

2.3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Autoethnography influenced the way the data were collected. In this case, it involved a systematic view of personal experiences in relation to the experiences of other Black women. The data sources for this study were journals, notes from discussions with others, written documents evidencing experiences, and observations. Data reviewed covered a span of about five years (2012–2017). Autoethnography is an appropriate tool "for fragments of experiences to be articulated and arranged in a collage" (Anderson 2006, p. 381). In order to ensure accuracy, I consulted notes; emails; photographs; and letters to or from mentors, therapists, doctors, people in my support systems, human resources personnel, and people from outside regulatory agencies. I recalled memories and made notes of them. I coded the data in ways that connected with the literature on mindfulness, Christian mindfulness, and Black women in academia.

The data were analyzed initially using a five-step process. I sorted the data, reviewed and analyzed the data in view of the literature, created codes, revised the codes, and created categories. The initial coding yielded concepts of mindfulness, mind–body stress reduction, Christian mindfulness, and Black women. These themes were re-analyzed using an intersectional Black feminist lens and connected across themes to reconstruct and condense items. This process resulted in fewer themes, namely the following: the vast nature of mindfulness, Christian principles of mindfulness, and applying those principles in culturally and spiritually modified mindfulness practices.

2.3.4. Limitations

Despite many efforts to reduce bias and autoethnography's potential to make contributions to the development of knowledge, this study was limited by the subjective nature of the methodology. I used reflexivity to help me bring awareness of my multiple identities (Esposito and Evans-Winters 2021). I may favor or dislike specific situations based on my own observations, feelings, experiences, and the experiences I share with others. I tried to balance this tendency by using literature, notes, and conversations to only share information that could be confirmed. In narrative research there is usually a separation between what is being studied and the one studying it. Although autoethnography often presents the voices and perspectives of those in power, I, as a Black woman in the US, represent only 2% of professors, 4% of all faculty of color, and 1.2% of the US population with terminal degrees. I believe that in this research, as with other autoethnographic studies of many Black women, we are empowered but not in power.

2.3.5. Findings

Three findings emerged from this exploration of my use of Christian principles and cultural and spiritually informed practices to maintain my health and wellbeing in the presence of racialized and gendered experiences in a hostile HWCI. First, Christian mindfulness encompasses a vast array of ways of thinking and being that promote awareness, attunement, focused attention, and openness to God. Second, Christian mindfulness sees things from God's perspective. Thus, it involves an intent to serve and obey God, an increased awareness of God, and an openness or attitude of surrender. Third, Christian mindfulness applies the wisdom of God in specific practices, such as creating rituals and routines, following mind–body–spirit disciplines, attuning oneself to God, and remembering.

3. Christian Mindfulness

The data coalesced around three important themes, as follows:

1. Christian mindfulness is vast;
2. Christian mindfulness involves seeing things from God's perspective;
3. Practicing Christian mindfulness in order to cope and thrive in hostile environments involves applying Godly wisdom.

3.1. Describing Christian Mindfulness

The research showed that the principles found in scriptures and biblical teachings about the mind, heart, and body have influenced my understanding of Christian mindfulness. My racial and cultural background in the context of my religious experiences as an active Christian have also informed my ideas about Christian mindfulness. Results indicate that I define Christian mindfulness as an awareness of God, an openness to God, and paying attention to God. The principles and practices I use to experience this mindfulness are informed by biblical doctrines. These doctrines include, but are not limited to, the beliefs that God is near, God is personal, God is all knowing and all powerful, and that trials in the lives of believers serve a purpose. These biblical doctrines help me see things from God's perspective.

3.2. Seeing Things from God's Perspective

Fortunately for me, I was given tools for success as a young child. We practiced good hygiene each morning in our home—good physical, emotional, and spiritual hygiene. In addition to washing our faces, eating breakfast, and brushing our teeth, we gathered in a circle in the early mornings to renew our minds and hearts with words of God and affirmations. My mother guided us through a short prayer, shared a scripture, and offered specific words of affirmation for each child and our father. At school, songs, scripture memorization, and prayer constantly reminded me of God's presence, his ideas, and his ways. This upbringing served as a template for me. During difficult times I reached back to some of these practices in order to cope and thrive.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, I have the following mandates: renew my mind daily, have a clean heart, put on the armor of God, and surrender my body to his will. Because I trust God, I have an attitude that is happy to comply. The study showed that I evidenced an intent to take on God's perspective and to intentionally accomplish the mandates by asking for and applying God's wisdom in dealing with the toxicity I experienced in the hostile HWCI. The wisdom God gave me led me to apply Christian principles in mindfulness practices.

The faith to believe what God says and act upon it is at the core of my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. From God's perspective, trials serve a purpose in my life. I expect trials, and if I handle them properly (applying God's wisdom), they help me to develop patience and perseverance. They teach me lessons I might use to support someone else or in my own future trials. The Bible has over one hundred scriptures on trusting God. The holy scriptures encourage me to ask God for wisdom when I am in a trial. Clearly, my experience in the hostile HWCI was a trial. I needed to take on the attitude that Jesus Christ wants what is best for me and believe that God is making everything work for my good. The Christian mindfulness principles that enabled me to see things from God's perspective during those five tumultuous years were an awareness of God, openness to him, and paying attention.

3.2.1. Awareness

In the highly stressful situation of the interpersonal conflict described earlier, my first response was fear. I was frozen, with no idea of what to do. My next response was anger; I wanted to make this person pay for what I saw her doing to others and to me. I devised ways to let everyone know the evil she was doing. I was ready to fight back. Fortunately for me, my therapist, my family, and my friends helped me realize this was not the solution. Instead, I chose to focus on God's character, nature, and words. This decision raised my awareness of the capabilities of my God. I was reminded of his nature; he is a gracious,

loving, all powerful, and righteous God. I reminded myself of my position in Jesus Christ. He is with me, he is in me, and without him I can do nothing. I was reminded through scriptures, prayer, and conversations to keep my focus on God. Reading scriptures that affirmed God's concern for whatever mattered to me (Psalms 138:8) reminded me that he would not leave me and increased my confidence in him. That was exactly what I need to cope with the conflict.

3.2.2. Openness

The increased awareness that God was with me and the realization that I was totally dependent on him positioned me to be more open to God. I sought God's will. In doing so, I noticed that I needed more time and space to connect to God. I set an intention to be open to what he may be doing with or in the situation. I acknowledged my feelings by writing them and communicating them to God in prayer. I thought about God's faithfulness, nature, and character. After a while, this openness led to moments of feeling hope. My attitude shifted; I no longer focused on coping or survival. Instead, I entered into a season of praise and worship. I sang, listened to music, and danced to words that reminded me of the good news of Jesus. Once, I came out of my office to a note on my car window that read, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). At the time I did not know who left this inspiration on my car, but I was encouraged by it and open to it being true.

Openness increased my awareness and helped me to pay attention to what was happening around me, in me, through me, and with others. I saw clearly that not only was I the victim of a spiritual attack, but so was the person who was harming me. The following are some of the instructions God's wisdom gave me during this time; these instructions are connected to some of the mindfulness practices that would heal my body, soul, and spirit, and provide rest for my mind:

- Join a community of believers engaged in scholarship, community service, and the study of God's words;
- Increase your service in your community;
- Develop rituals and routines that include work boundaries and increase self-care;
- Pay more attention to your physical health;
- Develop and enforce a writing routine (discipline, obedience);
- Engage in mind–body–spirit practices that you enjoy;
- Spend more quality time with family and friends (bonding, increased safety, joy);
- Continue to see a mental health therapist;
- Take copious notes about incidences at work;
- Increase time walking, especially in nature (quiet, reflective, movement);
- Decrease time spent watching TV;
- Refocus your attention on what God has done for others, and what he did for you in the past (gratitude, praise, worship);
- Develop affirmations of faith.

3.2.3. Paying Attention

What was I paying attention to? Not always to scriptures and God's words, but often to people's behaviors and to how the behaviors might hurt me. My mother often reminded me that the enemy is not people, but powers and principalities working in and through people. This truth has served as a great reminder that what I pay attention to grows, and I cannot allow myself to focus on the wrong things. I had to refocus my attention from the particular person who offended me to God and myself. I began recalling scriptures I had heard and read since childhood. These became my prayers and words of affirmations for myself, as follows: "I am more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus.". I remembered the many times God had brought me through difficulties. I also thought about how God had seen other Black people through very horrendous situations and the fact that despite many obstacles we are still here and many of us are flourishing. I started to visualize

myself putting on the whole armor of God to fight this spiritual battle against principalities and powers.

I fasted and prayed and asked God what he wanted me to learn and what he wanted me to do. Time away from specific foods, activities, and conversation gave me time to focus on and pay attention to God. I became aware of my specific times of vulnerability. I noticed that negative reactions and responses to people and situations occurred during specific times and circumstances. I realized that when I was not well-rested or when I was extremely angry, anxious, or lonely I responded poorly. I did not respond well when I was rushed or when an immediate response was requested. In these situations, I sometimes become defensive, raised my voice, shut down, or said or thought unkind things. I saw the negative cycle these reactions created, for example, something happens, I react, my reaction triggers others to also respond poorly—and the result is conflict, miscommunication, or misunderstanding.

I noticed that when I did not sleep well my digestion was poor, my hair thinned, and I felt sick. I found myself holding my breath as if to hold on to the memories of the hurt and anger. I noticed that I did not want to release the anger or the situation to God. Because I paid attention to these things about myself, I began to think about God's perspective.

3.3. Applying Godly Wisdom

God's perspective came to me through reading the Bible, spending time in prayer, having conversations with others, and paying attention to situations and circumstances. It is where I obtained wisdom about how to apply Christian principles and how to shift my behaviors. For example, I paid attention to staying rested, fed, and giving myself permission to move at a slower pace. I worked intentionally to stay full of joy and peace. I took time to pause in my responses and better prepare for the day. I developed rituals and routines that helped me pay more attention to God and myself, and to see others as God sees them. God sees people as made in his image. I was able to make more conscious choices about how to prepare for the day, how to care for my body, and how I might respond to various situations, even if the best response was no response at all.

4. Culturally and Spiritually Informed Mindfulness Practices

My intent as a follower of Christ has always been to listen to and obey God. Listening enabled me to see myself, my circumstances, and my experiences from God's perspective. Obeying meant applying the principles he showed me, using spiritually informed and culturally adaptive mindfulness to improve my health and wellbeing. I developed practices that promoted what I believe to be God's ultimate goal for my life, namely a clean heart, a renewed mind, and a surrendered body (Garzon and Ford 2018). I created rituals and routines that integrate mind, body, and spirit disciplines into my daily habits. I scheduled time for these things and did them no matter how I felt or where I found myself geographically. They became physical and spiritual disciplines for me.

The practices described in this section are the exercises and routines that enabled me to overcome the toxicity of those difficult years in a hostile HWCI and to emerge healthy and successful. I continue in them today. Many of these practices are strategies of mind–body–stress reduction and meditation as mindfulness, each with scientific evidence of its efficacy in improving the overall health and wellbeing of those who engage in it routinely. Many techniques have been modified to align with biblical doctrines, and all are culturally informed.

4.1. Morning Rituals and Routines

Much has been written about the power of morning routines. I first learned morning routines and rituals from my mother. She learned them from her parents, who owned a large farm and were solopreneurs, business people, and parents to 10 children. My mother, owner and principal of a school, gathered our family of eight in a circle in our kitchen at approximately 5:45 each morning. Before beginning our other responsibilities, before the

children headed for school, we had a time of prayer and edification. I can still hear her praying and making statements of affirmation about each one of her six children and my father, such as "We thank God for Alexis; she is such a friendly child and is doing so well in mathematics. Bless her, Lord".

Today I rise by 5:45 a.m. I am mostly quiet for the first two hours. My routine is flexible and the order of activities varies, but the disciplines are consistent. My morning routine begins with a ritual of prayer; it is very important that I begin the day with a focus on God. Then a short Qigong or yoga practice stretches my body and gets oxygen flowing to my brain. I take a 10- to 15 min walk in nature; this is my quiet time. The walks wake up my body and give me space to cultivate mindfulness by focusing my mind on God. During my walks I talk with God and listen to him. Our conversations involve adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and forgiveness. During this time, I am keenly aware of God and open to what he wants to say to me.

4.2. Paying Attention in Particular Ways

In those difficult years, I concentrated on paying attention in particular ways during my morning walks and throughout the day. Because I was paying more attention to God, I began to notice what was happening in me. I tended to ruminate on the ways Satan used "Christian" people in the academy to enact and perpetrate violence on Black people. This made me feel angry, discouraged, and depleted. I noticed what those feelings did to my body and energy level; they made me tired and anxious. I also noticed pain in some parts of my body. I began to acknowledge those feelings. Previous to working with a therapist, I had believed I should ignore or get rid of my feelings. Once I began paying attention to them, I just recognized them without judging them. As an intervention to rumination, I gathered the promises of God on little cards, read them aloud to myself, and meditated on the words. I practiced acting as if the words were true and made myself feel the reality of the words. This exercise left me feeling perplexed, inspired, or hopeful. I shared my concerns with God in prayer, in journals, and in other writings (brain dumps). As I paid more attention to God, I was confronted with the fact that I did not completely trust him; if I did trust, I would not be anxious or fearful. This realization led me to identify a set of affirmations of faith and create a ritual of using those affirmations in the mornings and whenever else needed.

4.3. Affirmations of Faith

I continue to make affirmations of faith a part of my morning ritual. Affirmations are short statements that combat negative thoughts or mindsets. I first learned about affirmations in my home and when I attended a predominantly Black Christian school as a young child. We memorized scriptures and made affirmations, such as "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" and "I am somebody." I use affirmations to interrupt negative thoughts and wrong thinking. I tend to be a high achiever and ruminate on what went wrong or what I would like to fix. I counteract this unhealthy tendency through affirmations of faith.

Unlike secular forms of mindful affirmations, the declarations I center my attention on are statements of God's greatness, not my own strengths or the powers within nature. Thus, my affirmations are usually scriptural and not based on positive self-talk. They include statements, such as "I am justified by grace", "I am reconciled by grace", and "I am forgiven". These affirmations are reminders of what God says about me and others (Colossians 1:20; I John 1:9; Romans 5:1). Making affirmations of faith is a ritual I carry out throughout the day to interrupt negative thoughts and lies Satan tells me about myself and other people. I try to imagine, visualize, and feel the truth of what I am saying. When the affirmations are not enough to build my confidence in Christ or settle my fears and anxieties, I listen to the words of God through biblical lessons, in prayer, or in conversations with others.

4.4. Awareness of and Openness to God

As a follower of Christ, I set an intention to have the mind of Christ. In order to raise my awareness of what the mind of Christ is, I engage in a ritual of reading and hearing scriptures. Each morning I recall the promises of God and God's words by reading scriptures or listening to inspirational biblical messages. As I engage with scriptures, I raise my awareness of God's thoughts, ways, and character. Anything that reminds me of the words of God, whether scriptures, notes, or songs, make me more open to the all-powerful, omnipresent, and all-knowing God I serve, who resides within me. This awareness increases my confidence in him as my Lord and savior. There is relief in knowing I do not have to fight any battle alone. I am reminded that God is with me and that if I dwell in his secret place with him no evil will come near me (Psalms 91). Even when this is not how I feel, the Bible states it to be true, and I choose to believe God's words.

The holy Bible demonstrates patterns of favor and faithfulness to those who love God and keep his commandments. I read old prayer requests, review my journals, and recall God's faithfulness in my own life. Three specific memories that always remind me of God's faithfulness are my completion of a doctorate program in the summer of 2007, the offer of a full-time faculty position at a private Christian university immediately after graduation, and the birth of a healthy 10-pound 2-ounce son despite an umbilical cord being wrapped around his neck. Not only do I remember God's grace, but I also remain aware of some of the strategies I used to get through those stressful times. Some of the strategies I used were remaining in community, praying, reciting affirmations of faith, and spending time in nature.

4.5. Music and Movement for Discharging and Openness

I am from a background that embraces music and movement in all aspects of life. In the Yoruba culture, music is life. My mother is a trained dancer, musician, and educator. My father is a martial artist and licensed therapist. They are both devoted Christians and it is impossible to separate what they do from who they are. Their faith is ever present in all they do, from music selection to the choice of words used in affirmations to the types of movement used at any given time. Most of their examples I witnessed involved Christianity and mind–body–spirit practices that promote the integration of music and movement into life.

I listen to God's words as I engage in mind–body movement. My favorite movement exercises are short Qigong practices and prescriptive yoga. Prescriptive yoga is geared for specific purposes or issues. I most often use yoga for focus in the mornings. I practice forward folds, lotus and warrior $\frac{1}{2}$ poses, and neck stretches. There are three simple yoga moves I use each morning to get started, as follows: Dangling pose, Warrior II, and Triangle pose. On rigorous or heavily emotional days, I use very upbeat and inspirational music; "Immediately" by Tasha Cobbs is my go-to.

Before the sun rises I enjoy three quick Qigong practices, namely the opening exercise, turning of the moon, and arm swings. Qigong is a moving meditation focused on light movement, breathing deeply, getting the body to open up and relax, and calming the mind. I stand in a comfortable position with my feet firmly on the ground, knees slightly bent and shoulders back, and focus on coordinating my breaths with the movements. A cultural modification I make is moving energy, especially when I feel weighed down. I start by bouncing vigorously, swinging my arms, tapping, stomping, or even clapping aloud. Then, I proceed with a brief Qigong or yoga practice. I engage in a 10- to 25 min intense cardio workout that includes dancing, clapping, jumping rope, and stomping. Hearing the word of faith through gospel music inspires me to keep moving and builds my confidence and faith in God as I discharge energy and move my body. I also plan a 15 min mid-day nap during particularly stressful times. Songs like "The Blessing" by Elevation Worship resonate and increase my awareness of God. The lyrics are as follows:

May His favor be upon you
And a thousand generations
And Your family and your children
And their children, and their children
May His favor be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children
May His presence go before you
And behind you, and beside you
All around you, and within you
He is with you, He is with you
In the morning, in the evening
In your coming, and your going
In your weeping, and rejoicing
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you

4.6. Writing

Writing has been a vehicle for healing for me (Evans 2021). Writing, like other mindfulness practices, runs deep within me. My parents are writers. I have vivid memories of my mother writing down everything from her goals to business documents. My father wrote notes for his Bible study lessons, presentations, and sessions as a licensed marriage and family therapist. At this very moment my mother, at 79 years of age, has written over 10 books and has an office covered in written prayers and goals. My father, at 77, has maintained a Christian blog and created a Facebook community for martial artists.

My writing discipline consists of one-hour writing blocks five days a week. Writing is a part of my morning routine, following my ritual of prayer. This is important because I depend on God to assist me with writing. Since my doctoral program, I have prayed specifically regarding what to write about and how to do it effectively. Therefore, without fail, I sit with a timer to work on books, articles, and other peer-reviewed manuscripts. I play NeoSoul, African drums, and Latin jazz funk instrumentals to keep me inspired. Music and aesthetics have played a huge role in my professional success and personal healing. I make my space aesthetically appealing by integrating candles, books, fresh flowers, and essential oils.

I am intentional about writing in ways that spread the good news of hope. As a scholar I can write on many topics and perspectives, but I want to be a voice for those who have had their voices marginalized. I have noticed that much of the scholarship on Black and Latino families blames parents for the achievement gap; it characterizes them as uninvolved. When I became aware that there was a dearth of literature on what works to support Black and Latino students in their success and wellbeing in school, I shifted my scholarship. I began writing to raise awareness of the abundance of gifts and strengths that lie within all people. I chose qualitative methods to capture the stories and perspectives of those from whom I learn. I now use my writing to center the voices and perspectives of people from historically marginalized communities, including widows, the fatherless, and the oppressed. I write to promote mindfulness and concepts of Christian hospitality in schools and universities. My academic writing is not, however, all for me, but also to serve the academy, students, families, and communities by spreading hope.

4.7. Prescriptive Mindful Yoga

Mindful yoga has been an important tool in my thriving. Mindful yoga integrates attention and control of the breath, affirmations, visualizations, music, and physical movement. I use yoga prescriptively. For example, if I am grieving, I engage in a yoga exercise targeted for grief. I often use yoga aimed at writing and creativity—Cat Cow, shoulder exercises, seated forward folds, setting intentions, creating awareness of the breath and body, three-legged dog, runner's lunge, and more. Because the most accessible forms of yoga tend to be secular and centralize Whiteness, I make cultural and spiritual adaptations. For example, I carry a great load as a Black woman, so I may need to move before I sit for a quiet practice. I imagine myself shaking off worries, fears, and other people's responsibilities. I may use Latin funk, the sounds of African drums, or no sound at all. In yoga there may be instruction to affirm oneself, and I make my affirmations about who I am in God or who He is in me. It is common in yoga to engage in a prayer hand posture; I use that time to listen to God or to thank God for something. I pay attention to what I am being guided to think, say, and do, and ensure that what I choose aligns with my beliefs.

4.8. Noticing

One of the practices of mindfulness is noticing. Yoga asks that you notice what is happening with your breath and in your mind and your body. I take time to notice during and after a morning walk. This discipline helps to ground me. It keeps me in the present moment. It keeps my mind from wandering and worrying about the day before it has even started. I have noticed that as soon as I wake in the morning I become overwhelmed with thoughts about the things I need to do. This surge of cortisone causes me to feel stressed, become impatient, and complain. By noticing this, I am able to intervene, to refocus so that I notice what I am doing in the present moment. What I notice as I walk and in my morning routine are my thoughts, the moment, my body, and my breath. After a mind-body activity, I notice how my body and mind feel. Intentionally noticing brings awareness to things that may be going on in my body, such as pain or worry. I have recognized pain or feelings of depletion in my body that sparked a visit with my physician. Those visits were revealing.

I have noticed that the more I am present and noticing, the less judgmental I am. I am more patient, slower to respond, more grateful, and more aware of God's presence in myself and others. This noticing has improved areas of my life. For example, when I noticed that I like to move and do things quickly, I realized that quiet time and a slower pace were areas in which I needed to grow. I noticed that I like to rush the yoga exercises and I grow impatient with sitting to ground or breathe. I also noticed that when I sit in the moment to be fully present and engage in the process, yoga and other experiences are more gratifying. I saw this pattern of rushing and, thereby, missing key moments at academic conferences, meetings, and with friends and loved ones. I realized I was cheating myself of the full experiences by not taking my time, slowing down, and engaging in the entire process even if I thought some parts contributed negligibly to my desired outcomes. Noticing this pattern enabled me to understand that it is in the quiet, slower times that I see and hear from God and am able to best reflect.

4.9. Gathering in Community

Community is cultural and spiritual for me. The relationships within the communities of which I am a part are essential to my thriving. During my difficult season, I joined a small group of Christians focused on writing for publication. We met weekly to discuss all sorts of things, including strategies for integrating our faith into our writing, as well as strategies for overcoming hostile interactions on campus. I was also a part of several campus-wide initiatives geared towards creating an inclusive climate for neurodivergent individuals, as well as a racially and linguistically diverse faculty, staff, and students. Coming together with other believers in Christ to solve real problems in ways that aligned with my faith was empowering. Conversations in these communities often reminded me to focus on and pay attention to God's words, His nature, and my identity in Christ. They reminded me

that anything was possible with God. These communities made space for sharing difficult stories, but also affirmed me with words of faith and with friendships. I was able to notice that I was not the only one in distress. Others were too, and I was able to encourage, pray for, and affirm them as they affirmed me.

On a similar note, I continued to gather with fellow believers in small church groups, one on one, and in large group gatherings. These affiliations and interactions kept my focus and awareness, for the most part, on Godly things. Each week, our small group dove into the scriptures and had discussions about their applications for our lives. I was able to share my struggles with Christian academic settings. Monthly gatherings with my sorority, mostly Christian women, also provided me with social, emotional, and spiritual support. Black women value community and service; these are what bring many Christians and Black women together. Therefore, I increased my time in service to people in community with others. This decision removed the focus from me and my issues.

5. Discussion

The study took place in a predominately White, private, evangelical Christian institution in the West over a five-year period. The stress and structural racism often associated with the experiences of Black women in HWCIs is the reason I call these institutions hostile. The long history of exclusion, isolation, devaluation, and violence from the academy towards Black people, especially women, is well documented and still happening. The inappropriate use of Black bodies in the academy dates back to (1932), and comes in many forms, including unethical experimentation, low wages, stealing runaway slaves, the weathering of Black women, and the disproportionality in number of contingent workers (Savitt 1982). To ignore and dismiss this history and then blame Black women for their skepticism of mental health and healthcare is victimizing and violent, and ignores social constructs and structural systems of oppression (Giles 2010; Pew Research Center n.d.).

Concepts of religion, culture, race, and gender were emphasized in this study because of the unique setting, and to highlight the interplay of dynamics within the setting and for Black women. This study used autoethnography and standpoint and Black feminist theories to describe and analyze my personal experiences using Christian mindfulness to cope and thrive in the academy. These methodologies and methods have been used by other researchers to understand the experiences of Black women in the academy (Esposito and Evans-Winters 2021). Black feminist and standpoint theories have been used in conjunction with memoirs, ethnography, and autoethnography to understand the experiences of Black women in dehumanizing spaces (Evans et al. 2017). Literature describes the academy as a place that devalues scholar-practitioners and community-based research, disproportionately situates Black women as contingent workers, fails to promote Black women to senior leadership positions, and fails to protect Black women from racial aggressions inside and outside of classrooms—all practices that contribute to dehumanization for Black women (Cox 2008; Nzinga 2020).

5.1. Understanding Christian Mindfulness

In this study, a definition of Christian mindfulness emerged, which centered on being open to God, being aware of God, and paying attention to God. This definition is in line with Kopel and Habermas's (2019) understanding that Christian mindfulness begins with philosophical and biblical truths and is followed by personal application of that truth. Kopel et al. described Christian mindfulness as a variant of mindfulness found in the West that emphasizes reflection on biblical teachings and God's interactions with man, nature, and things (2019). My definition of Christian mindfulness aligns practices with biblical truths and centers my personal relationship with God, while also raising awareness of God's greatness.

The emphasis on God is a distinctive feature of Christian mindfulness; rather than having an open and empty mind, I think about my personal salvation, my relationship with God, and who God is to me and to the universe. Because I see God as the creator of

all, my focus is on scriptures, words of faith, and God's attributes, character, and promises (Kopel and Habermas 2019). My focus is not on my own powers or the powers of nature.

There is little research that discusses how other Black Christian women describe Christian mindfulness, but what is available suggests their practice of mindfulness supports the above definition. A significant number of African American women identify as Christians. Indeed, 83% of all African Americans believe in God, and 75% pray daily (Pew Research Center n.d.). African Americans are more likely to identify as Christian than any other religion. When Black women are explicitly asked about mindfulness they often reference prayer, prayer with attention to and control of the breath, and mindful meditation on biblical readings or teachings (Evans 2021). These practices are among those detailed in this study as culturally informed elements of Christian mindfulness.

The findings of this study point to two concepts that distinguish Christian mindfulness from secular forms. These are as follows: seeing things from God's perspective, and using Godly wisdom to shape practice.

5.2. Adopting God's Perspective

Seeing things from God's perspective necessitates paying attention to God, increasing one's awareness of God, and being open to God. My intention to become aware of and pay attention to God comes from my personal relationship with Christ. This intent is what discriminates Eastern forms of mindfulness from Christian mindfulness (Kopel and Habermas 2019). Garzon and Ford (2018) understood that "adapting mindfulness to a Christian worldview requires the acceptance of key doctrines of the [Christian] faith" (p. 11). This study clearly showed my practice of mindfulness was influenced by my following doctrinal positions: God is near, God is personal, God is all knowing and all powerful, I should avoid spiritual influences that are not from God, and God is in me but also separate from me (Garzon and Ford 2018). Holding these doctrines enabled me to use approaches to mindfulness that aligned with my belief system.

My reliance on biblical doctrine to shape my mindfulness practices is typical of the behaviors of many Black women seeking Godly ways to achieve and maintain mental and emotional health. A phenomenological study of seven Black women found the women used positive religious strategies, including meditation on God's word, gathering with community to study the Bible, use of scriptures to focus attention, and viewing God as "with us", to cope and thrive (Avant Harris et al. 2019). In her in-depth study of the practices three Black women used for mental healing and body nurturing, Panton (2017) described the "Christian perspective" on mindfulness as a connection between the physical, spiritual, and emotional parts of a human; she linked this perspective to an explicit awareness of and openness to God. A study of 50 female Black or African American mental health practitioners or academic professionals in mental health fields demonstrated that spirituality played a dual role for the participants' Black female clients. The clients reported aspects of peace when engaging in prayer or meditation, and some also chose prayer over seeking help from mental health professionals (Bell 2017). These findings are not surprising because most African Americans describe themselves as "religious" or spiritual (Musgrave et al. 2002).

5.3. Applying God's Wisdom

As the findings illustrate, I use Christian principles to guide how I practice mindfulness. As an integrated person who brings a spiritual and a cultural lens to most of the things I do, I have difficulty calling some things Christian and others not as long as the "others" do not contradict biblical teachings. Rather, I am careful to seek God's perspective and apply Godly wisdom. For example, although some forms of mindfulness invite non-judgmental acceptance of experiences, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, my faith informs me to bring these things in alignment with the mind of Christ. Therefore, a big part of what I do entails adapting mindfulness practices to my worldview (Garzon and Ford 2018).

The way I approach mindfulness is also influenced by the fact that I am a Black woman. For Black women, meditation and mindfulness have long included affirmations, the use of specific types of music and movement, dance, quiet time, prayer, walking, time in nature or engaged in a relaxing activity, and writing or reading (Anderson 2017; Evans et al. 2019; Magee 2019; Watson et al. n.d.). Thus, the practices that have healed and continue to sustain me and countless other Black women are both spiritually and culturally informed. This finding is in line with the National Board for Certified Counselors' observation that integration of an "individual's religious background is not only culturally responsive, but ethically responsive" (quoted in Avant Harris et al. 2019, p. 10).

One practice detailed in this study that is associated with Christian mindfulness, as well as the religious background of many Black women, is prayer. In Christian tradition, mindfulness includes kataphatic and apophatic prayer and breath awareness—that is, meditating on words and images related to the scriptures, as well as practicing the presence of God or quiet contemplation, and practicing breath awareness (Garzon and Ford 2018; Hathaway and Tan 2009).

Prayer recurs in the literature describing how Black women cope in difficult circumstances. The prayers of Black woman are often collective and focused on salvation, liberation, peace, justice, and forgiveness. Mendenhall et al. (2017) analyzed the experiences of eleven Black mothers parenting in violent contexts and found the mothers used prayer and breath work to "transcend" or shift attention from their plights in order to persist. They used prayer deliberately "to calm down or change their behavior" (Mendenhall et al. 2017, p. 192).

In a study using duo-ethnography and critical race feminism to explore the experiences of Black women in the academy, Roby and Cook (2019) and Hicks Tafari and Simpkins (2019) found that the women used prayer and writing tools for resistance. An interesting finding on mindfulness research is that most Black women pray as they engage in yoga, perform movement-based activities, listen to music, serve, meditate, write, or use affirmations (Evans 2021). I often integrate prayer into my walking, writing, Qigong, yoga, and other activities.

Whereas prayer is frequently associated with Christian mindfulness, yoga is sometimes disregarded by Christians. Although in some contexts and forms yoga is associated with evil or cultish behavior (Panton 2017), I found ways to incorporate my religious and spiritual beliefs into the practice without making references to "other" sources of power, including myself. This adaptation to mindfulness gives a Christian approach to yoga. Historically, the literature on Black women's wellness describes the use of yoga and meditation as mindfulness. This form of yoga encompasses physical poses, use of music, use of writing to heal, travel and journaling, prayer, meditation, and mindful eating or drinking with a focus on the breath, non-judgment, paying attention, and being open (Evans 2021). I use these practices as Christian mindfulness, and what distinguishes my practice of yoga from more traditional forms is my explicit acknowledgement of God before, during, and after these activities, and my clear intention to raise my awareness of God. I and other Black women pray and adapt yoga and other forms of mindfulness to align with our spiritual and cultural knowledge.

The study showed that the spiritual and cultural pieces also inform my use of music, movement, and writing. My music choices reflect both my cultural background and my personal relationship with Christ. Music with movement, music to write by, music to celebrate, and music to motivate run deep in Black culture. In the Yoruba culture, music is intertwined with all aspects of life. Yoruba people are known for advanced drumming; perhaps this is why the drums resonate with me during my writing routine and motivate me to persist in writing. Johnson and Carter (2019) found that Black Americans use instruments of traditional African values related to positive ideas and behaviors.

5.4. Healing Power of Christian Mindfulness

This study demonstrated that practicing Christian mindfulness promotes spiritual, emotional, and physical healing and wellness. Specifically, it enabled me to cope in a hostile HWCI. This finding is confirmed by the literature that suggests that journaling (a mindfulness practice) and meditation are effective methods for healing emotional pain and critical to problem-solving and navigating the academy (Hall et al. 2007). Discussing the interlocking systems of race, class, and gender oppression is Black feminist, intersectional, healing, and informative. Black feminist thought, which is culturally informed, has been promoted in therapeutic approaches with Black women (Collins 1986; Woods-Giscombe 2010). One scholar described a womanist approach to wellness for Black women in the academy in very practical activities including drinking water, getting high-quality sleep, exercising, breathing properly, spending time in nature, having quiet time, practicing regular meditation, visualizing, and maintaining sources of spiritual inspiration (Evans 2021). In this study, my integration of a Christian worldview and personal beliefs related to my experiences proved effective in the attainment of mental health (Day-Vines et al. 2021).

The literature points to some of the ways the mindfulness practices in this study promote health and wellness. For example, walking reduces stress hormones, anxiety, and blood pressure, and increases focus and clarity (Harvard Medical School n.d.). Walking raises endorphins and dopamine, two hormones associated with mental health. Walking in nature boosts the immune system, increases optimism, and lowers cortisol (Harvard Medical School n.d.).

Along the same lines, writing has been shown to be helpful for managing anxiety, reducing stress, and increasing hope and gratitude. Journaling and other forms of writing, such as brain dumps and writing for advocacy and justice, are associated with empowerment and wellness (Evans et al. 2019; Evans 2021; Hicks Tafari and Simpkins 2019; Watson et al. n.d.).

Prayer has been associated with decreased depression and positive emotional health for Black women (Chatters et al. 2018; Woods-Giscombe 2010). Affirmations have been demonstrated to be protective against the negative effects of stress on the mind and body (Creswell et al. 2005), and to decrease rumination, increase perceptions of safety, promote healthier eating, and improve academic achievement (Moore 2021). I modified the idea of affirmations to align with biblical doctrines. I added tapping, an emotional freedom technique, which is helpful for depression, anxiety, and stress, to make my affirmations a part of my subconscious (Bach et al. 2019).

I gathered in community as a means of healing, coping, and thriving. Gathering with community is aligned with my cultural and biblical worldviews. Socializing, connecting, and a focus on relationships have been identified as strengths of Black people (Avant Harris et al. 2019). This form of collective identity is manifested in symbols, speech patterns, attitudes, values, beliefs, and feelings. It is cultural and associated with wellbeing (Johnson and Carter 2019). I gather with people who share my faith and/or racial and cultural background. We share a belief that we depend on one another for our survival and success, whether regarding promotion, tenure, or advocacy for our children and others. Although I do gather with specific Christian groups, I also connect with secular groups for the purpose of serving the community. I believe service to others is aligned with biblical principles even when it includes non-believers. Focusing my attention on those I can serve is both biblical and cultural and has been healing for me.

Volunteering may lower blood pressure, decrease depression, and increase connectedness (Watson et al. n.d.). Black women in the academy value service, and often integrate it into their teaching and scholarship. Gathering with believers and serving others are biblical principles taught in many churches (Garzon and Ford 2018). Although racism is pervasive and can be encountered in any group, including those organized for service, it exists in some settings to a greater extent than in others. Mental health professionals recommend that Black women leave an environment when racism is evident, pervasive,

and pronounced (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.; DeGruy 2005; Edwards et al. 2011). Culturally proficient clinicians realize the choice to leave the academy and have other options is a privilege (Edwards et al. 2011; Nzinga 2020). As a Christ follower, my intent, focus, and motivations are often, but not always, centered on God. Therefore, in the plethora of strategies I use, including prayer, quiet time, morning routines, affirmations, community, service to others, praise and thanksgiving, mind–body practices, and attention to the breath, the intent is to obey God.

Incorporation of culturally- and spiritually-specific practices "that raise consciousness and foster resilience and empower Black women" has been associated with decreased toxic stress and increased wellness (Bryant-Davis et al. 2015; Evans 2021; Woods-Giscombe 2010). I used the mindfulness practices of rising early, writing, being in a community, and implementing rituals and routines to raise my awareness of God and to pay attention to God, myself, and others in ways that were not previously available to me. The literature suggests that other Black women inside and outside of the academy have used early rising times, rituals and routines, journaling, writing memoirs, storytelling, mindfulness as meditation, and community to heal themselves, their loved ones, and their communities (Anderson 2017; Bryant-Davis et al. 2015; Evans et al. 2017; Hall et al. 2007).

5.5. The Research Process

In addition to the findings discussed above, this study contributes to the social science field an example of a valuable approach to research and knowledge creation. The process I used to collect, reflect, and analyze my narratives in conjunction with the literature is a model that can be useful for other groups and other settings. Autoethnography and narrative inquiry created space for me to identify, acknowledge, and discuss my feelings and experiences related to working in hostile HCWIs. A review of my journals, notes, emails, and other documents provided me with data to create the stories that explored my experiences. This methodology is credible and has been used to increase society's knowledge about the ways Black women cope and thrive in various settings, including the academy.

Anderson (2017) used autoethnography to examine travel journal and blog entries over a period of five years and reported that her "planned behaviors" were part of her self-care, healing, and empowerment. Evans (2021) detailed the ways Dr. Anna Julia Cooper used journaling to gain insights and develop theoretical frameworks to understand how identity and education intersect. Braid, as cited in Long (2014), demonstrated that reflective writing is one of the best means of measuring one's personal frame of reference.

Increasing amounts of scholarship within the academy encourage Black women to identify, acknowledge, and express their feelings about their conditions and treatment (Hooks 1984; Woods-Giscombe 2010). Black feminism suggests this is both empowering and healing at the same time. The empowerment comes from sharing stories and perspectives often lost in spaces, such as the academy, that place great value on disintegration, monetization, and competition. These values are often misaligned with those of Black women. Furthermore, the autoethnography process aligns with standpoint theory, narrative inquiry, and healing-centered practices. Unfortunately, there are movements within the academy to hinder these critical processes and the conversations they provoke. This is unfortunate because discussions about race are critical in interventions for racial trauma associated with racism (Bryant et al. 2022).

6. Conclusions

This qualitative autoethnographic study of my narratives describe my ideas about Christian mindfulness and explain how I use them to cope and thrive in the academy. Autoethnography of Black women's experiences is an effective method for adding to the literature on Black women's health and wellness. The process of engaging in autoethnography is healing in and of itself. The opportunity to describe, analyze, and reflect upon my own experiences in conjunction with the experiences of other Black people is empowering

and affirming. Black women's use of narratives and memoirs as primary sources is well documented in the literature (Esposito and Evans-Winters 2021). It is aligned with Black feminist thought, standpoint theory, and intersectionality.

I believe that taking on God's perspectives of life is a form of Christian mindfulness. My relationship with Jesus Christ and adoption of biblical doctrines set the parameters of the principles and practices I would use to cope and thrive in a hostile HWCI. I set an intention to raise my awareness of God, be open to God, and pay attention to God. The practices motivated by these principles were rituals, routines, writing, and walking, among others. This study identified the ways I adapt mindfulness culturally and spiritually to cope and thrive under the stress, structural racism, and the gendered violence I encounter.

I believe the negative conditions that exist for Black women are a result of sin and the fall of man. I also believe there are opportunities for individual and organizational healing and reconciliation in hostile HWCIs, but these are available only in community and with the active participation of people inside and outside of the academy. Christian mindfulness does not happen in isolation. It is an experience that requires individuals to be aware of, open to, and paying attention to God so they can come together collectively in faith and service to make individuals, organizations, systems, and structures better. Black women have been situated at the margins of society. They often lack position and power in the academy to make change. Black feminism and standpoint theory help to bring the complexities of race and gender in a highly racialized society to the forefront.

The process of using autoethnography of narratives helped me to document my experiences, process my emotions, and problem-solve. Journaling, writing, and leaning into the literature on Black women's wellness and the academy helped me to heal and create new knowledge while learning how to navigate the academy as a Black woman. Acknowledging the structural barriers, both racial and gendered, and engaging in critical conversations about race and racism are healing interventions that enable Black people and make contributions to knowledge. Despite their positioning, Black women in the academy are not powerless. They continue to use their cultural and spiritual strengths to positively impact their spheres of influence. Specifically, they use their scholarship, teaching, and service as mechanisms for healing, advocacy, knowledge creation, and change.

Adapting mindfulness to a Christian worldview helped me remember my position in relation to Jesus Christ and not to react out of the fear or anger commonly associated with racial stress and trauma. Using some of the mindfulness strategies mentioned connected me so closely with Jesus Christ that I became confident about his character and his promises to me. I created space for Christian mindfulness with rituals and routines. I used writing, music and movement, walking, community, remembering, and affirmations of faith to heal and promote openness. Overall, these strategies calmed some of my fears and made me less anxious. Eventually, I was able to sleep and digest my food. Over time, I made fewer mistakes and reacted less negatively to the microaggressions, lies, and insults to my intelligence and leadership preparation.

My personal relationship with Christ became central to coping and thriving. As I leaned into specific mindfulness practices and Christian principles, my awareness of God and my personal relationship with him grew. I paid more attention to our relationship and become open to his will and instructions for me. In regard to the hostility I experienced, God never changed the situation for me; instead, he changed me by leading me to the application of Godly principles through spiritual and secular practices. Because I engaged in culturally-informed Christian mindfulness practices, I was able to see the goodness of God while still in the same hostile situation.

Eventually I had the option of leaving the specific hostile environment, and I chose to do so. Before exiting, I met with human resources and shared carefully documented incidences and artifacts to support my observations. I also filed a formal complaint with a local agency overseeing employment harassment and discrimination. Shortly thereafter, I was offered a better position with higher pay by an institution only fifteen minutes from my home. Because my heart was clean and my ears in tune with God, I was able to join a

new community with a clean heart, free of resentment. I have since participated in several international research and community engagement opportunities to address educational inequities. Bringing hate and unforgiveness from the old situation into these settings could have permanently ruined my health and new relationships. It could have resulted in me triggering others or precluded me from new opportunities because I could not see them or did not feel safe in them. Rather, I have gone on to mentor other academics, write books and book chapters, and publish journal articles about how we thrive as integrated people in toxic and hostile environments. I recently published a book that was inspired by God and full of hope and strength for underserved children and youth. The time and energy once used to grieve and defend myself is now used to fuel God's will and purpose for my life.

It is my hope that others begin to learn more about the practical and spiritual supports Black women and other women of color use to thrive in the academy. Black women need to be valued, respected, and protected, as they are often brought into institutions to make transformative change. Mindfulness is not a strategy that should be used to exploit Black women's labor or to make them content with poor conditions. True mindfulness happens collectively when we all work to disrupt violence, oppression, and exploitation of Black women. Black feminism, autoethnography, and standpoint theory are tools that can help us to find ways to do this. We can use Christian and culturally-informed mindfulness practices to intentionally interrupt all of Satan's ploys that cause spiritual, emotional, and physical harm to Black women, Indigenous women, Latina women, and the LGBT community. Gendered and racialized violence from others is a sin. Whether intentional or not, the mindsets, practices, and policies that create or maintain negative racialized and gendered outcomes are wrong, and followers of Christ are commanded to oppose them.

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