

“Tell your sons about it, And let your sons tell their sons,  
And their sons the next generation.”

Joel 1:3

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you.”

Maya Angelou

The African diaspora is rich and replete with stories. Stories of triumph and trauma, resistance and resilience, forgotten moments and emotions left on the table of previous generations. They are locked away in journals, letters, libraries and mental storage units waiting to be told. The stories of “how we got over”, “how we made it through” or “what happened when” have been marginalized or left far too long for others to tell.

“If we do not tell our own stories, we leave the truth of our existence and experiences to those who may not treat our truth as sacred.” said Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, the new Director of Documentaries, Payne Theological Seminary. “Our stories are just too important not to be told.”

Payne Theological Seminary, under the leadership of President Dr. Michael Brown, is moving to the cutting edge of producing documentaries to preserve and present some of those stories. This innovative thrust is a part of the Mapping of Black Methodism, funded by a grant from the Lilly Foundation. It builds also upon the previous work of the Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church’s Anvil series of books, resource guides and documentaries to forge a new path reclaiming our heritage and presenting it to newer generations. Bishop McKenzie served as editor of The Anvil and executive producer the documentary series.

Bishop McKenzie is no stranger to documentaries. Her first documentary was Survivor Stories, fifteen years ago. It aired on TV One cable network and selected PBS stations. Survivor Stories told the stories of men and women struggling in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and southern Mississippi. It chronicled the efforts of black churches, the AME Church in particular, in the wake of a wind, water and human tragedy who provided support to hurting and hungry people.

She is also the Executive Producer of three other documentaries produced since 2010 “Echoes from the General Conference”, “Preaching on the Frontline” and “The Spirit of African Methodism”.

Currently, she is producing “AME Next” elevating the hopes and dreams of clergy and laity for the next millennium of African Methodism.

For more information on current and future documentary projects contact  
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