Kidnapped and Raped: Reading a 'Test of Terror' in the Quest for Freedom and Human Dignity in Africa

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Abstract

The problem that this essay addresses is that of violence against women in African context with a case study of Nigeria in particular. The question of human dignity and freedom are correlated in this discussion. Human freedom is reinterpreted as human dignity and verse versa. This is in order to closely argue that the time is ripe for the new rhetoric of patriarchal criticism in Nigeria and the rest of African context. Critical voices on the quest for human dignity and gender justice are being engaged within the essay as a point of departure to rereading one of the notable texts of terror in biblical scholarship namely, Judges 19 (20, 21 cf. Tribe 1984). These chapters are examples in biblical narratives when women are clearly abused and neglected or even downtrodden within patriarchal culture and ideology. The narrative found in Judges 19 became a historic example of how women (girls) are experiencing the hardship of dehumanization in a male orientated Nigerian context with particular emphasis to the Islamic insurgency group activities in the Northern parts of Nigeria. Narrative analysis would be used as a way of naming and resisting violence against women by retelling the ongoing stories of kidnap and rape of women and young girls in Nigeria as a quest for freedom and human dignity in context.

Key words: Human Dignity, Freedom, Women (girls), Narrative Analysis, Gender Theory, Text of Terror etc.

Introduction: Breaking the Silence about Gender Violence in Africa.

In one of her contributions for interpreting gender theories within the contexts of religion and popular culture L. Juliana M. Claassens discusses the question and possibility of "Breaking the silence about Gender Violence" (Claassens 2012a: 1f). This among others is basic to our sense of human survival and the quest for freedom for all human beings. Her work brings to our understanding the move within biblical interpretation and gender theories in "African" biblical hermeneutics to break the silence about gender violence in Africa and the modern and even postmodern world contexts. This idea of "breaking the silence" is nonetheless an urgent need in African biblical hermeneutics especially in Nigerian contexts among others in which patriarchy has been rooted and nurtured within religious and spiritual ideologies etc.

The vulnerability of humanity in Africa and the rest of the world is basic as a point of departure toward a creative engagement of the terrors of our time. It is agreeable to note with Claassens that, "Human beings are prone to injury, violence, and death- a reality clearly brought to our attention by the many instances of war and terror that in recent years have broken into our lives" (Claassens 2015: 19)

In her notable book *Precarious Life* (2004) Judith Butler explains why different people in different places and cultures perpetrate acts of violence against those they consider "other" than themselves. The sad situation is the fact that some human beings have not been considered as human enough nor have they been accepted and respected as such. This has been the main reason why we see multiplying acts of human dehumanization in our world today (cf. Butler 2004: 34; Claassens 2015: 22). In her creative and dynamic sense of engagement, Claassens (2012a) confronts the problems of "gender stereotypes," especially in conversation with the books and film of "The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo". Her analysis

reflected closely on the interface of gender, religion, cultures and violence, in order to boldly point her readers to the tyranny of the times especially within gender oppression in literature and films in which the portrayal of gender may seem innocent or as a way of entertainment but internally the ongoing injustice and oppression is still on. She notes the harshness of the stereotypes against women and how generally speaking silence is used to further neglect and oppress them instead of the power of the human voice in faith and reason to be the leading internal elements of unmasking the horror and disarming the evil one and thereby destroying the evil that is being done in such guises.

Claassens argues within what may sound strange rhetoric in biblical studies when she discussed the book of Leviticus as a "dangerous book." The use of Leviticus to legitimate gender violence is what has actually made Leviticus to be a "dangerous book" in the hands of many who are controlled only by their popular ideologies of objectification, oppression, and control. This has been the elements of terror and tyranny especially between male popular culture (patriarchy) and the female gender (which has been seen as 'the other') in many Western and especially African contexts.

In contexts where gender-bias cultures prevail "sexual violence" is used as means of "social control" of women's "misbehavior" (Claassens 2012a: 13). This so-called female correction has been a popular but unfortunate development in many African, not least Nigerian, contexts. Patriarchy still reigns as a supreme "divinely ordained" culture despites its oppressive and dehumanizing realities. In many instances women and girls are not only owned by men (in the male world) but they are reduced to being the property of the man for his own pleasure and fulfillment.

It is painfully agreeable that Scripture is seen as presented more "… as mirror of our society" (Claassens 2012a: 14). This in many senses has to do with the production and

transmission of the Scripture. Within history of biblical composition, and hermeneutical development (cf. Jonker and Lawria 2015:27ff) the biblical text has been used as a religious document to serve as tool to capture, and control women and those others in the margin of the popular culture of a given society as the "others". "In many instances today, one still sees instances of women who are not treated as fully human, who are deemed as inferior object(s) worthy of disrespect" (Claassens 2012a:15).

Claassens refers to the essay by Sharon Marcus, "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words" as revealing to the leading stereotypes against women and the ideologies behind rape culture in our societies arguing that literature and films enable by the means of "images of rape" which intrinsically lead others to argue in the negative to promote instead of to resist, thinking ideologically that, "women are rapable, women deserve rape/women provoke rape, women want rape, women are ashamed of being raped/ women publicly lie about being raped." (Claassens 2012a:16 cf. Marcus 2003). In what follows I will used narrative technique of story-telling (Mouton 2005:15 cf. Dube 2001) in order to further unmask the violence done against women in Nigeria (and Africa at large). This would be done by telling few (but important) representative stories of how many young women have been kidnapped, and abused as sexual objects and religious tools of arrogance and the display of male chauvinism in African context. I will restrict my discussion of context to my immediate Nigerian context (hopefully as representative to the rest of African contexts where such religious, political and social crimes against humanity are happening).

Narrations of Violence Against Women in Nigerian Context

The place of women in African cultures and worldviews has been made obvious that women are nothing more than being women. The right and dignity of women as the freedom to be, has either not yet been discovered by many or is still being

suppressed by many dominant male-orientated cultures. The societies in which we live today are historically constructed by the male others who generally seek to and in many ways actually control those societies. Women are seen as mere objects for male satisfaction of sexual pleasure and other inner life (or in-house) chores that mainly belong to the women. One of the shocking remarks that was made by the Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari (Mwakideu 2016) when some time in recent history on his visit to Germany and was standing side by side with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, he was interviewed on things that concern his life with his wife and her role in Nigerian politics but he shockingly answered by saying, "I don't know which party my wife belongs to, but my wife belongs to the kitchen, my living room and the other room." This line became a trending thought in Nigeria and I hope the rest of Africa as an example of "the place of many women" in African society.

This women marginalization has been seen and done across all strata of life not least the church context. This is unfortunately seen in many congregations that women only belong to the "pews" and men belong to the "pulpit" (Hendriks et al 2012). The ongoing marginalization of women in Nigerian context is now a continual trend and it has mainly been promoted by cruel exegesis and the force of the texts of terror.

The stories of the kidnapped Chibok girls of Borno State have been a popular news around the world today. The sad thing about it all today is the fact that those Chibok girls are gradually being forgotten in the history of Nigeria. The media has done quite well in telling the stories of how those schoolgirls have been abducted by Boko Haram militia and were camped at Sambisa forest for many months and now years. Several stories of how the government is working for their being released have been told but only turn out to be nothing but an empty cloud in the sky. The tragedy has forced many young women in Nigeria to dare the times to become civil rights activists with special emphasis to women's freedom

and gender justice. From the videos of the Boko Haram militia one of the repeated threats from their leader the notorious Abubakar Shakau has been, “we are going to sell your children.” Or “we have led your girls to convert to Islam and we have married them off.” This reduces being a woman nothing more than being a wife. This has been a popular Islamic culture especially as represented by the Boko Haram sect, that young girls and women do not have the right to inheritance in the father’s house, that they have no right to freedom of life and education and that even their hope for heaven can be nothing more than a hope for a husband. In popular Islamic culture and thoughts of heaven, there will be 70 women that will be shared only to the “righteous” and those to whom they are given will do nothing more than to enjoy sex with them etc. There have been reports about the Chibok girls who have been kidnapped by Boko Haram that they have married many of them not least their leaders and some have even given birth to children. The Nigerian government seems so silent and the promises to the parents of those girls are now seemingly dashed out. Some of those parents have died out of human history now without seeing the freedom of their girls. They died in total alienation from their children and with the memory of pain and dehumanization about their children.

Another similar story to those of the Chibok girls is that of Leah Sheribu. Leah is one of the girls also abducted by Boko Haram among the Dapchi School girls kidnap and she has been hidden for the past three years now. Some people say she has died but others still believe that she is alive, whether alive or dead all we can say about her now is that Leah Sheribu is not free. Leah Sheribu is a Christian young lady, according to the stories we heard, her other friends have been released but she was not released mainly because she refused to convert to Islam. The refusal of conversion to a particular religion in Nigerian context is enough to totally seize one’s freedom and even make one good for nothing but to be killed

or banished. Leah has been the victim of her faith. Some of the videos online portray her as being forced to be converted to Islam but up to now there are no sufficient facts to make such arguments concrete. I see Leah now as metaphor for our country Nigeria, if not Africa at large. Whenever, Leah Sheribu returns home, then the hope of Nigeria to return also from the inner exile to religious and political captivity will be possible. Thus I fear that Leah will be lost, and her voice be silenced forever.

Few days to the writing of this essay, there was another kidnap from Kaduna State Polytechnic (12th March 2021). Many students of the institution have been taken captive and I saw their video on my television not long ago, young men and especially young women are showed under huge threats. The boys are severely beaten and subjected to hard labor while the girls are subjected to cooking and sex activities. This is the horror of our time, and it reminds us on daily basis that everyone is a potential victim, no one is actually free, thus the human dignity of people is being distorted and abused. Yet there are people who do not care about such rhetoric and liberative possibility. The above narrative is our ongoing text of terror. In what follows I will turn to the proponent of the phrase "text of terror" namely, Phyllis Trible, in order to read a biblical story with her and from her exegetical work in order to further see the reign and evil of patriarchy then and now.

Phyllis Trible On 'Extravagant Violence'

Phyllis Trible as a leading feminist theologian has daringly coined the phrase "Text of Terror" in her seminal work of 1984. This presents her critical approach to biblical hermeneutics from feminist perspective. Her attempt is to provide liberative paradigms within biblical literature that will hopefully unmask the power of patriarchy in order to provide the general readers and especially those from Christian believing communities to find new ways of thinking and

interpreting the Bible with deep interest and respect for human dignity and justice.

Trible titled her chapter three of her book "An Unnamed Woman; the Extravagance of Violence." This focuses on the narrative of the woman from Bethlehem as found in Judges 19 whose sad narrative gave rise to the responses in chapters 20 and 21 of the same book. Trible sees this unnamed concubine as a typology of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, thus she blended the stories of the woman and Jesus Christ with the fact that "Her body was broken and given to many." Even though this analogy does not directly lead to the spiritual aspect of salvation of humanity as Jesus' does, nevertheless, it is a quest for the salvation of that unnamed woman and many other women like her and after her who live in the shadow and tyranny of male power in a given context like present Africa (Nigeria), who need to share in the freedom of life and the decisive retelling that makes the story and sacrifice of Jesus something significant also for them.

The book of Judges has been a significant bridge between the history of the conquest of Israel under Joshua and their settlement in the Promised Land and the kind of life they lived in the Promised Land. Many scholars have given their attention to the various aspects of Judges in order to discern ways of living better in a given context. The theological-ethical potential of Judges to stimulate further thoughts and research within a reconstructed ethos for a new society is quite high and useful. The basic problems that have been seen by scholars of Judges within the life and history of Israel are layers of corruption (which is seen as evil or sin) in the sight of the Lord. The leading ideological pattern of life that has been largely portrayed through Judges is that of retributive justice. But that finds its limitations or inversions in some instances as in the narrative of Judges 19. Her own experience is one of innocent suffering in a context of patriarchal power which pushed her into the margins, and led to her dehumanization and abuse (cf. Sogging 1981; Niditch 1982; Dumbrell 1983).

Among other scholars who have contributed to the interpretation of Judges and the discussion of the story of the unfortunate woman of Judges 19, Phyllis Trible (1984) helps us to closely read the account of the tragic experience of the unnamed concubine with good respect to the need of the time then and now. And to her exposition we shall now turn to once more listen to the story from a feminist critical perspective.

The story of the master and his concubine turned to be "a saga of violence" in an "oriental hospitality" narrative (Trible 1984:71). The basic need of the story from the beginning to the end is the need to recognize the other "as oneself" (cf. Paul Ricouer 1995) but that was generally ignored that is why the woman was abused by her master and that was why the master and all of them faced serious danger and she ended up as the victim of all the circumstances in which hospitality was neglected for the sake of patriarchal power which only dehumanized and destroyed her identity as a human being.

Ironically, the man also met horrible treatment at Gibeah after rejecting Jerusalem as a potentially hostile context (Trible 1984:71). Thus "[t]he tribal town became the alien place" also (Trible 1984: 71). The man who neglected his concubine is hereby also neglected by the people he thought would welcome and protect him. Even though the text did not discuss his disappointment against the people of Gibeah no doubt given his expectation on them he must have been highly disappointed when he was so treated as a foreigner and neglected by many as an outsider.

But the story gained a new move when the old man came by and saw the master and his servants on the street. Attention is still not been given to the presence of the woman even though she has always been with the man as he brought her with him from her father's house. The man was introduced in 19:16 as one who comes from the tribe of Benjamin. Even though he was willing to offer the hospitality that the sojourner desperately needed he only demonstrates its painful

"limitations" (Trible 1984:71). This ironically will turn out not to be a satisfactory hospitality in a general sense but specifically it will only demonstrate the limit or the inversion of actual hospitality by means of patriarchal hospitality.

The story ends with the imperative to the readers and listeners of this story to respond urgently and decisively. The Hebrew commands that Israel should "direct" its "heart to her" (19:30). Not only to give attention to this neglected woman but also to "take counsel and speak" and at the end "to repent" (Trible 1984:80-87). This is the only response that can free this woman from the tyranny of men and at least show that she has some friends if not in life then, now in her death, in distant history who still wish to listen to her story and speak on her behalf so that through such narration such act should not be repeated again.

Outrage of Terror with Connections to Kidnapping Young Girls and Sexual Violence

Douglas Lawrie (2015:37-56) among other scholars (Niditch 2008; Keefe 1993; Bach 1998) describes the narrative of Judges 19 as something "outrageous", that no woman reads this narrative without also experiencing the outrage within it. Even men would have to "shudder" every now and then because of their own humanity and because of the systemic evil that has been portrayed within the story of the Levite (the master) and his concubine.

Lawrie discusses the story in Judges 19 with an interest to challenge the patriarchy embedded in it and also move the argument toward a "restorative reading" of the chapter within and ongoing quest to stress the theological potential of the text towards restoring the dignity of the human person which has seriously been distorted. In his "…dialectic of dignity and shame" Lawrie argues that "…shame (not indignity *per se*) is the *alter ego* of human dignity; it is the shadow cast where the sun of dignity shines" (Lawrie 2015: 48). This shadow in a

sense seeks to blur the reality of human dignity and leads to its actual distortion and abuse.

As could be seen in the story of the unnamed concubine, "shame is not only private" (Lawrie 2015:49) but it can also be made public. The Levite made the shame of the woman public in order to buy his own dignity that he argued has been distorted by the men of Gibeah. The publicization of the story of the woman as seen in the text leading to chapters 20 and 21 did nothing to help in restoring the dignity and identity of the woman that the Levite helped to destroy.

Nevertheless, there is always the possibility within which we can discuss about "Restoring the Human to Dignity" (Lawrie 2015:50). The woman was made to leave her husband's house in the first place most probably because of his injustice to her. And when she returned to her father's house the same Levite followed her there and discussed with her father and her father gave her up again to return with the man back to her former state of subjugation and even abuse. The woman was still alive and present but her dignity, her worthy and honor has been removed from her. Her dignity is the recognition of her otherness as a human person who has the freedom to be and to choose. But her father and her master did not give her this choice. Her freedom has been seized and so her humanity. Freedom here is synonymous to human dignity, they are correlative in the sense that one does not exist without the other.

Lawrie further argues that to "get a restorative reading from Judges 19-21 one has to 'subvert' it, to show its obverse. It does not distort the text, for this is how we read irony. To restore the human being to dignity, one has to restore the 'human' to our conception of dignity, also in the reading of texts" (Lawrie 2015: 52). In the present reading (or interpretation) the new concept of dignity that I wish to stress is human freedom to be and to choose. If this woman would be restored then she must be restored to her human freedom,

this is only when she would be able to reclaim herself, open her mouth with dignity and let her voice heard. But as the story is seen in the biblical text, this woman lived and died in misery, and the force behind her that controls her decisions and action is a male force, which in reality has been one of the dark sides of human life in the present context of Nigeria as an example of larger African context. Many young girls have been kidnapped by the notorious Islamic militia called Boko Haram and later the Fulani herdsmen. I have already mentioned the stories of some of them as samples to illustrate the link in this essay between the kidnap and rape of the concubine in Judges 19 and the present misery of many girls (and even boys) in Nigerian contexts today. As long as the freedom of those young people is seized, their human dignity has also been seized from active appreciation by them or their loved ones.

Furthermore, the act of kidnap and rape that happens then and now further intensified the horror of patriarchal normalcy in most of our African contexts especially where human trafficking or sex trafficking has become a regular practice. Judges 19 has also been received as a text of terror that unmasks the evil of sex trafficking in the world (Pitts 2015: 3-6). Pitts reads his own American contexts with emphasis on sex trafficking closely in connection to Judges 19, his concern remains cogent to my African, Nigerian context in particular. This topic may seem strange to some, as Pitts explains, “Because sex trafficking is a relatively new addition to social justice discussion, no monograph on Judges makes a connection between human trafficking and the events of Judg. 19” (Pitts 2015:4). This highlights both the problem and the urgency for our close contextual interpretation as we read and interpret the biblical text.

Pitts cleverly argues that “Texts of terror tend to be avoided unless the reader can clearly separate the perpetrators of evil in the text from themselves” (Pitts 2015:3). Thus reading the “text of terror” is not pleasure but also the inner test of

oneself. This would lead to very sober moments of reflection and the adjustments of life both privately and publicly. As already pointed out above there is close correlation between freedom and dignity, seeing the story in Judges 19 Pitts points out that "the woman has no autonomy" (Pitts, 2015:3). This lack of human freedom to be and to choose makes her life miserable in the midst of men and that she became nothing to them more than a mere object of their actions.

Pitts follows Jan Fokkelman to argue that Judges 19 should be read with chapters 20 and 21 as well (cf. Pitts 2015:3). And when Pitts made the link to continue the story in the aftermath of Judges 19 he discovered that "In Judg 20, the Levite meets with the representatives of the recipients of the body parts for an explanation" (Pitts, 2015:3). They asked him, "How did this evil happen?" This is both a moral critical question and a critical inquiry about the crime done to the woman. At least at this point we could see that not all men see the same thing from the same perspective. This group of men could see that what was done was an "evil" act that should not have happened.

The Levite related the story of the outrage to the people at Mizpah in 19:24-27 but he neglected to tell the whole story. He included the concubine in this version only to point out that she was killed instead of him by the outrage of the men of the city at Gibeah. He neglected to say that he was almost raped by the men of the city. According to Gale Yee if he had told that part he would have been humiliating himself before them and thus even losing his prestige. Thus he kept many details away and in Yee's words as quoted by Pitts, "He manipulates his relationship with the woman in order to maneuver his male relations to accomplish his personal vendetta against Gibeah" (Pitts 2015:4 cf. Yee 2007:156). Pitts (2015:4) rightly added that, "he neglects to tell his fellow Israelites that he himself had sent the concubine out to the men of Gibeah, choosing to have her humiliated rather than himself." He also added that the men who attacked him were

the Lords or leaders (*Baale*) of Gibeah and this would strategically turn the fury of the Israelites to the leaders of Gibeah to start a serious war. He also said they wanted to kill him instead of telling them that the men of the city wanted having sex with him. He reported that their acts killed his wife has also seen in the LXX version but if we are to follow the Hebrew closely it may be that he was the one who killed the woman eventually and his act led to such devastating realities. "The results of the Levites report were both immediate and severe. The Israelites immediately began plans to punish the men of Gibeah. However, when the tribe of Benjamin refused to surrender the guilty men to the other Israelites, a civil war erupted and virtually all the men of Benjamin were killed in the ensuing battles" (Pitts 2015:4).

Later Israelites tried to repopulate the tribe of Benjamin by attacking Jabesh-Gilead from where they captured four hundred young women as prisoners of war for the men of Benjamin. But then they saw that those girls were not enough for the Benjaminites so they went to Shiloh and kidnapped more girls and gave to "the men of Benjamin"(Pitts 2015:4). Thus, "the punishment of Gibeah for the rape of the Levites concubine was more rape!" (Pitts 2015:4). The story of the abused concubine led to "mass death and more rape" (Keefe 1993:92).

The freedom of the woman and her dignity are highly connected to the point that her "inability to exert any control over her own fate" left her seriously dehumanized (Pitts 2015:4 cf. Ackerman 1998:237). According to Pitts, "Much modern trafficking is predicated on the ability of traffickers to transport victims across borders or even across town, normally in circumstances where the victim's travel rights are limited" (Pitts 2015: 4). The concubine in the story was "anonymous, hidden and silent. She is the only character in the story who never speaks" and it is also pointed out that, "In her silence, the concubine seems to be the only person in the narrative with no identity of her own" (Pitts 2015:4). The so-

called unnamed concubine of Judges 19 became the victim of patriarchalism among many other young girls in the book of Judges and elsewhere. “In the ancient Near East, as in most of the world today, men had authority, power, and often authorization to abuse and even traffic women” (Pitts 2015:4). This has been one of the regular horrors in Nigeria today, as I write this essay I still asked about some young girls yesterday who have been kidnapped and the news is that they are still in the bush with the kidnappers. “Like the concubine’s broken body, the oppressed, wounded, and devastated bodies of victims of sex-trafficking in the twenty-first century cry out” (Pitts 2015: 5). It is time that “we” in Nigeria, Africa and the world, listened to this cry, and be roused by it to act decisively and liberatively. This is the question of responsibility and resistance.

Conclusion: Resisting Violence Against Women in Quest for Freedom and Human Dignity

In conclusion to this essay, we shall briefly respond to the following questions, what should we do in the face of kidnap and sexual violence against women (and men)? What does it mean to resist sexual violence? In response to the first question on “what to do” Trible, Pitts and Claassens help us to know that it is so urgent that we need to learn to “speak up.” We do not need to be silent but to speak for victims and against the perpetrators. Juliana Claassens in her section on “Resisting rape scripts” refers to Cheryl Exum explaining what and how to resist rape culture in the following words; “Resisting involves becoming self-conscious about what we do when we see texts and images in certain ways, recognizing what is at stake personally and culturally, and taking responsibility for our interpretations” (Claassens, 2012a: 17 cf. Exum 1996: 53). What it means to resist here means to learn how best to see and to speak. It means to learn how to understand and interpret human life as a liberative and transformative action. As the need to learn to speak for the

voiceless and to speak out against the ideological evils that we see in our contexts and cultures every now and then.

Sharon Marcus in Claassens also calls for the resistance of rape scripts "that describe female bodies as vulnerable, violable, penetrable, and wounded and metaphors of rape as trespass and invasion" should be resisted (Claassens 2012a:17). This would help to stop male pleasurable entertainment of self by the objectification of the woman other. In the case of Tamar and Ruth they resisted the indignity that was done to them by reclaiming their space in life and society (Claassens 2012b: 659-74). Although Tamar used deception, yet she stressed her need for justice and righteousness among her own people. Ruth did not lie in the dust of apathy or foreignness, but by means of hard work and faith she resisted the evil of otherness that may hinder her progress and then she moved further into the space of her redemption and flourishing.

One of the most pathetic realities of the concubine in Judges 19 is that "She could get to the threshold of safety but never over that threshold" (Pitts 2015:6). Her strength was not enough, her time has gone out and she could not finally liberate herself from the evil of dehumanization even though she wanted to. Similarly, the kidnapped and raped girls (and abused women) in Nigeria, under the yoke of Islamic revolution, or Christian cultural ideologies must be saved through the voices and actions of others. We must learn to resist in solidarity as an act of renewal of interest to life, peace and justice to everyone. Unless everyone is free and given their human dignity, none is free and none has dignity. One is equal to all, and all are one. Thus none should be neglected or sacrificed but that everyone may be redeemed, and that everyone should be free to be human in the world of God.

Pitts agreeably advised that "[w]e must stand up for the victimized…We must recognize the evil as evil… We must speak up for the silenced, for the oppressed, for the victimized.

Our world, like that of the Levite and concubine, is broken and filled with evil. We must speak the truth into this world" (Pitts 2015:5, 6). Following Phyllis Trible, "We must say "Never again" (Pitts 2015:6 cf. Trible 1984:87)

Pitts also quoted the worlds of Jacqueline Lapsley's comments on Judges 19 when she argues that we need to learn to "enter sympathetically into the experience of these characters, to sit and weep and cry out with the Israelites, because they are us" (Pitts 2015:6 cf. Lapsley 2005:66). It is imperative here and now that "[w]e must act! To remain ignorant and living in blissful-and sinful-ignorance cannot suffice any longer. The expectation of the biblical Creator and the Son Jesus are clear: Care for the oppressed and the captive and the helpless. Repent! And repentance must include action" (Pitts 2015:6). This action must be empathetic, decisive, creative, liberative and restorative, for the sake of all the oppressed.

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