

Womanist Wellness Research: A Conceptual Map

Question	How do Black women writers define wellness?
Goal	To define traditions of wellness in Black women's writing; to interpret and apply findings
Purpose	Empowerment: increase control, influence, rights, efficacy (self, community, social, political)
Methods & Frameworks	Case study and content analysis: regeneration & wellness as a human right (Cooper) African American Feminist Consciousness (Guy-Sheftall) Womanism and Womanist Health Empowerment (Walker, Maparyan) Intellectual history and grounded theory (Applied, Standpoint, Critical, Moral, <i>BWIT</i>) Community based-research: collaborative problem solving (Clark & Du Bois, <i>AACE</i>) Health advocacy (Avery, CBWW, BWHI, CDC, NIH) Black historiography: Presence, Oppression, Contribution, Resistance (Franklin) Morbidity: anxiety and stress reduction--personal, interpersonal, social, political (Kabat-Zinn) Longevity: Blue Zones for Black women (Buettner)
Sources & Formats	Africana Memoirs Database http://www.africanamemoirs.net/ Mental Health Research Collaborative/multidisciplinary Africana Foodways Africana Memoirs database & cookbooks Meditation & Yoga Memoirs Africana Memoirs database Digital Humanities Library of Congress Viewshare maps, website creation

Description

Wellness is a central part of mission statements for agencies concerned with Black women's health. For example, Black Women's Health Imperative (BWHI), Center for Black Women's Wellness (CBWW), and Oldways African Health & Heritage program all include the term wellness in their objectives. Thus, defining histories of wellness can guide millions of Africana women struggling to achieve balance in our own lives.

In the *Peace Studies Journal* article "Inner Lions: Healing Traditions in Black Women's Writing," I defined Womanist Peace as Black women's quest for health and freedom. Citing Angela Davis's 1987 Bennett College speech titled, "Sick and Tired of being Sick and Tired: The Politics of Black Women's Health" (which draws on insights from Fanny Lou Hamer), I identified two parts of womanist peace: 1) mental, physical, and spiritual health; and 2) social, economic, and political freedom. Womanist wellness focuses on the personal health of Black women. **I define "womanist wellness" as Black women's empowerment through healthy mind, body, and spirit.**

While the first decade of my research focused on Black women's educational empowerment and predominantly emerged from a Black feminist social and political perspective, the second decade of my research draws from womanist epistemologies, integrating Black feminist consciousness (Beverly Guy-Sheftall) and womanist frameworks (Alice Walker and Layli Maparyan). In the first phase of my academic career, I defined "empowerment education" (largely associated with Paulo Freire), as a Black women's historical educational philosophy. From my dissertation on Fanny Jackson Coppin, Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Septima Clark (2003) to *Black Passports: Travel Memoirs as a Tool for Youth Empowerment* (2014), I advanced this discussion. Now, I turn my attention to inner peace, and examine Anna Julia Cooper's life and writing as an example of sustainable Black women's human rights scholar-activism. The [Purple Sparks: Poetry by Survivors of Sexual Assault](#) youthSpark fundraiser and partnerships with BWHI, CBWW, and Oldways are examples of community-based application of these ideas.

At the 2015 Sisters of the Academy (SOTA) Research Boot Camp, I mapped the first era of my research, categorizing my publications from graduate student to full professor. Below, I sketch a concept map for the next four book-length projects in my post-promotion era which, God willing, I will enjoy creating over the next decade or so. For those who have inquired: yes, I am actually researching and writing four books at once; no, I am not stressed out about it, because they all involve Black women's voices at the center of investigation. This is simply what I like to do (see picture on page 3). As Bob Marley, Stevie Wonder, and Bobby McFerrin all sang, "Don't worry about a thing, 'cause every little thing gonna be alright." Be well. Dr. E

WOMANIST WELLNESS RESEARCH

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Mind: Mental Health

- *Black Women's Mental Health: Balancing Strength and Vulnerability*
- Edited book, under review 2015
- www.bwmentalhealth.net



Body: Africana Foodways

- Women's Narrative Foodways and Culinary Traditions in the African Diaspora
- 2017-18



Spirit: Meditation

- *Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing: Meditation and Mental Health in Black Women's Memoirs*
- Due late 2016
- Book description: www.professorevans.net/books.html



Case Study: Black Women's Human Rights Legacy

- *Anna Julia Cooper: Human Rights Educator*
- Under contract, Rowman & Littlefield, due late 2016
- Book description: www.professorevans.net/books.html

Evans, Stephanie Y. and Myles, Sharnell (Eds.). (2015) [*Purple Sparks: Poetry by Survivors of Sexual Violence*](#). Atlanta: [youthSpark VOICES](#). **This is a FUNDRAISER! Show your support by purchasing a copy!**

Evans, Stephanie Y. (2014) "Inner Lions: Definitions of Peace in Black Women's Memoirs, A Strength-based Model for Mental Health." [Peace Studies Journal](#). vol. 7, no. 2 July, pp. 1-30. [Article PDF](#)

Evans, Stephanie Y. (2014) "Healing Traditions in Black Women's Writing: Resources for Poetry Therapy." [Journal of Poetry Therapy](#). July 2014, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 96-125 ([Curriculum list](#)) [Article PDF](#)

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Letter to Gramms, 1972

I was 3 years old when I wrote my first letter--to my grandmother, Mary Edmonds. When I visited her in 1999 (my first year of graduate school), and told her I was not confident in my writing and didn't think I was smart enough to make it as an academic, she pulled out the letter and handed it to me. "Suggarpuddin' you are a writer. That is who you are. You didn't draw me a picture, you wrote me a letter." This explained a lot.

