



# National Black Sisters' Conference 1968 - 2018

## *Signs of Soul 2018*

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...”  
Luke 4: 16 - 20



## *Where is the Spirit Leading Us?*

- To embrace a vision that can't be deferred
- To speak the truth to the people
- To hope that something will turn out well
- To be “The Beloved Community”
- To preach, sit and listen at the justice table



2003 Conference attendees at the NBSC 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Miami, FL

# *Message from the President*

Summer July 2018

Dear Sisters and Associates,

As our theme for this year's Joint Conference proclaims, "[We've Come a Mighty Long Way](#)". In August 1968 more than 200 black women religious met in Pittsburgh PA and founded the National Black Sisters' Conference with the generous support and hospitality of Bishop John Wright, Mother Thomas Aquinas, RSM and the Pittsburgh Sisters of Mercy.

We are most grateful to Patricia Grey, Ph. D (formerly Sister Martin De Porres Grey, RSM), who had the vision and traveled around the country to invite her fellow black women religious to come together in the spirit of Harambe, and with a collective voice speak to the hopes, dreams and needs of our people.

Our founding members boldly answered the call in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., as black neighborhoods burned in anger and hopelessness, to proclaim a gospel of liberation and hope; and in direct response to the call of Vatican II to work for justice.

These courageous women would address themselves to the urgent need for the church to embrace her children equally; to promoting the educational and leadership formation of black women religious, to the wholistic education of the African American community, and to confronting the sin of racism in our church and society.

It was a bold agenda in 1968 and it is a bold agenda today. We, the members of the National Black Sisters' Conference, stand on their shoulders. We have inherited the mantle to actively work for the liberation of our people and we accept it once again in 2018. We have heard the clarion call to work for justice, to speak out against all the forces of evil that continue to attack the black community and violently take the lives of our young people.

We have inherited a rich legacy and we will continue to give witness to the power of the Gospel to set the captives free.

**Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! We have truly, "Come a Mighty Long Way"!**

Sincerely in Christ,

*Sister Roberta Fulton, SSMN*

# *NBSC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration*



**W**e as Black Women Religious, continue to stand at the forefront in the struggle for justice, giving witness to the saving truth of the gospel and the mission of Christ's Church on earth.

The National Black Sisters' Conference was founded in 1968 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania under the inspiration and direction of then Sister Martin de Porres Grey, RSM (now Patricia Grey, Ph.D.) and with the generous support and hospitality of the Most Reverend John J. Wright, Bishop of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Sisters of Mercy.

Sister Martin de Porres was the only woman religious to attend the first national Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC) held in Detroit in April, 1968. Inspired and encouraged by the vision of African American Catholic Priests, she left the Caucus with a heightened awareness of the pressing demand for black religious to address themselves to the urgent need for the Catholic Church in America to develop greater relevancy for black folk, or to risk losing its credibility as a manifestation of Christian unity.

The Holy Spirit moved Sr. Martin de Porres to call all black religious women to share in a task, which would be done only by Black religious women acting together, fully free, and joyously for the coming of the kingdom.

At that first, now historic, meeting in the summer of 1968 over 150 Black Catholic women religious from 79 different national and international congregations, gathered on the grounds of Carlow College. Sister Martin de Pores was elected to serve as president. A board of directors was elected and plans for legal incorporation of the National Black Sisters' Conference were made.

Today, NBSC is a national organization of more than 150 Black Catholic women religious and associates in the United States striving to promote a positive self-image among ourselves and our people. Together, we form a strong and cohesive voice in support of the dignity and rights of women of color, in creating mentoring and support systems for Black women in religious formation, in educating the African American family, and in confronting the sin of racism, which continues to permeate our society and Church as we work tirelessly for the liberation of African people.

We as black women religious, continue to stand at the forefront in the struggle for justice, giving witness to the saving truth of the gospel and the mission of Christ's Church on earth.

# *20/20 Vision Update*

We are still standing at the forefront to address the issues facing the African American community. The 4<sup>th</sup>. National Gathering for African American Women is scheduled for July 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> in New Orleans.

Looking back over our past Women's Gatherings, we ponder these questions.

## **Were your expectations met?**

- I was inspired by good, rich discussion from Black Women at the Conference
- Better understanding of what my role as a Black Catholic woman and what I can do to make a difference.
- You could feel the Spirit in the room
- I received more than I thought God wanted me to have
- I was awakened to need to be informed within my family

## **What insights and revelations did you experience during these gatherings?**

- We still have work to do
- Wake up, look up and get up.
- Problems are the same all over the country
- As a young adult I realized the active women in the Church are older and after them there are no others.

## **What topics would you like covered in the future?**

- The future of our youth
- How changes from Vatican II affect Black people
- How do we incorporate a young woman's (18-25) place in the Gathering
- Setting a national agenda for Black Catholics
- Mental Health issues affecting Black women

## **Members Ministries**

Education/Evangelization  
Religious Education  
Health Care/Justice and Peace  
Prison Ministry  
Counseling/Music Ministry  
Outreach to the Poor/Mission  
Pastoral Ministry  
Women/Youth  
Finance/Development



Nelson Mandela International Day 2018 marks 100 years since the birth of Nelson Mandela. The Centenary is an occasion to reflect on his life and legacy, and to follow his call to "make of the world a better place." Mandela embodied the highest values of the United Nations. One hundred years after his birth, Mandela's example of courage and compassion continue to inspire the world.



Congress XII was attended by more than 1,500 Black Catholics in Orlando, FL in July 2017. The theme was: **“The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me: Act Justly, Love Goodness and Walk Humbly with your God.”** The keynote speakers were Cardinal Peter Turkson, Author Bryan Stevenson, Dr. Tricia Bent-Goodley, Fr. Donald Sterling, Bishop Joseph Perry, Bishop Edward Braxton. The Pastoral Plan Of Action for NBCC XII can be reviewed on the Congress website: <https://www.nbcccongress.org/pastoral-plans.html>

On the road to Sainthood...

- Julia Greeley
- Henriette Delille
- Mother Mary Lange
- Fr. Augustus Tolton
- Pierre Toussaint





## *Book News....*

**“Subversive Habits:  
The Untold Story of Black Catholic Nuns in the United States.”**

by Shannen Dee Williams

“In my manuscript, I argue that the story of black sisters is the story of the American Catholic experience. “

- Author



Dr. Shannen Dee Williams is a historian of the United States with research specializations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, African-American history, black women’s history, civil rights history, African-American religious history, the black Catholic experience, and feminist and womanist thought. She teaches courses in U.S., African-American, women's, religious, and civil rights history at the University of Tennessee.

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*If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking.*

-Haruki Murakami - Author

# *Stay at Home NBSC Pledge Fundraiser*

All members, associates and friends are encouraged to support  
our stay at home pledge.

Thanks to all who have sent in your pledge.

It's not too late!

Your generous donations will be greatly appreciated.

## ***STAY CONNECTED***

**National Black Sisters' Conference**

[www.nbsc68.com](http://www.nbsc68.com)

**National Black Catholic Congress**

[www.nbccongress.org](http://www.nbccongress.org)

**The National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life**

[www.blackcatholicsforlife.org](http://www.blackcatholicsforlife.org)

**National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus**

[www.nbccc.us](http://www.nbccc.us)

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

[www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

***Save the Date:***

***Joint Conference 2019***

