Ain’t I a Woman? By Sojourner Truth

That man over there say
   a woman needs to be helped into
   carriages
   and lifted over ditches
   and to have the best place
   everywhere.
Nobody ever helped me into carriages
   or over mud puddles
   or gives me a best place. . .
And ain’t I a woman?

Look at me
Look at my arm!
   I have plowed and planted
   and gathered into barns
   and no man could head me. . .
And ain’t I a woman?

I have born 13 children
   and seen most all sold into slavery
   and when I cried out a mother’s grief
   none but Jesus heard me. . .
   and ain’t I a woman?

That little man in black there say
   a woman can’t have as much rights as a man
   cause Christ wasn’t a woman
Where did your Christ come from?
   From God and a woman!
Man had nothing to do with him!
   If the first woman God ever made
   was strong enough to turn the world
   upside down, all alone
together women ought to be able to turn it
   right side up again.

I could work as much
   and eat as much as a man—
   when I could get to it—
   and bear the lash as well
   and ain’t I a woman?
As we explore the message of “MAAFA” or “The Great Suffering” we are also going to consider the unique and powerful ways that God in the midst of suffering (that should have soiled our spirits with doubt, fear, hopelessness and utter despair) not only kept us but fortified our faith, clarified our witness and verified our connection to a divine other-worldly source of strength, power and hope. Furthermore, we will consider how in the midst of such conditions designed to destroy us culturally, historically, psychologically and spiritually God still gave/gives peace, creativity, courage, wisdom and a holy boldness to remain steadfast and unmovable.
THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK
W.E.B. Du Bois
God of Our Weary Years:
Captured but not Conquered
Faith over Fear
Daniel Chps. 1-3.
Learn the literature and language of those who have now captured you—myth’s, stories, The spiritual and cultural ethos of the Empire. That which shapes and reshapes identity and that which impacts social and economic relations or realities.

(V5) Food of the Empire- To influence mood, create commonality, create sense of connection, create conditions within the spirit and body.

(V 6-7) Change of the name as a way to get you to accept a version of yourself that is more death driven or in line with the culture rather than life sustaining.
Daniel means “God is my judge” Changed to Belteshazzar which means “ Bel, protect his life!”

Hananiah means “ The Lord shows grace” changed to Shadrach which means – Under the command of Aku the moon god.

Mishael means “Who is like God” changed to Meshach which means “ who is like Aku”

Azariah means “ The Lord Helps” Abegnedgo, means “servant of Nego/Nebo or Nabu “ the god of learning and writing”

Acculturation - The process of changing so that you become more like people from a different culture, or of making someone change in this way
“I’m not black. I’m OJ”
Known as a great military strategist, the cavalry-trained Queen Amina fought many wars that expanded this southern-most Hausa kingdom. Ruled for 34 years.
After graduating from Virginia State University on a full academic scholarship, West began working as a math teacher for two years in Sussex County before obtaining her master’s degree. She then became the second black woman to join the Dahlgren, Virginia, naval base in 1956, where she was one of only four black employees. During her stint, she collected location data from orbiting machines and input the data into giant supercomputers, while using early computer software to analyze surface elevations. She worked long days and nights recording satellite locations and on complex calculations. Although the work was tedious, West told The AP that she “was ecstatic” about the opportunity “to work with some of the greatest scientists.”
(V8) The spirit of righteous resistance. Daniel is physically in captivity but not spiritually, psychologically or emotionally.

Free to exercise his will to resolve within to keep the empire/the things from the culture he is now a part of out of his temple.

God honored Daniel’s boldness, loyalty and steadfast courage in the face of perceived disadvantage.

Daniel does not give up his agency completely (Hurricane Carter) (V10-21)
Captured but not Conquered
Even through the Fire!
Pt. 2
Daniel chp. 2-3
17 Then Daniel went to his home and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon might not perish. 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

20 Daniel said:

“Blessed be the name of God from age to age,
for wisdom and power are his.

21 He changes times and seasons,
deposes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding.

22 He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and light dwells with him.

23 To you, O God of my ancestors,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and power,
and have now revealed to me what we asked of you,
for you have revealed to us what the king ordered.”
African religion is far more than “a believing way of life’ or ‘an approach to life” directed by a book. It is a “way of life” or life itself, where a distinction or separation is not made between religion and other areas of human existence.” Africans get their spiritual revelation and inspiration from neither a book nor their oral tradition but from their lives.  

Pg. 1 Teresa Reed, The Holy Profane: Religion in Popular Black Music
Daniel’s confidence is based on a verified connection-The answer has already been given or revelation has already been received. Commitment to certain practices that give you power in your position.

Our private work/commitment to a/the process can and does give us public confidence (The gifts of Black Folk)

Confidence that remains clear about the source of the power/insight/ability

“First I want to give honor to/thank God”
(V46) Because of the certified witness (it is official not just when faced with small things but large things as well) God can cause captors/rulers/demagogues etc.. to confess

(V48) Daniel recognizes that it is bigger than the singular promotion thus he does not leave behind those who stood with him or those from the home team. (Ujima) = Collective work and responsibility.
President Abraham Lincoln established the Freedman’s Bank on March 3, 1865 as part of the Freedman’s Bureau. As the Civil War drew to a close, the United States Congress and President Lincoln recognized the need to aid newly freed black men and women in their transition to freedom. To support the land grants and other elements of the Freedman’s Bureau Act, a Freedman’s Bank was established to help newly freed Americans navigate their financial lives. Call it the financial literacy program of its day.

During its existence, The Freedman’s Bank maintained some 37 offices in 17 states, including the District of Columbia. At its height, the Bank had over $57 million in deposits (adjusted for inflation) and 70,000 depositors.

Five weeks after the creation of the Freedman’s Bank, President Lincoln was assassinated. Seven years later, in June of 1872, the U.S. Congress voted to permanently close the Freedman’s Bureau. The Bank however remained operational and in 1874 Frederick Douglass was asked to run the Freedman’s Bank as its D.C. branch relocated to a new home across from the U.S. Department of Treasury, in a grand building which cost $260,000 to construct. http://freedmansbank.org/
1866- Congress passes first Civil Rights Act declaring freed blacks U.S. Citizens

1868- Congresses passes 14th Amendment, granting AA equal citizenship and civil rights.

1870- Congresses passes enforcement acts to control the KKK and federal guarantee civil and political rights.

1870- Rev Hiram R. Revels becomes the first African-American Senator, Joseph Rainy is seated as first Black house Rep, 5 other black men elected to U.S. House of Rep

1875- Congress passes Civil Rights Act of 1875 giving equal treatment in public places and access to jury duty.

1883- Supreme Court overturns Civil Rights Act of 1875

1896- Supreme Court approves segregation with “separate but equal” ruling in Plessy vs Ferguson.
(V12)- Suggests that they were in a particular culture but the culture was not in them. Not functioning to the degree that they would shift their public loyalty and allegiance. Jesus in Matthew having a conversation with Satan.
16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. 17 If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

Righteous Resistance, Willful Defiance, Moral Dissent

(FF) There is a collective resistance/disposition of belief in God’s power. Easier to maintain the disposition when it is a collective effort. We have come this far by faith. We have come treading the path through the blood of the slaughtered: (FUBU)
The promotion and position did not cause them to forsake the God who put them in position.

What they watched and heard Daniel do serves as an example and witness for them in this moment. (What examples of resistance, protest, courage, resiliency, fight back, give back have you been around?) The power of Sankofa-

Our survival as a people is a direct result of our holding to God’s unchanging hand.
They were dually covered (physically and spiritually) when they were thrown in the furnace. They secured rescue through their righteous representation in the midst of Empire.

Hebrews 11:1
You never know how your witness today might create a spiritual revolution tomorrow. Nebuchadnezzar's response and decree following them surviving the fire. Through the fire, through the limits to the wall and just a chance to be with you I gladly risk it all.