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ABSTRACT

This article firstly identifies an early pattern of Black Baptist women predominantly choosing to undertake formation for ministry at one of the Baptist Union of Great Britain's (Baptist Union's) colleges, namely, Spurgeon's, over and above Bristol, Northern, and Regent's Park. Secondly, it highlights the contextual particularities of each of these four Baptist colleges – from the 1980s onwards – with reference to women's and Black people's engagement, and the potential for all of the colleges to better document and share their history with reference to women and Black people's engagement in order to cultivate a sense of welcome and belonging for all.

KEYWORDS

Black Baptists; black history; English Baptist colleges; Kate Coleman; Violet Hedger

Introduction

Kate Coleman and Violet Hedger appear to share at least two things in common. This includes the title of 'first' in relation to undertaking formation at a Baptist Union college for ordained Baptist ministry. In the case of Hedger, a white English woman, she is the first woman of any ethnic background to undertake such formation at a Baptist Union college¹ – Regent's Park, 1919–1923.² Coleman on the other hand is the first Black³ woman known to have undertaken such formation – at Spurgeon's, 1993–1996.⁴ Secondly, at different points of their

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¹The focus of this article is on these four Baptist Union's Baptist colleges – Spurgeon's, Bristol, Northern, and Regent's Park. However, it is acknowledged that there are two other Baptist Union colleges – Cardiff Baptist College (formerly known as South Wales Baptist College), and the St Hild Centre for Baptist Ministry. These two colleges are not part of the focus of this article because the latter was only launched in March 2024 (see: "Launch of St Hild Centre for Baptist Ministry," Baptist Times article, https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/674147/Baptist_Union_Council.aspx – accessed July 22, 2024), and whilst Cardiff Baptist College has existed in some shape or form from the nineteenth century, there is no known record of a Black woman to date having completed accredited formation for ordained Baptist ministry there.

²See: 'Rev Violet Hedger' story from The Angus Library and Archive <https://theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk/baptist-women-2/rev-violet-hedger/> (accessed July 22, 2024).

³The term Black is used to describe individuals who identify as ethnically from African or African diaspora backgrounds such as African-Caribbean.

⁴Baptist colleges' student records historically did not include the ethnicity of students, so such detail has to be established either through the existence of photos and available oral or written accounts referring to a student's

lives both Hedger and Coleman served as the minister of Chalk Farm Baptist Church, London. Hedger from 1952–1956 and Coleman from circa 1988–1999. Both Hedger and Coleman also undertook their formation at Baptist colleges that were located in London, at least at the time of their studies – Regent’s Park relocated from London to Oxford after acquiring its Oxford site in 1927.⁵

However, whilst numerous white British Baptist women have subsequently chosen to undertake formation at all four English Baptist colleges – Bristol, Northern, Regent’s Park, and Spurgeon’s – the vast majority of Black British Baptist women have chosen to undertake formation at Spurgeon’s regardless of the geographical proximity or not of Spurgeon’s to where they resided in England.

Spurgeon’s Over Bristol, Northern, and Regent’s Park for Black Women

Spurgeon’s student records show a number of Black women following Coleman in undertaking formation for ordained Baptist ministry at Spurgeon’s from the late 1990s onwards.⁶ Some, like Joanne Gillings and Anna Ratcliff did so whilst based in the Midlands and thus potentially geographically nearer to the Baptist colleges located in Bristol (Bristol Baptist College), Oxford (Regent’s Park), and Manchester (Northern). It took until 2005 for Black women to begin to undertake formation for ordained Baptist ministry at the other three English Baptist colleges – Charmaine Howard, at Regent’s Park, 2005–2008, Beatrice Anayo, at Bristol, 2013–2016, and Dorothy Rose, at Northern, during the 2010s.

Howard, Anayo, and Rose all chose to study at Baptist colleges that were near to where they were based – Howard was based at Tove Valley Baptist Fellowship in Northamptonshire whilst training at Regent’s Park; Anayo was based at Stapleton Baptist Church, Bristol when she trained at Bristol; and Rose was based in Birmingham at Hamstead Road Baptist Church (now known as Gateway to Hope Baptist Church) as she undertook formation at Northern.⁷ However, the singular cases of Howard, Anayo, and Rose do not detract from

ethnicity, or country of origin. In this regard, there is a record of a Black woman, Grace Nthambi Kisila studying at Bristol Baptist College prior to Coleman beginning her period of formation at Spurgeon’s. However, Kisila was not undertaking a programme of formation with a view to be ordained to serve in a Baptist Union church. The college student records show Kisila as coming over from Kenya to study there from 1984 to 1987. Thereafter there is no known record of her remaining in Britain to be ordained for Baptist ministry. Consequently, Coleman remains the first known Black woman to undertake formation at a Baptist Union college for ordained Baptist ministry to serve in a Baptist Union church.

⁵See: Anthony J. Clarke and Paul S. Fiddes, *Dissenting Spirit – A History of Regent’s Park College 1752–2017* (Oxford: Centre for Baptist Studies, Regent’s Park College, 2017), 104.

⁶Examples include Joanne Gillings (1998–2003), Joyce Grant (1999–2005), Anna Ratcliff (2000–2002), and Meldine Chambers (2000–2007). Ratcliff (based in Nottinghamshire) and Gillings (based in the West Midlands) are early examples of Black women based in the Midlands but choosing to study at Spurgeon’s as opposed to one of the other colleges that were seemingly geographically closer to them.

⁷Charmaine Howard supplied these ministry details about herself via an email dated 20 March 2024. Beatrice Anayo told her story in Baptist Together Spring 2019 magazine “Celebrating, Surviving, Thriving – A Focus on Women in Baptist ministry,” 31–2. Dorothy Rose’s time at Northern as a student whilst based at Hamstead Road Baptist Church was recalled by the co-principals of Northern, Clara Rushbrook, and Glen Marshall in an email dated 21 October 2022.

what to date is a very Spurgeon's-centred story of Black women undertaking formation for ordained ministry at Baptist Union colleges. This pattern contrasts with the story of Black men undertaking formation for ordained ministry to serve in Baptist Union churches whose story begins not at Spurgeon's but at Regent's Park, and Bristol.⁸

Regent's Park, Bristol, Spurgeon's or Northern for Black Men

In the case of Regent's Park, it was Sam Reid who came from Jamaica to study at the college with a view to immediately returning to Jamaica, but he was persuaded to remain in England to serve as the minister of Moss Side Baptist Church, Manchester, from 1962–1965.⁹ Later, John Bernard from Nottingham undertook formation for ordained Baptist at Regent's Park from 1999–2001 whilst he served on placement at Peartree Road Baptist Church, Derby, and then served as minister of a local ecumenical partnership church – Christ Church – in Milton Keynes.¹⁰

The story of Black men undertaking formation for ordained ministry at Bristol in order to serve in Baptist Union churches begins with Desmond Gordon who came from the Caribbean, then studied at Bristol from 1969–1974. He then initially served in Trinidad, before returning to Britain in 1979, to serve as a minister of a Baptist church in Finchley, London.¹¹ Following on from that Jamaican-born Glenford Gordon who had resided in Birmingham from the age of seventeen went on to undertake formation for ordained ministry at Bristol 1985–1988 before going on to serve as a minister of Acocks Green Baptist Church, Birmingham, and later City Road Baptist Church, Birmingham.¹² Birmingham-based Bryan Scott, and Mark Green also undertook formation for ordained ministry at Bristol in the later 2000s and early 2010s respectively, and went on to serve at Baptist churches in Birmingham.¹³

⁸There are a number of examples of Black men coming from overseas specifically to undertake formation for ministry, but not with a view to being ordained (some were already ordained in their home countries) and serving in England, but to immediately return to or travel to Africa, North America, or the Caribbean. Some early examples of that in English Baptist colleges are found at Spurgeon's whose records confirm Black students such as J. McGee in 1867, Calvin H Richardson in 1870, Thomas L Johnson in 1876, and Simeon Gordon in the 1880s. See also David Killingray, "Black Baptist in Britain 1640–1950," *Baptist Quarterly* 40 (April 2003): 69–89. The formation these individuals would have received in English Baptist colleges would also have taken place before the concept of accredited ministry emerged in the Baptist Union in 1896, which was when the Ministerial Recognition Committee was introduced (see: Ian M. Randall, *The English Baptists of the 20th Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2005), 64).

⁹See: Roger Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage* (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), 231; and *Baptist Life* magazine article in July–September 2012 edition reproduced in Baptist Times: https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/370744/From_Moss_Side.aspx (accessed July 22, 2024).

¹⁰John Bernard supplied this information on his ministry to me via an online message on 27 March 2024.

¹¹This is recorded in Bristol Baptist College student records. Also, see: Roger Hayden *English Baptist History*, 234.

¹²This is recorded in Bristol Baptist College student records. Also, see: Roger Hayden *English Baptist History*, 234; and Heart of England Baptist Association's tribute to Glenford Gordon following the announcement of his death on 13 January 2024.

¹³See: Baptist Times article 22 May 2016 'Ordination service for Mark'. https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/468680/Ordination_service_for.aspx (accessed July 22, 2024); and Baptist Together 'Candidate Information' for Bryan Scott's President 2024–2025 nomination, January 2023, 6.

In the case of Spurgeon's, the beginning of the story centres around the 1980s with David Ellis and Kingsley Appiagyei.¹⁴ Ellis was born in Wolverhampton to Jamaican parents. He already had a connection to London before he enrolled at Spurgeon's due to his prior studies at London Bible College. He undertook formation for ordained ministry at Spurgeon's, 1987–1990 and on completion of his training served as minister of Totterdown Baptist Church, Bristol. He later returned to the West Midlands to be the minister of Small Heath Baptist Church, Birmingham before going on to be a regional minister for the Heart of England Baptist Association.¹⁵ At the same time David Ellis was undertaking formation at Spurgeon's, Ghanaian-born Kingsley Appiagyei who was already living in London had initially begun some independent study at Spurgeon's in 1985, before going on to also undertake formation there for ordained Baptist ministry. He left Spurgeon's in 1991 and has served as the minister of Trinity Baptist Church in London since then, which is one of the largest churches within the Baptist Union.¹⁶ Throughout the 1990s and onwards a number of other London-based Black men undertook formation for ordained ministry at Spurgeon's, to name a few of those earlier and influential figures, Rupert Lazar, Chris Andre-Watson, and Wale Hudson-Roberts¹⁷ who have all gone on to serve in Baptist Union churches in London, and in time in wider Baptist Union life. Notably, Lazar serving as Baptist Union President 2016–2017, and Hudson-Roberts as the Baptist Union's national coordinator, adviser, and enabler for racial justice work since 2002.

The story of Black men undertaking formation at Northern unsurprisingly begins more recently given the college opened in 1964.¹⁸ The first known Black man to undertake formation for ordained ministry there with a view to serving in Baptist Union churches was African-born Mark Banda, who made his home in Britain in the early 1990s and studied at Northern in the late 1990s. He was followed by Walsall-based Kevin Smith studying at Northern in the early 2000s, African-born Samson Ake in the late 2000s who has gone on to

¹⁴David Ellis recalled in a meeting with me on 22 May 2024 that in addition to Kingsley Appiagyei being at Spurgeon's when he arrived in 1987, there were two other Black men already studying there. Clifford Taylor (from the Caribbean) and Noah Pashapa (from Zimbabwe). Ellis is uncertain that Pashapa served in a Baptist Union church after training but he does believe Clifford Taylor served at least for a brief time in a Baptist Union church in London after his time at Spurgeon's.

¹⁵Heart of England Baptist Association, biography of David Ellis (see: <https://www.baptist-heartofengland.org/about/staff/>) (accessed July 22, 2024).

¹⁶Kingsley Appiagyei has led Trinity Baptist Church to the point of being one of the largest Baptist churches in the Baptist Union and has planted many more churches and played a part in numerous others becoming accredited Baptist Union ministers. See: Sivakumar Rajagopalan, 'Migration Matters,' in *Encountering London*, ed. Faith Bowers, Joe Kapolyo, and Israel Olofinjana (London: London Baptist Association, 2015), 47–8.

¹⁷This information comes from the recollections of Spurgeon's tutor Chris Voke shared with me by email in October 2022.

¹⁸Northern Baptist College was formed through the merger of Rawdon College in Yorkshire and the Manchester College. See: Peter Shepherd. *The Making of Northern Baptist College* (Lowestoft: Tyndale Press, 2004). It also seems that there were occasional and possibly short-stay overseas Black students at a Baptist college in Yorkshire region in the 1850s, perhaps Rawdon's predecessor – Horton Academy. See: David Killingray, "Black Baptist in Britain 1640–1950," *Baptist Quarterly* 40 (April 2003): 76.

serve in several Baptist Union churches, and Olanrewaju Banwo in the 2010s who has served as minister of Christ Way Baptist Church, Salford.¹⁹

This brief summary I have offered of the twentieth-century picture of Black Baptists undertaking formation for ministry points to an early pattern amongst Black women but not Black men training at Spurgeon's, regardless of the geographical proximity of the college to where they resided. On reading Coleman and Hedger's personal reflections on undertaking formation for ordained ministry, it is not difficult to imagine Black women factoring into their choice of college which of them might provide the best support for navigating any combined marginalisation they might encounter on account of their gender and racialised identities.

Coleman and Hedger's Reflections on Being the 'First'

Hedger, in 1941, looking back over the years fondly referred to the principal of Regent's Park who admitted her for formation:

I hear still Dr. G. Pearce Gould, with the dignity of his years, breaking the conservatism of centuries, speak in public, and with enthusiasm, of the new era, which he himself was helping to usher in.²⁰

Hedger also spoke of being received by men undertaking formation for ministry at Regent's Park as 'one of themselves'.²¹ She subsequently contrasted this with her experiences after Gould retired as principal and was replaced by Wheeler Robinson who it seems sufficiently resented her presence as a woman undertaking formation for ministry, to request she pay her own entrance and examination fees, whilst the college paid such fees for all the men. It was years later in 1990 that a subsequent principal, Paul Fiddes, formally rectified this on behalf of the college by presenting her with a cheque to refund the sum she had paid.²²

As has been noted earlier in this article both Hedger and Coleman at different points in their lives served as ministers of Chalk Farm Baptist Church, London. Hedger was the minister there 1952–1956.²³ It might therefore appear somewhat surprising then that Coleman in the 1980s whilst a member of the same church that thirty years earlier had called Hedger to be their minister, reflects on the congregation's stance (and indeed her own stance) of not initially being convinced theologically that Kate – as a woman – should be a minister.²⁴

¹⁹This information is sourced from a combination of Northern student records and the recollections by email in October 2022 of now co-principals – Glen Marshall who has been a tutor at Northern since 2004, becoming a co-principal in 2013, and Clara Rushbrook who was a student at Northern in the late 1990s, becoming co-principal in 2013.

²⁰Violet Hedger, "Some Experiences of a Woman Minister," *Baptist Quarterly* 10.5 (January 1941): 243.

²¹Violet Hedger, "Some Experiences," 243.

²²Clarke and Fiddes, *Dissenting Spirit*, 92.

²³See: 'Rev Violet Hedger' story from The Angus Library and Archive <https://theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk/baptist-women-2/rev-violet-hedger/> (accessed July 22, 2024).

²⁴See: Kate Coleman, "Black Theology and Black Liberation: A Womanist Perspective," in *Black Theology in Britain – A Reader*, ed. M. N. Jagessar and A. G. Reddie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 111.

Once Coleman and her congregation were convinced that she should undertake formation for ordained ministry, her reflections on her experiences of that formation do not appear to be as positive as that of Hedger's (prior to the arrival of Wheeler Robinson at least). Reflecting on her experiences in 1998, Coleman described her time at theological college as like experiencing 'a crisis of invisibility.' This was due to the theology presented to her feeling 'patriarchal and invariably Euro-American.' The 'very male and ... remarkably white' presentation of the figures in the Bible and the lack of reference to 'African or Caribbean theologians' and the absence of 'the theological voices of significant Black British men and women' all contributing to this. Consequently, she described being a Black woman in that environment as 'reflecting the antithesis to what dominant culture and dominant theology sees as normative'.²⁵

It is clear from Coleman's reflections that unlike Hedger she did not only have to deal with the impact of gender-related marginalisation but the intersection of that with her experiences of being Black in Britain. Coleman's reflections on having to navigate such a challenging environment at Spurgeon's leads to the question of – why have the vast majority of Black women continued to choose Spurgeon's to undertake formation for ordained Baptist ministry? Particularly, as in some cases one or more of the other Baptist Union colleges have been geographically closer to them, and their counterpart Black men seem to have opted for choosing Baptist colleges closest to where they are residing.

It is conceivable that there are perceived particularities of the geographical and cultural contexts of each of the four Baptist colleges seen to pose specific opportunities and challenges to Black women ministerial students. I am also conscious that I offer this insight as a Black Baptist woman minister who has historically either studied at, held an advisory role or teaching role at each of the four Baptist Union colleges. Furthermore, on my journey to becoming a Baptist minister, whilst living in Birmingham my home-city, in 2014, I turned down an offer of a place to undertake formation for ordained ministry at Bristol. I instead chose to attend the Residential Selection Conference (RSC) non-collegiate accredited route to ordained Baptist ministry in 2016. In doing so and unknown to me at the time I became only the second Black woman to take that route.²⁶

My decision to take the RSC route was not based on any lack of confidence in Bristol or any of the other Baptist Union colleges. Rather, I felt I already had sufficient ministry experience and theological qualifications. This confidence in the colleges stemmed from me being a part-time tutor at Northern 2010–

²⁵Kate Coleman, "Black Theology and Black Liberation," 112–13.

²⁶The RSC route is available to those who already have a university diploma or degree in theology from a non-Baptist college and adequate prior ministry experience. In cross-referencing the names on RSC records held by Baptist Union's Ministries Team with the known Black women ministers Michele Mahon is believed to be the first Black woman to take the Residential Selection Conference route in 2009, in order to become a youth specialist minister. Further, that I was the first Black woman to take the route to become a general local church minister, in 2016.

2016 working with ministerial and non-ministerial students, which had provided me with opportunities to get to know the tutors, students, and the campuses of all four colleges. It is from these personal experiences that I am aware of significant contextual differences between the four Baptist Union colleges. Furthermore, I am conscious that these differences potentially pose different opportunities and challenges to Black women ministerial students, whom to varying degrees may or may not have been aware of them or wished to embrace them.

Contextual Differences Between the Four Baptist colleges from the 1980s Onwards

As has been set out earlier in this article, it was from the 1980s that Black Baptists began to consistently attend Baptist colleges to undertake formation for ordained ministry in order to serve in Baptist Union churches. The 1980s also happen to be the period these colleges began to move towards ‘practice-based’ patterns of formation which is also described as ‘congregation-based’ or ‘church-based’ formation.²⁷ This involves students going into the college a number of days a week, as opposed to the former model of being a residential student at the college for a minimum of three years. This more flexible mode of formation seems to have paved the way for a more diverse ministerial student body to emerge, in terms of more women students and more students of Black and other UK minority ethnic backgrounds. For example, Spurgeon’s transformation during this period was described as:

From being a community of men, the College developed into a training ground for men and women, three-quarters of whom were married and over half of whom had families. The average age of the students rose from twenty-two to thirty-five.²⁸

Under this now dominant ‘church-based’ model of formation, students operate either as sole pastor of a congregation or alongside a more experienced lead minister of a congregation.²⁹

Spurgeon’s

Spurgeon’s for some time has had a reputation for being the Baptist Union college that attracts the majority of all Baptist ministerial students.³⁰ Its location in London, the largest city in England means it also has the largest proportion of

²⁷See: Anthony Clarke, *Forming Ministers or Training Leaders?* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2021), 61

²⁸Mike Nicholls, *Lights to the World – A History of Spurgeon’s College 1856–1992* (Harpenden: Nuprint, 1994), 180–1.

²⁹Anthony Clarke, *Forming Ministers*, 61

³⁰As far back as 1908 the historian W. T. Whitley noted that 555 ministers had been formed at the Pastors’ College (Spurgeon’s) compared to 144 at Regent’s, 128 at Bristol, and whilst Northern did not exist yet the colleges that would later merge and become Northern – Rawdon had formed 124 and Manchester 78 (quoted in Ian M. Randall, *The English Baptists of the 20th Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2005), 68–69).

Black people in Britain, and correspondingly the largest proportion of Black people found in the Baptist churches that send people to undertake formation at English Baptist colleges for ordained ministry.³¹ In simplistic terms this means that there has consistently been more Black Baptist women in the vicinity of where Spurgeon's college is located and therefore it has always been potentially the most conveniently geographically situated English Baptist college for a significant number of Black women in Baptist churches to attend. Furthermore, Spurgeon's has attracted a lot of independent Black and UK minority ethnic students, particularly from Pentecostal churches undertaking formation for ordained ministry in their own church traditions whom Baptist ministerial students share classes with.³²

Thus, in attending Spurgeon's Black women have statistically always been more likely to be amongst Black women both within the college context and within the wider community context of London than the other Baptist Union colleges. This in turns means they have been more likely to have opportunities to encounter and share with one another insights they may be aware of as to women's and Black people's contributions to culture and theology, to help foster a sense of belonging.

Spurgeon's also appointed its first woman tutor – a white British woman Deborah Reid – in 1987,³³ and over subsequent years a number of other women tutors have been appointed, so since then it has been a place where Black women could encounter a woman as a tutor onsite. They would also from the early 2000s have had the opportunity to encounter a Black man as a tutor – Calvin Samuels – who was a New Testament tutor there from 2003 – 2010,³⁴ and from the 2010s a Black woman as tutor – Dotha Blackwood – who was appointed as a chaplain and tutor in practical theology in 2011.³⁵

Regent's Park

Regent's Park accepted its first students in Oxford in 1928 and formally closed down new applications to its London base in 1936.³⁶ Its ongoing Oxford location since then means that it could typically be expected to draw its students from the surrounding counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Dorset,

³¹From the late 1940s, there were significant levels of migration of Black people from the Caribbean and then from Africa to Britain. As of 2003 it was estimated that more than 50% of Baptist churches in the London region of the BU had a majority of people within them from UK Black and minority ethnic groups. See: Sivakumar Rajagopalan, "Migration Matters," in *Encountering London— London Baptists in the 21st Century*, ed. Faith Bowers, Joe Kapolyo, and Israel Olofinjana (London: Tyndale Press, 2015), 46.

³²There are currently thought to be more than half the ministerial students at Spurgeon's coming from such Pentecostal backgrounds. See: Anthony Clarke, *Forming Ministers*, 65.

³³See: Nicholls, *Lights to the World*, 191, and Deborah Reid's Spurgeon's staff biography: <https://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/debra-reid> (accessed July 22, 2024).

³⁴He is Methodist by church tradition. See: The Baptist Times article 11 October 2016 'Former Spurgeon's lecturer new LST Principal'.

³⁵See Dotha Blackwood's Spurgeon's staff biography: <https://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/dotha-blackwood> (accessed July 22, 2024).

³⁶Clarke and Fiddes, *Dissenting Spirit*, 110–11.

Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes. These are not areas that have such a large concentration of Black people as to be found in London, both in terms of within the wider community and the Baptist churches that potentially send people to Regent's to undertake formation for ordained ministry.

Regent's Park has also been a private hall of the University of Oxford since 1957.³⁷ This means that the college has to meet the needs of ministerial and non-ministerial students whilst living up to the academic expectations of being associated with the prestigious University of Oxford. Regent's Park is also not known to have had many Black British ministerial students from the 1980s onwards – apart from Nottingham and Derby-based John Bernard 1999–2002, and Milton-Keynes-based Charmaine Howard 2005–2008. Neither has it been perceived by some as having a reputation for having many non-ministerial Black students, which was highlighted in a University of Oxford Freshers' guide to 'Being black at Oxford'.³⁸ More generally, there have been calls for the university to reckon with its colonial heritage as part of its responsibility towards ensuring the wellbeing of Black students.³⁹

Whilst Black women attending Regent's Park might statistically be less likely to be amongst Black women than if they attended Spurgeon's in London, that does not mean there have not been other opportunities for them to encounter insights about women's and Black people's contributions to culture and theology, to help foster a sense of belonging. Black women attending the college could have encountered the story already mentioned in this article of Paul Fiddes as principal showing the college's willingness to address women's experiences of being marginalised, as he presented Hedger with an apology and a refund of her £5 fee, in light of the way she was mistreated by a former principal. Similarly, since 2011 through Regent's Park's commitment to what has become known as the Sam Sharpe Project,⁴⁰ they could have encountered the story of the enslaved Black Baptist deacon, Sam Sharpe, whose faith-inspired strategic resistance played a key role in the abolition of slavery in British territories such as Jamaica.

³⁷Clarke and Fiddes, *Dissenting Spirit*, 116.

³⁸Deborah Ogunnoiki offers advice on how to navigate Oxford University as a Black student in the Cherwell Freshers' guide 5 October 2022. In this guide she refers to her perception of Regent's Park: 'Typically, smaller colleges like Regent's Park and Teddy Hall aren't likely to have black students due to their already small student population. However, some big colleges ... also fall short on their number of black undergraduates' (see: <https://cherwell.org/2022/10/05/being-black-at-oxford/>, accessed July 22, 2024). Although, it has to be noted that there have been a number of Black non-ministerial students at Regent's, most notably Oluwafemi Nylander who graduated from the college in 2016, and he has fed into bringing challenge to the university to reckon with its colonial heritage including a 'Rhodes must fall' campaign (see the following footnote).

³⁹In 2014, Oxford University's Students' Union launched a high-profile campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality – CRAE 100 Voices – campaign that sought to address things like 'Oxford's visible colonialist history'. See: <https://oxfordandcolonialism.web.ox.ac.uk/crae> (accessed July 22, 2024).

⁴⁰Clarke and Fiddes, *Dissenting Spirit*, 237.

They would also have had the opportunity to encounter a number of women tutors, such as Jane Shaw teaching church history 1993-2001, Eleanor Kreider teaching liturgy 1995-2000, Pamela Sue Anderson a renowned tutor in feminist philosophy of religion 2001-2017,⁴¹ as well as more recent women tutors such as Myra Blyth 2004–2020 who served as chaplain and tutorial fellow in theology,⁴² and subsequently Beth Allison-Glenny who now holds that role. From January 2020 they would also have had the opportunity to encounter a Black man as a tutor – leading Black theologian Anthony Reddie – who is Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture.⁴³

Bristol

Bristol Baptist College has the distinction of being located in a city that has a small but long-established Black presence which has been the site of some of England's most high-profile and significant anti-Black racism resistance movements. This dates back to events such as members of the 'Windrush Generation' – the term used to describe the Black Caribbean people who arrived in Britain from 1948 onwards – who led the Bristol bus boycott of 1963 as part of the wider civil rights struggle in Britain. The efforts of the Bristol bus boycott are widely regarded as leading to the passing of the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, which outlawed racial discrimination in public places.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Bristol has continued to play a leading role in racial justice movements, as evidenced by the Black Lives Matter march in Bristol of 2020 that featured the removal of the statue of the controversial transatlantic slave trader Edward Colston. That march has served as a catalyst for national debate and action around reparations in relation to British colonial and transatlantic slavery legacies.⁴⁵

Consequently, Black women attending Bristol Baptist College could have the opportunity to do so in the midst of Bristol city's rich and longstanding Black civil rights activist story. They would also be following in the footsteps of Black ministerial students, including Desmond Gordon 1969-1974, Glenford Gordon 1985-1988, and others who have followed them in the twenty-first century, such as Bryan Scott, Mark Green, and then the first Black woman Beatrice Anayo 2013-2016.

⁴¹Clarke and Fiddes, *Dissenting Spirit*, 268.

⁴²See article Baptist Times article 15 July 2020 'Book Honour for Myra Blyth' – https://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/583456/Book_honour_for.aspx (accessed July 22, 2024).

⁴³His appointment was announced by Regent's Park on 6 September 2019. See: <https://www.rpc.ox.ac.uk/anthony-reddie-ocr/> (accessed July 22, 2024).

⁴⁴It was led by Owen Henry, Roy Hackett, Audley Evans, and Prince Brown who later got assistance from Paul Stephenson. See: <https://collections.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/bristols-black-history/bristol-bus-boycott/> (accessed July 22, 2024).

⁴⁵Marvin Rees as the Mayor of Bristol set up the 'We are Bristol History Commission' in the aftermath of the march to begin conversations in relation to dealing with colonial and transatlantic slave trade legacies (see: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-and-mayor/policies-plans-and-strategies/we-are-bristol-history-commission/> accessed July 22, 2024), and other local councils and institutions up and down Britain have developed similar initiatives.

They would also have had the opportunity to encounter a woman as a tutor from 1990, Hazel Sherman 1990-1993, and then Ruth Gouldbourne in 1995,⁴⁶ who have been followed by other woman tutors such as Sian-Murray Williams a tutor in Worship studies and ministerial formation, 2006-2016.⁴⁷ They would also have had the opportunity to encounter Helen Paynter as tutor in Biblical studies since 2020, and as Director of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence (CSBV) which was launched in 2018 at the college. CSBV amongst other things addresses how the Bible has been inappropriately used to justify violence against women.⁴⁸

Furthermore, between 2014 and 2015 prospective Black women students could have encountered a Black tutor – Anthony Reddie, who taught there before he moved to Regent’s Park in 2020.⁴⁹

Northern

Manchester which is home to Northern Baptist college – the newest of the Baptist colleges in that it was established in 1964 through the merger of the Manchester Baptist college, and the Rawdon Baptist college (in Yorkshire) – like Bristol has a comparatively smaller Black population to that of London. However, unlike Bristol is not also well known for its anti-Black racism activism. Northern also does not have a history of receiving many Black ministerial students apart from Mark Banda in the 1990s, Kevin Smith in the early 2000s, Samson Ake in the late 2000s, Olanrewaju Banwo, and Dorothy Rose in the 2010s. Although, Northern for a number of decades has operated with ecumenical partners including out of shared buildings, which are today known as the Luther King Centre (LKC). Collectively these ecumenical partners have engaged a number of Black and other UK minority ethnic students in formation for ordained and non-ordained ministry from a range of Church traditions, and Northern’s ministerial students will have had the opportunity to share some of their classes with them.

There would also be other opportunities for Black Baptist women ministerial students to encounter insights about women’s and Black people’s contributions to culture and theology, to help foster their sense of belonging. For example, through the site of the college buildings being named after the well-known Black Baptist minister Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr., the leading civil rights activist in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, through the pioneering story of Sam Reid that has already been noted in this article. Reid came over from Jamaica and after training at Regent’s Park served as the minister of Moss

⁴⁶See: BUGB, *A Short History of Baptist Women in Ministry* (Didcot: BUGB, 2019).

⁴⁷Bristol Baptist College newsletter, Issue 34, Summer 2023, p. 18.

⁴⁸See Bristol Baptist College staff profile for Helen Paynter: <https://www.bristol-baptist.ac.uk/team/revd-dr-helen-paynter/> (accessed July 22, 2024).

⁴⁹See: Baptist Times article 10 April 2014 ‘Anthony Reddie for Bristol Baptist College’ https://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/399310/Anthony_Reddie_for.aspx (accessed July 22, 2024).

Side Baptist Church, Manchester, from 1962-1965. Moss Side is an area not that far from where the Northern college building is located and has a longstanding history of being home to people from the Windrush Generation and their descendants.

Northern also has the honour of being the first Baptist Union college to appoint a woman tutor, Heather Walton in 1985,⁵⁰ the first woman principal, Anne Phillips as co-principal in 2009, as well as the first Black woman tutor, myself 2010-2016, and another Charmaine Howard, from 2023.⁵¹ More generally, Northern whilst Richard Kidd was its principal can be described as the Baptist Union college that was the earliest to engage with liberation theologies such as Black theology, womanist theology, postcolonial theology, all of which seek to take seriously the potential for lived Black experience to be a source of theology.⁵² To this end, Northern was formerly one of the early partners of the Sam Sharpe Project alongside Regent's Park when it launched in 2012.

Conclusions

This article has traced a distinctive pattern of Black women that have followed Coleman in undertaking formation for ordained Baptist ministry at a Baptist Union college, primarily doing so at Spurgeon's. This is despite Coleman describing her time at theological college in the 1990s as like experiencing 'a crisis of invisibility', due to things like the 'very male and ... remarkably white' presentation of the figures in the Bible, the lack of reference to 'African or Caribbean theologians' and the absence of 'the theological voices of significant Black British men and women'.

It has been argued that in some ways it not surprising that Spurgeon's receives the majority of Black women Baptist ministerial students, given its location in London, which is home to the vast majority of Black Baptist women within the Baptist Union. It has the potential to therefore serve as an environment where Black women are more likely to be amongst fellow Black women both within the college and within the wider community context of London than the other English Baptist colleges. This in turn might be seen by some Black women as providing helpful support for navigating any combined marginalisation they might encounter in a college context on account of their gender and racialised identities.

However, this article has also broken new ground in charting some increased diversity from the 1980s not just amongst the student body, but in the teaching staff, and the theology being taught across the four of Baptist Union colleges

⁵⁰Heather Walton was a Methodist employed by Northern Baptist College. See: Shepherd, *The Making of a Northern Baptist College*, 255.

⁵¹Charmaine Howard took up the role of Tutor for Inclusion for Black and Brown students at the start of the academic year in 2023.

⁵²See: Richard J. Kidd, "Baptists and Theologies of Liberation," in *Doing Theology in a Baptist Way*, ed. Paul S. Fiddes (Oxford: Whitley, 2000), 46.

that are the focus of this article. Whilst this could be regarded on the face of it as basic information on diversity in the colleges, it needs to be recognised that prospective students currently have no simple or easy way of garnering such an overview. Yet, this is the kind of information that colleges should arguably be systematically documenting and sharing, in ways that deepen the understanding amongst all in the Baptist Union as to the significance of this increased diversity (and the ongoing need for diversity). In seeking to achieve such a depth of understanding, colleges could draw upon their own historic and current contextual particularities – some of which have been outlined in this article – to help individuals grasp insights into women’s and Black people’s historic and ongoing contributions to culture and theology.

It is hoped that through such endeavours colleges will learn to grow in their abilities to foster the sense of a rooted Christ-like welcome and belonging for all – not least for prospective Black women ministerial students – at each of the colleges, rather than such prospective students potentially relying on uninformed perceptions.

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