

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 18, 2021

Inaugural Hooks Institute Social Justice Series to be held Feb. 24 on Facebook Live

The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change will host the Inaugural Hooks Institute Social Justice Series on Feb. 24 at 1 p.m. with Hooks Scholar in Residence Andre E. Johnson giving a lecture on his book, *No Future in This Country: The Prophetic Pessimism of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*. The event will be moderated by UofM Communication and Film graduate student Tom Fuerst and can be seen live on the [Hooks Institute's Facebook page](#). It is free and open to the public.

No Future in This Country: The Prophetic Pessimism of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner (University Press of Mississippi, 2020) draws on the copious amount of material from Bishop Henry McNeal Turner's speeches, editorial and open and private letters to tell the story of how Turner provided rhetorical leadership during a period in which America defaulted on many of the rights and privileges gained for African Americans during Reconstruction. Unlike many of his contemporaries during this period, Turner did not opt to proclaim an optimistic view of race relations. Instead, Johnson argues that Turner adopted a prophetic persona of a pessimistic prophet who not only spoke truth to power but also challenged and pushed African Americans to believe in themselves.

At this time in his life, Turner had no confidence in American institutions or that the American people would live up to the promises outlined in their sacred documents. While he argued that emigration was the only way for African Americans to retain their "personhood" status, he would also believe that African Americans would never emigrate from the U.S. to Africa. He argued that many African Americans were so oppressed and so stripped of agency because continued negative assessments of their personhood surrounded them that belief in emigration was not possible. Turner's position limited his rhetorical options, but by adopting a pessimistic prophetic voice that bore witness to the atrocities African Americans faced, Turner found space for his oratory, which reflected itself within the lament tradition of prophecy.

About Andre E. Johnson

Andre E. Johnson is an Associate Professor of Communication and the Scholar in Residence at the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the UofM.

About Tom Fuerst

Thomas M. Fuerst is a graduate student in the Department of Communication & Film at the UofM studying religious and prophetic rhetoric. He is currently examining the role of prophetic rhetoric in the call narratives of African American preachers in the 19th century.

About the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change

The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute implements its mission of teaching, studying and promoting civil rights and social change through research, education and direct intervention programs. Institute programs include community outreach; funding faculty research initiatives on community issues; implementing community service projects; hosting conferences, symposiums and lectures; and promoting local and national scholarship on civil and human rights. The Hooks Institute is an interdisciplinary center at the University of Memphis. Contributed revenue for the Hooks Institute, including funding from individuals, corporations and foundations, is administered through the University of Memphis Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization. Visit memphis.edu/benhooks for more information.

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