

Mother Anna Bates Artist Statement

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Mother Anna's portrait is centered on her grass-roots work to form a Black Catholic church in Detroit, Our Lady of Victory, amidst resistance and racism from the Church. The positioning of Mother Anna and her parishioners emulates the architecture of Our Lady of Victory, as after Catholic authority refused to grant her request for a church, Mother Anna created a "church" with the people in her popular summer programs.¹⁰ The stained glass behind Mother Anna further emulates the church's architecture, and displays in the three panels the ways in which Black women like Mother Anna are excluded from the Church. The left panel shows discrimination and lack of representation of Black women and girls with natural hairstyles;¹¹ the middle displays a Black Madonna (for the white-washing of Mary and the Church's lack of emphasis of the racism-caused high rates of infant mortality for Black mothers as a life issue);¹² the right panel conveys the exclusion of Black song and spirituals from "typical/traditional" Masses or prayer services.¹³ The stained glass—chosen for its unbelievable lack of representation of Black figures—conveys a future Church where all Black women are centered and valued.¹⁴

The FutureChurch resource packet for Mother Anna Bates can be found here:

<https://www.futurechurch.org/women-witnesses-for-racial-justice-downloads>

¹⁰ Shannen Dee Williams, "Celebrating unsung Black Catholic women in U.S. history," U.S. Catholic, February 24, 2014, <https://uscatholic.org/articles/201402/celebrating-unsung-black-catholic-women-in-u-s-history/>; Shirley Slaughter, *Our Lady of Victory: The Saga of an African-American Catholic Community*, (iUniverse, 2007).

¹¹ Sarah Salvadore, "Catholic schools slow to accept cultural significance of black hair," National Catholic Reporter, February 20, 2020, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/catholic-schools-slow-accept-cultural-significance-black-hair>.

¹² Anna Swartwood House, "The long history of how Jesus came to resemble a white European," University of South Carolina, July 22, 2020, https://sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2020/07/conversation_white_jesus.php#.YPCzMxNKiRt; Cristina Novoa and Jamila Taylor, "Exploring African Americans' High Maternal and Infant Death Rates," Center for American Progress, February 1, 2018, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/02/01/445576/exploring-african-americans-high-maternal-infant-death-rates/>; John Gehring and Jeanné L.L. Isler, "Systemic racism is pro-life issue, and Catholics must step up," National Catholic Reporter, September 19, 2018, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/systemic-racism-pro-life-issue-and-catholics-must-step>.

¹³ Dawn Araujo-Hawkins, "Black spiritual traditions have long history in Catholic Church," Global Sisters Report, March 19, 2018, https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/spirituality-equality/black-spiritual-traditions-have-long-history-catholic-church-52606?gsr_redirect=1.

¹⁴ "Editorial: Why white Jesus is a problem," National Catholic Reporter, June 30, 2020, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/editorial-why-white-jesus-problem>.