

Anne Marie Becraft Artist Statement

Chloe Becker

Sr. Becraft is standing in front of two schools: the one on the left, she founded in Washington D.C. when she was fifteen years old for Black children who were being pushed out of schools with white teachers due to a D.C. policy; the one on the right (Saint Frances Academy), is where she continued to teach after she joined the Oblate Sisters of Providence, furthering her commitment to education.²⁷ The phrase in the sky pays homage to Maya Angelou's poem, "Still I Rise" and directly names how white society disenfranchised Anne Marie Becraft, and further, all Black women. White society has degraded her mind by limiting access to education (like the D.C. policy that hindered many Black students in the nineteenth century), which is present today in the limited access and discrimination in schools and academia for Black students.²⁸ Society has degraded Black women's souls, as when Becraft was alive, a significant amount of white people believed that Black people did not have souls;²⁹ remnants of that belief exist today in the lack of "mainstream" religious art that depicts Black people and the (subconscious and overt) suspiciousness of Black Americans' goodness (such as with racial profiling).³⁰ Society has degraded Black youth through systems that stunt their futures (like the school to prison pipeline), which perpetuate the lie that they're incapable of impacting society.³¹ This is the same lie that Anne Marie likely faced as she fearlessly harnessed her power at fifteen, yet still she rose and rose and rose.

The FutureChurch resource packet for Anne Marie Becraft can be found here:

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

²⁷ "Building to Be Renamed for Pioneer Black Educator Anne Marie Becraft," Georgetown University, April 13, 2017, <https://www.georgetown.edu/news/building-to-be-renamed-for-pioneer-black-educator-anne-marie-becraft/>.

²⁸ Ibid; Isha Trivedi, "Faculty say higher education, research is 'rife' with discrimination," The GW Hatchet, August 31, 2020, <https://www.gwhatchet.com/2020/08/31/faculty-say-higher-education-research-is-rife-with-discrimination/>; Kim Fischer and Gregory Anderson, "Systemic racism has led to education disparities," Temple University, June 25, 2020, <https://news.temple.edu/news/2020-06-25/systemic-racism-has-led-education-disparities>.

²⁹ "Building to Be Renamed for Pioneer Black Educator Anne Marie Becraft."

³⁰ "Editorial: Why white Jesus is a problem," National Catholic Reporter, June 30, 2020, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/editorial-why-white-jesus-problem>; "Racial Profiling: Definition," American Civil Liberties Union, <https://www.aclu.org/other/racial-profiling-definition>.

³¹ "Deconstructing Racism and Ableism in the School-to-Prison Pipeline," Temple University, <https://disabilities.temple.edu/school-to-prison>.