



## **Monica A. Coleman**

Writer • Professor of Religion •  
Sexual Violence Activist

*Speaker Press Kit*

**Writer**  
**Professor of Religion**  
**Sexual Violence Activist**

# Monica A. Coleman

A survivor of rape, Monica A. Coleman became committed to speaking out against sexual violence in 1996. In 1997, she founded and coordinated “The Dinah Project,” an organized church response to sexual violence, at Metropolitan Interdenominational Church in Nashville, TN.

In its first three years, The Dinah Project reached over 3000 people. She wrote about her experiences in *The Dinah Project: a Handbook for Congregational Response to Sexual Violence*. Coleman’s expertise in religion and sexual violence has taken her around the country to speak at churches, colleges, seminaries, universities, and regional and national conferences. Because of this work, the interdenominational preaching magazine *The African American Pulpit* named Coleman one of the “Top 20 to Watch” – The New Generation of Leading Clergy: Preachers under 40.

**Gifted in her ability to be open, clear and direct – about such a difficult topic**

*Goucher College*

Diverse audiences find *The Dinah Project* to be a helpful resource. *The Dinah Project* is being taught at Candler School of Theology of Emory University in Atlanta, GA and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. It is also used by personnel working at the Black Church Domestic Violence Institute and the Georgia Network to End Sexual Assault (GNESA).

Coleman has lectured on church responses to sexual violence at regional and national conferences hosted by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, the Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute, Area Health Education Centers Program of Tennessee and The Center for the Study of Violence and Health. Her diverse audiences have included social service workers, law enforcement, clergy, laity, full congregations and undergraduate students.

Coleman believes in working in her local commu-

**Absolutely wonderful! Powerful information for such a time as this.**

*Shaw University Divinity School*

nities. While living in Nashville, Coleman was an active volunteer for the Rape and Sexual Abuse Center of Middle Tennessee. She was a featured speaker at the “Take Back the Night” rallies in 1998 and 1999, the narrator for the center’s promotional video and a member of the Speakers’ Bureau. Coleman was often featured on local evening news programs that covered stories regarding sexual violence. Coleman also volunteered at Vanderbilt University where she spoke to all in-coming first year students about avoiding situations of date rape.

Coleman has talked about “The Dinah Project” on several radio programs in Nashville, TN, Baltimore, MD, XM Satellite Radio, and on the “Voices and Viewpoints” program of WFDD, the Piedmont Triad (NC) National Public Radio (NPR) station. The Alban Institute has identified Coleman as a “wise voice” in congregational leadership.

Coleman earned degrees at Harvard University, Vanderbilt University and Claremont Graduate University. She is the Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Coleman’s articles have been published in a variety of publications including *ESSENCE Magazine*, *The A. M. E. Review* and *The Women of Color Study Bible*. Her academic writings can be found in journals such as *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, *Soundings: an Interdisciplinary Journal* and *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*.

Coleman has gifted the church with an invaluable spiritual resource that provides the church with a theology, language, blueprint, and practical ministry plan to help the church say to persons who have suffered from sexual violence that their tears are understood. Her story is powerful and offers hope to survivors everywhere.

## SUGGESTED TOPICS

**Talking About Rape**

**How Churches Can Address Sexual Violence**

**Clergy Sexual Misconduct**

**Sex and the Christian Thing to Do**



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Writer • Professor of Religion •  
Sexual Violence Activist



Rev. Monica A. Coleman, Ph.D. is an ordained elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the author of *The Dinah Project: a Handbook for Congregational Response to Sexual Violence* (Pilgrim Press 2004). Coleman is currently Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. In 2005, the interdenominational preaching magazine *The African American Pulpit* named Coleman one of the “Top 20 to Watch” – The New Generation of Leading Clergy: Preachers under 40.

In 1997, Coleman founded and coordinated “The Dinah Project,” an organized church response to sexual violence, at Metropolitan Interdenominational Church in Nashville, TN. In its first three years, The Dinah Project reached over 3000 people. She wrote about her experiences in *The Dinah Project: a Handbook for Congregational Response to Sexual Violence* (Pilgrim Press, 2004). Monica’s expertise in religion and sexual violence has taken her around the country to speak at churches, colleges, seminaries, universities, and regional and national conferences. Coleman views community justice work as ministry, and has worked as a women’s advocate for a domestic violence program, and a community organizer with low-income neighborhoods.

A native of Ann Arbor, MI, Monica graduated from Greenhills School. She graduated magna cum laude with honors from Harvard-Radcliffe Colleges with her undergraduate degree in Afro-American Studies. She earned the Master’s of Divinity degree and Certificate in the Study of Religion, Gender and Sexuality from Vanderbilt Divinity School. There she focused her studies on theology, Christian education, ethics and sexuality. She received her doctorate in Philosophy of Religion and Theology from the School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University. She has received additional professional development at the Woodhull Institute for Ethical Leadership. Coleman’s articles have been published in a variety of publications including *ESSENCE Magazine*, *The A. M. E. Review*, *Ecumenical Trends* and *The Women of Color Study Bible*.

A self-described nerd, Coleman is equally committed to the work of the academy and contributing to the field of religious scholarship. She was named her one of twenty-five “intellectual elite” in her graduating class at Harvard. Coleman’s academic work focuses on process theology, a religious perspective that affirms God’s compassion in every event believing that what we do and what creation does make a difference to God. Coleman also studies black and womanist theologies, African traditional religions and the representation of religion in literature. She is the former Director of Womanist Religious Studies and Assistant Professor of Religion at Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, NC where she spearheaded the first undergraduate program in to focus on the religious experiences of women of African descent. Her academic writings can be found in journals such as *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, *Soundings: an Interdisciplinary Journal*, *Journal of Religion* and *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*.

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**Talking About Rape**

How Words Can Harm and Heal

**How Churches Can Address Sexual Violence**

**Clergy Sexual Misconduct**

**Sex and the Christian Thing to Do**

Beyond “Just Say No”

## Audience Comments

# Monica A. Coleman

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“The author shows heart and “holy” boldness.”

*A.M.E. Review*

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“A natural way of connecting with people.”

*Senior troop 1052, Girl Scouts (Greensboro, NC)*

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“This is a must-read for clergy and spiritual counselors.”

*Black Issues Book Review*

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“Coleman helps congregations name the violence and use the grace of solidarity to heal.”

*Creative Transformation*

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“Coleman adheres to what she believes is a calling.”

*Tennessee Tribune*

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“An excellent primer for a pastor, layperson or congregation.”

*Congregational Resources*

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“I feel empowered by her example.”

*NPR (WFDD) listener*

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## *In Print*

**For a church struggling with the issue of its relevance to the broader community, The Dinah Project presents one answer to the question of what it means to be a church.**

*Journal of Religion and Abuse*



Sexual violence is rarely discussed in church, despite the rising incidents of rape, sexual assault, molestation and incest. The Dinah Project, which gets its name from Genesis 34 – the rape of Dinah, Jacob’s daughter – was borne out of the author’s decision to start healing through the church after being raped. What resulted is this book and an entire ministry program to assist churches in responding to sexual violence.

The Dinah Project describes programmatic ways in which a local church can respond to the crisis of sexual violence in the community. By sharing the lessons of one church, this book proposes detailed methods for instituting a church program. The Dinah Project provides church activities ranging from providing resources for members to ways to organize a full-time church ministry, and many stages in between. Topics include planning worship services, conducting community education workshops, working with local agencies, establishing a board of directors and holding therapy groups at the church. With checklists, forms and detailed explanations, this user-friendly book guides any interested individual from basic information about sexual violence to tips on budgeting for programs.