

GOD IS A NEGRO

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NARRATOR: They fought a holy war to fulfill a prophecy.

EDWARD KEITH: As the Israelites were freed, so would they be free eventually.

NARRATOR: From the ashes they forged a powerful faith that sustained them through brutality and betrayal.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: “Am I not a man because I happened to be of a darker hue.”

NARRATOR: It gave birth to vision of equality.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: “Why should not we believe that God is a Negro?”

NARRATOR: Through the battlefields of American history a people raise their voices and ask where can we go to be free?

NARRATOR: They carried muskets, bibles, and faith in God’s Providence.

JAMES CONE: Faith is the most Powerful force in the world. It is the one thing, it is the one light people can’t put out. You have one faith that over more than 300 years that is articulating and defining itself believing that God has made us into a people not to be slave but to be free.

NARRATOR: Henry McNeal Turner was the first black chaplain in the Union Army His story is the story of how the black church developed. –Writing weekly in the newspaper of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, he expressed the faith African-Americans brought to the Civil War.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: God will surely speak Peace when his work, is accomplished... Then the millennium will dawn. Our race, that has been afflicted and downtrodden, shall then stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

NARRATOR: Turner’s was the faith of generations that deliverance was at hand.

W.W. LAW: They constantly tried to prove their worthiness of being declared citizens of this country, and the beneficiaries of that pronouncement that all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. We believed that. And we spilled blood... proving our meter and our worth of being a contributing part, and worthy of everything that this country has to offer.

NARRATOR: For African-American soldiers, the Civil War was like the parting of the Red Sea. Chaplains like Turner, a Moses, leading the way... All that remained was a crossing through the sea of battle into the promised land of citizenship...

SANDY DWAYNE MARTIN: For African Americans, the Civil War represented God's action in the world. They were not naïve; they understood that some of the union forces were outright racist. But there is the faith, there is the confidence in providence that this has happened according to God's will.

CORNEL WEST: 180,000 black soldiers joined the Union Army to defeat the Confederacy. Would the Union army have won without black soldiers? Interesting question. Probably not. Think about that. God, have mercy.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: "And Ethiopia stretched forth her hands to God with a musket in them. Go to the bloody fields that have been redeemed by gallons of the richest blood that every coursed its way through the veins of man...ask 'why are you here revisit takes? And the answer will come loud as thunder: "Give Me Liberty or Give me Death"

NARRATOR: Sixty-eight thousand black soldiers gave their lives for what they saw as God's army.

Outside the fort were many skulls lying about; Some thought they were the skulls of our boys; others thought they were the enemies. They were a gruesome sight, those fleshless heads and grinning jaws, but by this time I had become accustomed to worse things.

NARRATOR: Black soldiers turned the tide of the war, and opened a battle that tested the faith of African-Americans.

CHARLES WILLIS: You looking for social equality after the war is over, to me a lot of that hinges on that fact that if I prove myself and I'm patriotic and will fight, that when I'm back on my side and the war is over, that I will be given those kinds of things I should have had in the first place.

NARRATOR: Lincoln declared Emancipation in 1863, earning him - and the Republican Party - the loyalty of African-Americans.

NARRATOR: In Lincoln's wartime act, Turner saw the fulfillment of God's prophecy to free his people.

NARRATOR: And so it came to pass that most slaves learned of Emancipation from men who looked like them, men who wore Union Blue. "Men and women, old and young, were running through the streets, shouting and praising God. We could then truly see what we had been fighting for. I took one old woman by the hand and asked

her if she was glad to see us. “Why, bless the Lord,” she said. “It seems like the good Lord has opened the heavens and handed you down in answer to my prayer.

EDWARD KEITH: All of a sudden you have freedom. What does Freedom mean? Freedom to what? Freedom to starve? Freedom to no longer have a place to stay? Freedom to move about. Freedom to be whatever you want to be.

NARRATOR: They left the plantations carrying little more than the faith in their hearts.

REGINALD HILDEBRAND: WEB Du Bois’ Black Reconstruction ... To most of the four million black folk emancipated by Civil War, God was real. They had met Him personally in many a wild orgy of religious frenzy, or in the black stillness of the night. His plan for them was clear. They were to suffer and be degraded, and then afterwards by divine edict, raised to manhood and power; And so, on January 1, 1863, He made them free. The magnificent trumpet tones of Hebrew scripture transmuted and oddly changed became a strange new gospel. A great human sob shrieked in the wind and tossed its tears upon the sea. Free. Free. Free.

W.W. LAW: To walk away from a plantation took courage, because you had lived all of your life in the environs, in the confinement of this vicinity, and knew nothing about the outside world. Yet you had a feeling that it was better than where—what you have here. And many, not all, but many were willing to step out and try.

NARRATOR: It was a chaotic time: four million slaves freed into a war-torn economy by a President, Chaplain Turner called “the Jesus of Liberty.

But then, on Good Friday, 1865, President Lincoln was assassinated.

W.W. LAW: This nation had lived in sin all of that time, and somebody had to be crucified. Somebody had to suffer for the redemption of the souls of this nation.

NARRATOR: It seemed that the freedmen had been left to wander in the desert.

NARRATOR: In North Carolina, The regiment chaplain Turner served freed slaves who were then left at the mercy of their former masters as the army moved on.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: To describe the scene produced by our departure would be too solemn. Many were the tears shed many sorrowful hearts bled...I was compelled to evade their sight as much as possible, to be relieved of such words as these: Chaplain, what shall I do? Where can we go? Will you come back?

NARRATOR: All his life Turner spoke for those whose voices seemed to be heard only by God.

NARRATOR: He came from Abbeville, S.C., the seat of the Confederate secession...

NARRATOR: where it was illegal for blacks to learn to read...

NARRATOR: ...family legend said his mother was the daughter of an African prince – so he was born free...

NARRATOR: Yet, he worked side by side with slaves...

NARRATOR: As an old man he remembered two things about Abbeville:

NARRATOR: The elderly slave who taught him to pray...

NARRATOR: And the white lawyers who taught him to read

SARAH BUMBARY: You had to read and write in order to progress. And at every turn there seemed to be an obstacle. Finally, he was embraced by some attorneys at the courthouse. And they began to teach him how to read.

LAWRENCE HOWARD: Here are these lawyers. Now you could say that they uh, were playing a game or something, because he had such a good memory, which is one kind of reference that is made, or you could say that they provided enormous opportunity, not only for him to complete his kind of basic education, but to be exposed especially to issues of public policy.

NARRATOR: The white Southern Methodist church married public policy with faith. Turner became a Methodist preacher. By the time he was 23, his sermons drew white and black alike.

STEPHEN ANGELL: He was a traveling evangelist who attracted large, biracial crowds in the cities in the South that he traveled through. He went as far west as New Orleans as a preacher, through the states of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. He had quite an audience and quite a reputation even before the Civil War.

NARRATOR: But among white Methodists, Turner could never be more than an itinerant preacher.

NARRATOR: He heard of a church where Blacks could become bishops... and joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

NARRATOR: After the war, he became one of its hardest-working missionaries.

BERNARD POWERS: Turner and the other AME missionaries believed that-that there was a special mission, a racial mission, that the AME church was duty-bound by its obligation to God to fulfill. And that obligation was to uplift the race in every conceivable way: psychically, spiritually, economically, educationally, in every conceivable way.

NARRATOR: In February, 1865, the union flag rose over Ft. Sumter. Soon, a group of missionaries, flooded the south...

NARRATOR: Among them was Turner's mentor, Daniel Payne, the senior bishop of the AME church.

NARRATOR: Payne represented northern liberalism, education, and respectability.

NARRATOR: He intended to transform his race.

JAMES CAMPBELL: It's not the certain kind of fastidiousness that leads people like Daniel Payne to be so concerned with reforming the lives and particularly the religious lives of freed people, it's also a sense that this is a period when the race is on trial, in which this is an opportunity and an obligation to run black institutions according to recognized standards and thereby vindicate the capacity of the race.

NARRATOR: Payne spoke of raising "African manhood" ...but women also responded to his call.

BISHOP VASHTI MCKENZIE: It is within the context of church where women's self-esteem was affirmed. Here she has a history where her family was sold off into different parts of plantation. She was forced to breed with men against her own choice, even if she was in love and had a husband. And now all of a sudden she's being baptized into the church. That god sees her as having value and worth and she's a part of the family of God

NARRATOR: Under Payne's leadership, African-Americans raised the first new building from Charleston's ashes: --Emmanuel AME...The building of the black church had begun.

NARRATOR: The AME church favored educated ministers...so Turner studied harder, then, he went to Georgia, where thousands of former slaves sought to worship free from whites.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: I have been preaching three times a day on Sunday and nightly the rest of the week. Five hundred souls have thrown off the slave-yoke of Southern Methodism, and united with the AME Church, and are standing in the full vigor of their God-given rights.

BERNARD POWERS: One of the things that he was confronted with in his-- in his early days in Georgia was: Well, how do you get enough people who can meet the rigorous standards of the ministry, when you need to have the word spread? And so he would start off sometimes asking a man if he could-- if he could read and write. And the man would say, "No, I can't read or write." But then Turner would go on and say, "Well, can you sing? And can you pray?" And if the man could sing or pray, that was sufficient

enough to allow him to come into the-the ministry at least at a low level, because Turner understood that such men could be worked with.

NARRATOR: Turner had a radical idea – to raise leaders who made the people feel the spirit...a spirit still evident in Georgia's communities of Faith.

PASTOR MITCHELL: We look everywhere but to God - for the answers to our problems!

NARRATOR: These keepers of the faith still worship in the congregational style Bishop Payne fought in the years after the war.

REVEREND EASON: Daniel Alexander Payne came from a Lutheran background, which was very much a high church background where people really didn't express themselves that much in worship. A more of a [cerebral] type of worship environment; whereas Henry McNeal Turner believed in an emotive style of worship where people could give full vent to their emotional releases.

LAWRENCE HOWARD: One of his most important I think contributions is his emphasis on people who are outsiders. He goes to Georgia. What's he doing? He's organizing sharecroppers. And he's also bringing them with this kind of Wesleyan message, particularly as he would have it done, which is kind of sung congregationally, as such.

LAWRENCE HOWARD: And in that message of course, one is hearing that God loves the poor, because the poor and outsider realize that they have no place else to turn but to God.

NARRATOR: In 1866, freed slaves praised the Lord as they participated in politics for the first time.

Even with the protection of occupying Union forces, freedmen needed a hand to deal with a political process turned upside down.

W.W. LAW: In the early elections after the war, blacks could vote but the white folk in the South couldn't (those who had been Confederates). This made it extremely difficult for blacks, because all of the effort on the part of Southern whites, from the time of the end of the Civil War until the 1930's and 1940's, in fact all the way to the 1960's for a hundred years—they were trying to return blacks to their previous condition of servitude.

JULIAN BOND: I don't know how a people prove they're ready for acceptance by the larger society. I rather think that the larger society has got to accept the people. And the dilemma that we have faced through all these years is: How do you get them to accept us?

NARRATOR: Freed slaves were barely accepted as human. Northern journals depicted black voters as creatures more akin to the devil than to God.

NARRATOR: While in the post Civil War South those who supported black rights put their lives in danger.

Preaching after a lynching, Turner pointed a finger at whites standing in the back, and declared “not only do you act like dogs, you are dogs!”

NARRATOR: The black congregation feared for his safety. They carried him to a tree in the woods.

He spent the night there listening to the hound dogs howl.

NARRATOR: Bishop Payne called Turner the bravest man in Georgia...and encouraged him to enter politics.

NARRATOR: Ministers and their churches took different positions when it came to dealing with their former masters... masters...

NARRATOR: Some chose to worship under the paternalistic eyes of Southern whites (CME)...others in integrated congregations (Methodist) ...some worshipped independently (Baptist) while others submitted to a black church hierarchy (AME, AME Zion)

CORNEL WEST: They figure, once America’s turned this corner, Promised Land’s down the road. Maybe America’s going to [act right], because it’s got great potential. The whole world’s looking on America. This is the grand city on the hill, the moral example on the globe. And black folks say, “Good God!” Especially the black ministers. “I think we join forces. We can create a democracy, a multi-racial democracy.”

NARRATOR: They called it political reconstruction...Throughout the south, over a hundred black ministers –won election to legislative seats.

In 1868 Turner joined 31 blacks, elected to the Georgia State House.

REVEREND EASON: His work actually transcended the stained glass windows of the church. He was actually a politician, actually being elected to state– to office in Georgia. His picture stands today in the George State House of Representatives in Atlanta.

NARRATOR: As he began his term, Turner HOPED for a political coalition with the Confederates.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: We want to treat them kindly and live in friendship; yet, I must say, as I believe, that as soon as old things can be forgotten, or all things become common, that the Southern people will take us by the hand and welcome us to their respect and regard.

EDWIN REDKEY: No sooner had he taken his place along with those other black representatives in the legislature, than the white forces, whether Democrat or Republican, combined to force the black legislators out of the Legislature

NARRATOR: It would be 1965 before blacks regained access to the Georgia State House. And then again, whites forced the most outspoken member out.

JULIAN BOND: I remember the last time I think it was that Negroes sat in this body was in 1868 if I'm not mistaken...they were expelled...the last time I tried to watch what was going on I'm expelled.

JULIAN BOND: I had knocked on the doors, I'd kissed the babies, I'd shaken the hands, I'd competed against someone in the primary, I'd done everything right. I'd won the election. And now these white men are telling them they've got to make some other choice.

NARRATOR: In 1867, as white politicians voted to expel all the black legislators Turner had lost faith in a multiracial democracy.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: Am I not a man because I happen to be of a darker hue than honorable gentlemen around me.

JULIAN BOND: Bishop Turner had been where I was. He had sat in the legislature with these overwhelmingly white, overwhelmingly rural, overwhelmingly conservative. And so he and I sat in the same place and, I imagine, experienced some of the same things. And it was so good to know that before me, there had been somebody there who was a real man, who stood up, who shook his finger at the group.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: I assert that by the time you take off the mucous pigment – the color of the skin you cannot, to save your life, distinguish between the black man and the white. Because God saw fit to make some red, some white, and some black, and some brown, are we to sit here in judgement upon what God has seen fit to do? As well might one play with the thunderbolts of heaven as with that creature that bears God's image.

NARRATOR: Congress heard their appeal but responded too late. Alone, the expelled black legislators faced white reprisals...

THOMAS ALLEN: "After we were expelled from the legislature, I went home to Jasper County. I was carrying a farm there...At about 2 o'clock, my wife woke me up and said there were persons all around the house. I asked them what they wanted...they said the dogs had treed something and that they needed a light. They asked me to come out. At this time my brother-in-law waked up. He said, "I will get up and give them a light." He put on his shoes and vest and hat. That was all he was found with after he was killed." - Thomas Allen.

ABRAM COLBY: “They came to my house and broke my door open, took me out of my bed and took me to the woods and whipped me – they gave me 400 or 500 licks before they commenced counting...” Abram Colby, Greene County

NARRATOR: Political organizers, like Turner, faced a more public punishment.

EDWIN REDKEY: He was appointed as a postmaster, a political job, in Macon Georgia, but the combination of white Republicans and Democrats forced him out of that position with accusations of mishandling funds and so forth, which were totally fictitious.

STEPHEN ANGELL: That really wasn't the most damaging allegation in the court of public opinion, it was his extramarital involvement that tended to stick in people's minds. It greatly damaged Turner among many in the AME church including Bishop Payne who felt AME ministers had damaged the cause by combining the gospel and politics during Reconstruction.

NARRATOR: Outraged, Payne condemned his protégé. It seemed Turner might lose everything he had worked so hard to attain.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: I have had to pass through blood and fire. No man can imagine what I have had to endure but one who has gone through it.

REVEREND EASON: Lesser men, incidents like that would have almost Destroyed their pol– their political and ecclesiastical careers. But Turner was very focused. He had to have a strong faith. With a weak faith in God, Turner would have left the ministry, would have left the political arena, would have given up.

CAIN HOPE FELDER: Slavery and oppression provides a wilderness experience where people raise ultimate questions and they're on the breaking point and on the brink and at that particular special place between sanity and insanity, breaking and not is where I think God encounters us best and I think at that point, either you break or you get the sense that there's no need to break. And I think that a lot of blacks got the sense that there was no need to break.

NARRATOR: Turner left Macon, and settled in Savannah. There he helped build a network of black Methodist and Baptist churches.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: We want power; it only comes through... unity...

REVEREND EASON: All of the different multifaceted things that Henry McNeal Turner did really resonated with me. He had a strong spirituality but at the same time he had a vibrant social outreach ministry. And we don't see a lot of that today. I think when we look at televangelist today in the African American community they are basically lifting individual piety without social responsibility. Henry McNeal Turner did both of those

things well. He was able to be concerned about church growth and development but at the same time really be concerned about the souls of people.

W.W. LAW: You must understand that the church served as the center of the meeting–gathering place, and it’s the only time that we got together, because even in my boyhood, people worked from sun-up to sundown. And you were trying to make out of the land or out of the water subsistence to take care of yourself and your family. But the Bible had taught us that the seventh day, keep it holy, there is no work. So that was the gathering day.

NARRATOR: By 1870, just five years after the Civil War, a people who had once owned nothing had raised a million dollars to educate themselves. They built a network of churches, banks, and....associations. ... under Bishop Daniel Payne’s leadership, the AME church owned its own university – Wilberforce, in Xenia, Ohio.

NARRATOR: In 1877, federal troops withdrew from the political affairs of the South...

They left black Americans vulnerable – and disenfranchised.

NARRATOR: Southern whites called it Redemption.

Henry McNeal Turner called it the Death of Reconstruction.

In the North, even some abolitionists Turner once admired published anti-black statements: “I hate the black; black is not God’s color; white is God’s color,” wrote Methodist Minister Henry Ward Beecher.

CORNEL WEST: After 1877, the sun withdraws and the clouds are dark again. New forms of enslavement. Jim Crow, Jane Crow are waiting around the corner for another 80 years or so. The Civil War, freedom, Emancipation (capital E) what’s waiting for you. Confederacy loses the war, white supremacy wins the peace. New forms of subjugation.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: We are bitten, we are poisoned, we are sick and we are dying. We need a remedy. Oh for some Moses to lift a brazen serpent, some goal for our ambition, some object to induce us to look up. Have we that object here? Is there any possibility of getting it here? I do not see it.

SARAH BUMBARY: Bishop Turner saw that if we weren’t accepted here, maybe we should look to the motherland, and the motherland was Africa.

EDWIN REDKEY: In the seventies the end of reconstruction, the end of the promises the end of the hope and expectations for many people in the south just disillusioned so many that they (OC) thought one way of getting rid of their troubles or alleviating their grief was to go somewhere – whether it was Mexico or Kansas or to Africa – just to leave that home base of the South.

NARRATOR: In 1878, a ship readied to sail. The Azor was destined for Liberia.

JAMES CAMPBELL: About 200 people emigrate on this ship, but over 10,000 people come to Charleston to see the ship off. It's one in the long line of African American back-to Africa steamship companies, similar to what Marcus Garvey will do 40 years later.

JAMES CAMPBELL: Henry Turner delivers a speech at the launch of the Azor, in which he talks about the providential hand, which had brought them here within sight of where thousands of African American slaves had landed and is now carrying them back equipped with Christianity, equipped with civilization which they'll replant in Africa until he says, "the bright blaze of Gospel truth shall shine across the whole, broad African continent.

NARRATOR: As the Azor sailed, a call and response began between those on the boat and those back on shore...

NARRATOR: Elected bishop in 1880, Turner became the guiding spirit of a Back-to-Africa movement.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: "What is my position? Simply to found and establish a country or a government somewhere upon the continent of Africa, as I see no other place in the world to do it, where our young men and ladies can find a theatre of activity and usefulness...and at the same time build up a center of Christian civilisation that will help redeem the land of our ancestry."

JUALYNNE DODSON: The denomination was hesitant. There were many who felt, that this was stretching the funds of the denomination entirely too far. But if Henry McNeal Turner had an independent (relatively speaking) autonomous funding source for his foreign missions, then indeed there could be more receptivity, more opportunity.

NARRATOR: Turner became the church's most controversial bishop. He allowed the voice of Southern Black Church women to grow louder ... thru their purse strings Turner found the funds for his African missionary work.

JUALYNNE DODSON: Women were not powerless in this denomination. Women had been successful since the 1840's in their own preaching activities. There had been many accounts where pastors were saying, if it hadn't been for them, our church would have died out.

NARRATOR: In 1885 Turner told the conference of bishops that he had ordained a woman pastor...trouble ensued.

JUALYNNE DODSON: This hierarchy of men feels quite threatened. They say you can't do this – Not only can't you do it we want you to rescind it, take it

back, and not only that if you do it again we're kicking you out.

CAIN HOPE FELDER: One of the only places in the community that was allowed the black men to have a sense of virility and leadership as a man was the church. The Black pastor became very threatened if there was even a suggestion that a woman would also be able to rise to that level. And I tend to think that still bedevils us today.

NARRATOR: Although Turner remained supportive of women church leaders... increased public racism diverted his attention

Turner described a conductor's attempt to move him and his wife Eliza, ill with heart disease from a first class car.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: He moved toward my wife. I intercepted him and said: I want no trouble, and I pray God you will save me from any, but if you touch my wife there will be a funeral tomorrow in either your family or mine. He gave me a terrible look, and then passed on. My wife remained in that car, while I went into the smoking car, in order not to give too much offence."

NARRATOR: Six years later, Eliza Turner died. She had given birth fourteen children. Ultimately, only two sons survived.

Turner's youngest, David, watched his father embark on his first trip to Africa, in 1891.

During each of his four trips to Africa, he wrote almost daily letters home to the Christian Recorder.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: I had to admire the erectness with which these men and women stand. The native African has no fear, no cowardice, no dread, but feels himself the equal of any man on earth.

NARRATOR: His words ignited a movement. Southern sharecroppers formed emigration societies. They sold their farms to make the \$30 fare, and came East.

EDWIN REDKEY: Turner's message appealed to people who were desperate. So it was the inarticulate, the poor, the easily led, in some cases, the gullible who followed the line to try to go to West Africa.

CORNEL WEST: The Europeanization of the world is taking place. So there's really nowhere to go. You see? You can go to Africa; colonization's already there. You go to Central America; it's the backyard of American empire. So that the whole notion of the exodus is powerful in- in its mythic formulation, but on the ground it's not as operative as one would think.

NARRATOR: European powers plundered the African continent for riches...as Africans struggled against virtual enslavement in their own land... they found hope in the same scripture which had sustained black America.

CAIN HOPE FELDER: Let Princes come out of Egypt, let Ethiopia hasten to stretch forth her hand to God. This is the text that has galvanized our imagination. That text celebrates the royalty of the Nile Valley. It celebrates the connection between the motherland and the Holy Land.

CORNEL WEST: It connects the sacred texts with Africa itself. And you get the fusion of so-called sacred history, which flows out of the biblical text, with profane or secular history, which is the hell black people are catching at that particular moment. And somehow it's possible to make the bridge.

NARRATOR: The music of faith crossed that bridge.

Jubilee Singers from the states brought a music none had ever heard before... along with an image of cultured, educated black Westerners Africans sought to imitate.

NARRATOR: Thru that music, came word of the church in America which had black bishops....

NARRATOR: The African Methodist Episcopal church became the lens through which Africans and African-Americans viewed each other...

JAMES CAMPBELL: Here are two groups of people African Americans and Africans who in different but in some respects similar ways, had been excluded politically. Subjected to extraordinary oppression, and also endured that, and survived that. That experience provided political inspiration for generations for black political activists in South Africa, much as the triumph and struggle of Africans against Apartheid in the last 1/3 of the 20th Century would provide enormous inspiration to black people here at home.

NARRATOR: In 1893, Turner called for a National Convention. He invited black Americans to share their views on their plight – and to discuss whether Africa might be their solution

BISHOP PAYNE: To God alone can we look for protection...emigration to Africa...I cannot endorse.

BISHOP LEE: If Bishop Turner thinks Africa is Eden, why don't he go there and stay?

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: Hear "Every friend of the colored race will rejoice that Bishop Turner has bravely called the convention...but do not believe in any wholesale plan of colonization to Africa. Emigration? Yes. Mass exodus? No.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON: We are to work out our own salvation by overcoming prejudice and acquiring the elements of civilization

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: In this country, white represents God, and black the devil...I believe that God made Africa...and that Jesus Christ died for her four hundred million, and every man with a drop of African blood in his veins should be interested in the civilization, if not the salvation of her millions”

SARAH BUMBARY: They just didn't accept what he was saying, it hurt him. Regardless to how negative it is living in the United States, it's hard to pick up and move to another country and another culture. And whereas Bishop Turner was aggressive, he felt that he could go forth, there were many other people that said you know, I accept this, I'm going to stay here. I know what I have here.

NARRATOR: Turner had stood poised to be anointed as old lions like Bishop Payne and Frederick Douglass passed on.

Now, he realized he could no longer carry the day among his own people, much less against the whites.

NARRATOR: During the 1890s the rate of lynchings rose to one per day...

It was the Great Nadir of race relations.

Even The Supreme Court sided with the oppressors, as it supported the separate but equal doctrine.

Still --- the people kept the faith.

SANDY MARTIN: If you look back from 1890 you're gonna see a number of things, for one thing, even where blacks are losing the right to vote they have voted. They have an experience of having participated. They have established various institutions schools, churches of course, in some instances hospitals and so forth and so on. They have affirmed – they have proven that black people can be free and survive.

NARRATOR: From prayer and song, the faith of field hands had built a refuge of bricks and mortar. Now the people banded together.

The Black Baptists would soon become the largest black organization in the world. Turner kept close alliances with them...He addressed their first national convention – in Atlanta, in 1895.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: We have every right biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro. As you buckra or white people have to believe, that God is a fine looking symmetrical and ornamented white man. Why should not the Negro believe that he resembles God as much so as other people?

BISHOP VASHTI MCKENZIE: When John the revelator describes Jesus in the Book of Revelation, describes the Lord as having hair like lamb's wool. Well, the last time I checked, people of African descent have hair like lamb's wool. Whose feet were bronzed. And last time I checked, people of African descent have bronze color to their skin, and have eyes that shone like fire. Although we worship a God who transcends all gender and race, won't we be surprised when we get to heaven and see the Lord for ourselves?

JAMES CONE: Most people have experienced some contradiction with the Christian faith. How do you find your humanity in a world that says everything good is white, everything bad is black? It was Henry McNeal Turner who helped me to see that being born black was a gift of God, and not something I that I needed to be ashamed of.

NARRATOR: But Turner believed that faith alone would not ensure survival.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: Every black man in the United States should have several guns in his house. We advise him to keep them loaded and prepared for immediate use, and when his domicile is invaded by bloody lynchings...turn loose your missiles of death and blow the fiendish wretches into a thousand giblets.

NARRATOR: The AME Bishops thought Turner had crossed the line.

African emigration... women ordained... uneducated preachers in the pulpit—

They banished Turner from writing for church publications.... And eventually exiled him to northern Michigan.

JULIAN BOND: There's a war going on. And it's a war between people who are preaching the social gospel, and who are saying, "you've got to engage yourself in this world, right here, right now, and the people who are saying. "No. It's something else. It's other-worldly. It's in heaven."

NARRATOR: Turner wrote that, for Negroes, "hell might be better than the US." Racist tabloids in Atlanta stoked the fires of Racial hatred. In the fall of 1906, they exploded.

VOICE OVER: Atlanta has not seen a time since 1864 like she saw last night. About 5000 white people started to 'run the niggers out' as they called it and killed 30 peaceable Negroes who were at their work or returning from their work and lots of others were wounded...it is awful and horrible. -AW Rowell, Clark University

NARRATOR: The generation who fought a holy war for freedom had lived to see their dreams of citizenship betrayed.

HENRY MCNEAL TURNER: I used to love what I thought was the grand old flag, and

sing with ecstasy about the stars and stripes, but to the Negro in this country, the American flag is a dirty and contemptible rag. Not a star in it can the colored man claim, for it is no longer the symbol of our manhood rights and liberty.

NARRATOR: He died in 1915. He was 81 years old.

STEPHEN ANGELL: He dies in Canada, he swore that he would not die in the US where Jim Crow had affected his people so badly.

NARRATOR: A train returned his body to Atlanta, where twenty-five thousand people paid their respects.

They represented the community of freedmen who built the black church in America