Twitter Thread by Sam Rocha



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A thread of appreciation for Gloria Purvis:

This past year, I was blessed to be in dialogue with many people within the Academy and the US Catholic Church. I mean no offence to anyone, but, amongst them all, Gloria Purvis was easily the most edifying and impressive. She soared.

I had never met nor spoken to Gloria before my interview with her. I sent a few prompts and questions beforehand to show respect and honesty, but we did not agree to anything too formal in terms of the conversation or content of the interview. We had a time set and that's it.

The moment the Zoom call connected, we got started, with no chit chat. I felt bad initially for this oversight, but she took to it like a duck to water. I opened asking about framing the conversation around anti-Black white supremacy, citing Du Bois. She took flight.

Not only did she accept the frame, she extended it, citing a far less known, and more radical, essay by Du Bois, weaving it into common associations like Our Lady of Guadalupe. She did this with great enthusiasm, but also humility and even a certain pressure on my chosen source.

Seeing this range in her very first response, I realized I needed to dig deeper. Every move I made she accepted on its own terms but then extended and enriched and even subtly challenged or subverted with great joy. But none of this was even the most impressive part for me.

As her remarks extended, an entire list of historical examples, anecdotal stories, and academic sources emerged. These ranged from popes to Black scholars to specific details about Jim Crow laws. She was an encyclopedia AND a story teller. She wraps her erudition in grace.

And she is quick, too! The conversation pace was so fast, I had to transcribe it at 25% rate slowed down. There was no awkward weighing of strategies; she devoured every last point and even pressed me to contribute, allowing and even inviting me to add a note here and there.

Just as quickly as things went, we ended at the exact time we needed to and I got to work. From there, her attention to detail and impeccable editorial standards for fact checking and attribution were beyond impressive. I confess I was worried whether I could meet her standard.

When I left my little studio and as I edited the transcript, I became something of a fanatic, constantly reading passages aloud to whomever would listen, and telling of the wonders of Gloria Purvis, this genius public scholar and masterful and soulful communicator.

My fanaticism has justly measured itself into an early but absolutely beautiful friendship. In that realm, I have come to learn of her passion for cultivating prayer and holiness in her life, her devotion to the Carmelite Order, and her truly remarkable love for humanity.

I should note that Gloria and I do not agree on every idea and issue nor do we share the same approach to our work. I appreciate that, too. Nonetheless, I see in her a singular and precious light for the US Catholic Church and also for the Black intellectual tradition in America.

Gloria Purvis is a treasure. She knows more and has done more homework and study than most around, including scholars. She communicates easier and with more joy and integrity than most journalists. She cultivates a real and living spiritual life. She is the best we have today.

She is also principled and courageous. She will not bend or twist or soft-pedal or whitewash her message. She has endured much more than this cancelation of her her show and she bears it with a well-earned and deserved confidence. She does not suffer fools and for good reason.

So, please, follow and plan to support @gloria_purvis in whatever she does and wherever she goes going forward. And perhaps read this interview again, an interview which I have read well over 50 times, to test my account against its principle source: https://t.co/x7ZyZqaNY3

Do not expect me to soon or ever repeat this ritual. There are only so many Gloria Purvis' in the world and most of us are simply not up to her standards. We are the ones illuminated and guided by her brilliance.

May God bless and keep my sister Gloria Purvis!

Amen.