

THE COMMUNE INSTITUTE PRESENTS

Chalk & Pen

A retreat for Scholars in Theology & Religion

March 7–11, 2027

The Hotel Hershey · Hershey, Pennsylvania

SNAPSHOT PROGRAM · INVITED PARTICIPANTS

Dear Beloved Colleague,

You have given much to your work—teaching, writing, mentoring, and making room for others' growth. This invitation asks you to make room for yourself.

Bring the manuscript, teaching project, creative work, or unresolved question that needs your attention. Come with room to receive care, companionship, and rest.

Harmonia Rosales's paintings place Black bodies within the historical archive of divinity, the histories, images, texts, and practices through which communities represent divinity. In my classroom, her work has expanded students' theological imagination and invited questions about sacred presence, inheritance, and erasure. Here, we will consider what this encounter calls forth in our own words.

Ms. Rosales joins us as Artist in Residence. Lama Bodhi Satyagraha leads morning meditation; Dr. Amey Victoria Adkins-Jones guides our featured Rosales conversation. I will guide optional Brush to Pen sessions through her artwork and *Chronicles of Ori*, her retelling of Yoruba cosmology, which each participant receives.

Afrodiasporic cultural myth and Eastern contemplative and wisdom traditions will nurture our time together. Protected studios, optional sessions, and daily Free Time make space for work, solitude, and companionship. Sunday's libations ceremony and Monday's reception and dinner offer time to gather.

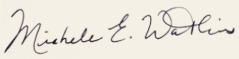
> — *"Rest has a place here."*

There is no required answer to the questions that accompany us. You do not have to account for every hour. After registration, we will ask about your project, dietary requirements, and access needs so we can prepare to welcome you.

My hope is that you leave with words you needed to write, relationships you wish to continue, and a clearer sense of what your life and work require.

Come with your work. Come as yourself.

Warmly,



Rev. Dr. Michele E. Watkins
CEO & Lead Convener · COMMUNE

FEATURED ARTISTS

Art, spirit & the written word



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Harmonia Rosales

Rosales's paintings reimagine the sacred through Black divinity, gold leaf, and the visual language of the Renaissance. Her work anchors the daily "Brush to Pen" sessions and the Featured Artist-in-Residence Conversation.

Each participant receives her book *Chronicles of Ori*.



ARTIST ~ LAMA IN RESIDENCE

Rev. Dr. JoAnne M. Terrell

Lama Bodhi Satyagraha

A Womanist theologian, ordained elder, author of *Power in the Blood*, and Emerita faculty of Chicago Theological Seminary.

As resident spiritual guide, mentor, and teacher, she leads morning devotions and supports writing rooted in healing, liberation, and spiritual integrity.

MEET YOUR GUIDES

Artists & retreat leadership



Dr. Amey Victoria Adkins-Jones

Lead Conversant

Assistant Professor of Theology and Africana Studies at Emory's Candler School of Theology. A constructive theologian specializing in Mariology, Black feminist and womanist thought, and theological anthropology, she is author of *Immaculate Misconceptions: A Black Mariology* (2025). Her project *See No Evil* examines visual technologies and Black death and protest. She leads the featured Rosales conversation.



Rev. Dr. Michele E. Watkins

Lead Convener · Guide for Brush to Pen

Founder of The Commune Institute and a womanist religious scholar working at the intersections of postmodern philosophy and contemplative spirituality. She convenes the retreat and guides optional Brush to Pen sessions in response to Harmonia Rosales's artwork. Her invitation centers protected work, contemplation, care, and companionship for Afrodiasporic scholars, artists, and thinkers.

Brush to Pen sessions are guided by Rev. Dr. Michele E. Watkins. Ms. Rosales joins the reception and featured conversation.

AT A GLANCE

Five days in community

ALL TIMES EASTERN · SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT

SUN · MAR 7

Arrival & settling in

2:00–6:00 PM · Hotel check-in. Evening at leisure.

MON · MAR 8

Mediumship: What moves through our work?

8:00–8:30 AM · Morning devotion with Rev. Dr. Terrell
9:00 AM–12:00 PM · Writing Studio I
1:30–3:30 PM · Black Cultural Production salon
4:00–6:00 PM · Brush to Pen I
7:30 PM · Opening Libation · 8:00 PM · Evening Fire

TUE · MAR 9

Artist-scholar encounter

8:00–8:30 AM · Morning devotion with Rev. Dr. Terrell
9:00–10:30 AM · Writing Studio II
10:45 AM–12:15 PM · Featured Artist Conversation
2:00–4:30 PM · Brush to Pen II
4:45–6:00 PM · Optional consultation & feedback circles

WED · MAR 10

Deep work: From encounter to practice

8:00–8:30 AM · Morning devotion with Rev. Dr. Terrell
9:00 AM–12:00 PM · Writing Studio III
2:00–4:30 PM · Brush to Pen III
4:30–6:00 PM · Optional feedback session
8:00 PM · COMMUNE Reading & Showing

THU · MAR 11

Farewells & departures

7:30–9:00 AM · Breakfast & informal farewells
11:00 AM · Philadelphia charter · 12:15 PM · MDT charter

EKPHRASTIC WRITING SESSIONS

Brush to Pen

Encounter art. Attend deeply. Write in response.



Harmonia Rosales · *The Creation of God* (2017)
© Harmonia Rosales · The Bennett Collection of Women Realists

Who enters the frame as sacred?

Ekphrasis is writing in response to art. Harmonia Rosales's *The Creation of God* revisits Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, placing Black women in the central roles. The familiar gesture invites us to reconsider whose bodies carry sacred authority, whose stories shape our imagination, and what a changed image makes possible.

Guided by Rev. Dr. Michele E. Watkins, Brush to Pen offers space to look closely, reflect, and let language emerge. Begin with a detail: a hand, a gaze, the space between figures. Follow it into a poem, a passage of prose, a prayer, or a fragment that speaks to your own work.

Monday · Audience	For whom do you write? Who is invited into the world your words create?
Tuesday · Presence and Absence	Whose presence or absence calls you to write? What comes into view when Black women occupy the sacred frame?
Wednesday · Possibility	What does this encounter make newly imaginable in your scholarship, vocation, or creative practice?

Optional · Monday–Wednesday, 1:30–3:30 PM Eastern, in a separate room, concurrent with Writing Studio II. Choose how to use these hours. Ms. Rosales joins the reception and featured conversation.

ENCOUNTER, REFLECT, RESPOND

Encounter · Ìbápadé

The Sacred Convergence & Reverence

> Whose presence or absence calls me to write?

Ìbápadé is the intentional convergence of worlds, spirits, and communal presence. Before we put pen to paper, we acknowledge that which calls us into the room. We attune ourselves to the divine within the mundane, honor the ancestral in our present moment, and step into the venerable imaginaries without condemning the uncanny. We present ourselves as interconnected fragments ready to refract light together.

An invitation to practice

Attend to a presence, an absence, or an inherited memory. Notice what calls you to write.



A Portrait of Eve (2021)
Harmonia Rosales

ENCOUNTER, REFLECT, RESPOND

Reflect · Àyẹ̀wò

The Deliberate Turn & Inner Sight

Who am I writing for?

A kaleidoscope yields vision through human movement and deliberate examination of what lies beneath the surface, or Àyẹ̀wò. We turn our thoughts, memories, inherited traits, and life events under a new angle of light. Orí-Inú, our inner consciousness, offers a fresh vantage point on lived experience. We unearth hidden meanings and sacred patterns. We embrace our role as mediums and safeguard Afrodiasporic wisdom.

An invitation to practice

Turn your attention inward. Consider whose lives, questions, and hopes your words will meet.



Miss Education (2020)
Harmonia Rosales

ENCOUNTER, REFLECT, RESPOND

Respond · Ẹbọ & Àṣẹ

The Sacred Offering & Manifestation

What do I hope my words make possible?

Response is the work of *enfleshment*. Through Ìbápadé we meet the call; through Àyẹ̀wò we rotate our vision. We construct our offering, our Ẹbọ, and claim authority to name our truths through our languages, mediums, disciplinary styles, and native prose. Àṣẹ is the creative force that transforms internal attunement into an external gift that sends our words into the world to actualize possibilities and generate futures that endure.

An invitation to practice

Make an offering in your chosen form. Name what you hope it will make possible.

As mediums of memory and truth, every turn of the page is a turn of the mirror. Welcome to the work.



Queen Moremi (2023)
Harmonia Rosales

REGISTRATION & PARTICIPATION

The shared retreat package

Included for every participant

- Featured sessions with Artists in Residence Ms. Harmonia Rosales and Rev. Dr. JoAnne M. Terrell (Lama Bodhi Satyagraha).
- Protected Writing Studios and optional Brush to Pen sessions.
- Morning Meditation, salons, and the COMMUNE Reading & Showing.
- Cohort materials, including *Chronicles of Ori*.
- Meals according to the retreat schedule.
- Hershey Gardens admission, including the indoor Butterfly Atrium.

The same access, for every participant

General and VIP participants share access to the retreat's sessions and artist conversations. VIP adds an autographed Harmonia Rosales print.

Prepare to be welcomed

After registering, share your project interests, dietary requirements, and access needs. Bring the work or question that needs your attention.

Protected studios provide twelve hours of project time. Afternoon studios and optional Brush to Pen sessions occur concurrently; choose how to use those hours.

VENUE, LODGING & TRAVEL

Lodging, travel & access

Lodging · separate booking

$199 per night cohort rate. Room-block reservations open December 1, 2026. Arrange spa services separately.

Travel & access

Plan arrival for Sunday afternoon, March 7. After registration, share access needs and transportation information so the Institute can prepare to welcome you.

Make room for Free Time

Daily Free Time offers space to enjoy the gardens, pool, and quiet places at the hotel. Spa services are arranged separately.



TWO WAYS TO JOIN THE COHORT

Registration & participation

All participants receive the same access to retreat sessions and artist conversations. VIP adds an autographed Harmonia Rosales print. Lodging is booked separately.

General Registration

$2,750

December 1, 2026 – January 30, 2027

The full retreat package.

Preregistration promotion · $2,500

For SSBR members and HTI alumni through November 30, 2026.

VIP Registration

$3,500

The full retreat package plus an autographed Harmonia Rosales print.

Register · $500 deposit

chalkandpen.thecommuneinstitute.org/register

REGISTRATION

Payment & print details

Deposit & balance

$500 non-refundable deposit at registration. Balance due January 30, 2027:

Registration	Balance due
General	$2,250 balance
VIP	$3,000 balance

Lodging is booked separately

$199 per night at The Hotel Hershey, with complimentary parking and no resort fee. Room-block reservations open December 1, 2026.

Your autographed VIP print

- Artwork: autographed print by Harmonia Rosales.
- Preview: view the print at Monday's reception with the Artists in Residence.
- Collection: Wednesday evening or Thursday before departure, in a protective sleeve and rigid portfolio for travel.

General participants may purchase a print or upgrade to VIP, subject to availability and the agreed sales terms. Print purchase prices are separate from the VIP upgrade charge.

Ask the Institute about print shipping options and charges.

After registration

You will be invited to share your project interests, dietary requirements, and access needs.

chalkandpen.thecommuneinstitute.org/register

MAKE THE WELCOME POSSIBLE

Cooperative giving & sponsorship

Communities pool resources so that the work of individuals can strengthen the life of the whole.

SPONSOR A CHALK & PEN FELLOW

Give a scholar room to create.

$3,500

Support time, space, food, lodging, conversation, critique, and community for Black scholarship.

Discuss a fellowship with the Institute.

Many gifts. A shared welcome.

Individual gifts may be pooled so that many contributors can collectively support one scholar.

Gift	Giving level
$100	Friend
$250	Supporter
$500	Writing Sponsor
$1,000	Patron
$1,250	Shared Sponsor
$2,500	Scholar Sponsor

Cooperative Retreat Partner · $10,000+

Support the gathering through a larger partnership.

The Commune Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Gifts are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.