

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER

Boston University School of Theology

Summer 1990 Vol. 6, No. 3



DIFFERENCES HONORED AT WOMEN AND THE WORD 1990

The sixth annual Women and The Word preaching event sponsored by the Anna Howard Shaw Center took place on March 22 and 23. This year's theme was "Honoring Differences: Women's Cross-Cultural Realities and Preaching," and featured The Reverend Dr. Christine Smith, The Reverend Joan Martin, and The Reverend Hae Sun Kim. The conference emphasized the importance of speaking out of one's own worldview and faith journey. It addressed the need to recognize and name the fact that one's background or "social location" is operative in one's theology and preaching.

The opening session creatively introduced the cultural realities of the three speakers as each presented symbols of her heritage. Joan Martin played a tape of African drums and displayed a brightly woven cloth on the candle-lit table; Hae Sun Kim spread a colorful striped cloth and invoked the spirit of her ancestors by ringing traditional Korean bells; and Christine Smith disclosed her Appalachian heritage by displaying an afghan woven by her aunt and a lantern used by her father, a freight train worker.

By exploring their differences and their commonalities these women challenged the assumption that there are universal theological truths apart from the context in which they are preached.

As Rev. Smith, assistant professor of homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary, remarked, "I am aware that the evolution of my social and theological consciousness has been fundamentally shaped by the realities of my social location."

She went on to list a number of these self-definitions that have shaped who she is: "I am white, I am a woman, I am a feminist, I am able-bodied," she said. She also acknowledged that, conversely, she is shaped by who she is not as well as who she is. "My evolution has been just as fundamentally shaped by my not being a person of color, by my not being a man, by my not being a person with with any discernible disability..." In this, she articulated the difficulty in naming and owning these definitions.

She remarked, "I do indeed find it very hard work to get clear, and stay clear, about who I am, what I am; who I am not, what I am not; and their meaning and significance for my work in the world. But honoring human difference, my own and others, is what this clarity is all about,...and the honoring of women's cross-cultural differences is what this event is all about."

According to Dr. Smith, we must acknowledge the vast differences among people and the myriad of human realities and incorporate these differences with our own self-understanding in our preaching.

"Preaching," she said, "is an act of public theological naming. It is an act of disclosing and articulating the truths about our present human existence, and also it is an act of bringing new reality into being, an act of creation...it is nothing less than the interpretation of our present world, and hopefully, an invitation to a profoundly different world."

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The Reverend Hae Sun Kim, copastor of the Korean-American congregation in Cambridge, Mass., spoke of the pain of living in a community where there is just one truth proclaimed by one voice, namely, the privileged class. "So when different voices speak, they are considered wrong."

"There is injustice," she said, "when some people speak for others, when white women speak for all women, when the educated and the middle class ignores the experience of the poor and uneducated."

The daughter of a Christian minister in Korea, the Reverend Hae Sun Kim grew up in poverty as one of few Christians in this country whose history is one of oppression by outside powers.

She commented on the need to define the "social (and) historical location of our lives ... for our ideas and thoughts and feelings come from that social location." But she also cautioned against the detriment of individuation and alienation among people in a society.

"In our society, we are encouraged not to make the connections and we have to ask, who benefits from our alienation? Who benefits in this highly individualized society?"

"The reality of our lives," she continued, "is that one happening is related to the other. People in a privileged position over others need to know that in all social structures, the way we live, the way we spend money, the way we make decisions, the way we preach, the way we pray, have everything to do with the poverty, oppression, and exploitation of others."

She concluded, "Not making connections as preachers and theologians is participating in the perpetuation of oppression and exploitation of our brothers and

sisters and the earth and nature around us."

To the Reverend Joan Martin, codirector of the Church and World Institute of the Protestant Campus Ministry at Temple University, preaching in the African-American tradition is a "dialogical act."

"As we talk about women honoring difference across our cultures and the meaning of preaching, I want to emphasize that fundamentally, I believe preaching is a dialogical act. It is a dialogical act whether it is the body's response to drums... the hearts response to the sacraments, or the mind and the whole body's response to words. It is all part of call and response. There is no preaching in the African-American community that does not engender call and response. That means that preaching is not just speaking the truth, but hearing it spoken back to you. It is dialectical."

"Preaching is about being embodied in this culture," she continued. "It's about being all that we are physically, and that means skin color and language. It means the dialogue of different languages... but it is not about the different languages that we speak but that which we supposedly hold in common and share."

As the Reverend Joan Martin explained, the question is NOT "What does the Bible say? - as if we are a blank slate." Instead, one must ask, "in what contexts do we place those understandings?"

Nearly 175 individuals participated in this year's annual preaching event. Preaching workshops were facilitated by numerous local clergywomen. The two-day event's closing communion service expressed the dialectic tone of the event, using bread from various cultures in the communion celebration.

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WOMEN MAKING NEWS AT BUSTH

Dr. Dana L. Robert, professor of international mission at the School of Theology has recently been named an associate professor at Boston University, and has also received tenure. Dr. Robert is the first female faculty member in the Boston University School of Theology to receive tenure. Congratulations Dr. Robert!

Dr. Carole R. Bohn, a specialist in pastoral and developmental psychology, has been named executive director of the Albert V. Danielsen Institute for Pastoral Care at Boston University. Dr. Bohn had been serving this past year as director ad interim of the institute. Congratulations Dr. Bohn!

The Rev. Dr. Terry Scherf, former director of field education and assistant professor of pastoral theology, has accepted a position as

a Lily Scholar at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. We wish Dr. Scherf the best in this new phase of her ministry.

Mary Lou Greenwood Boice, BUSTH registrar and Anna Howard Shaw Board Member, recently received her Master of Theological Studies degree from the school, with a concentration in pastoral counseling. Congratulations Mary Lou!

Myra Vandersall Siegenthaler has been named head librarian for the School of Theology Library. Ms. Siegenthaler was the deputy director of the Wessell Library, Tufts University, with the rank of associate librarian/assistant professor of library science. She has been at Tufts since 1978. Ms. Siegenthaler will join the staff at the Theology Library beginning July 1, 1990. We look forward to her arrival!

SHAW CENTER FINANCIAL UPDATE

By: MaryLou Greenwood Boice,
Shaw Center Board Member

With the end of the 1990 fiscal year comes the opportunity to report on fundraising for the Anna Howard Shaw Center.

Changes in giving this year are indicative of continued and growing funding support from a greater variety of sources. The Shaw Center received 117 gifts, in comparison to 75 gifts last year. In addition to an increase in donors, the average gift to the center rose from \$37.00 to \$45.00.

This year the Shaw Center received funding from two churches, both of which had named the center as a recipient of funding through their missions budgets. These churches are South Glastonbury Congregational Church and the United Methodist Church of Newton. Gifts from church organizations, as well

as from individuals, represent only a few possibilities for on-going support and involvement in the work of the Shaw Center.

There is a need, though, for more persons to share in meeting our financial needs. At the close of the fiscal year, the Shaw Center was \$8,000 shy of its \$20,000 operating budget. Since the Center's operating budget is tied directly to its fundraising, our budget for the coming year has been reduced.

All gifts, large or small, remind us of the unique role the Shaw Center has undertaken in providing resources and programming to women and men throughout the Church.

If you, or your church, is interested in encouraging the effects of the Anna Howard Shaw Center, or in learning more about the Center, please contact Margaret Wiborg (617) 353-3059.

CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE:

[Note: The following is one woman's reaction to the 1990 Women and the Word Preaching Event. The Reverend Imogene Stulken is the Protestant pastor at the University of Lowell. Some portions of her original paper, submitted for CEU credit, have been omitted because of space constraints. The following is used with her permission.]

Two themes emerged for me from Women and the Word that corresponded to themes I have been addressing particularly this past year. The first theme (actually specified in the subtitle of the event -- "Honoring Difference: Cross-Cultural Realities and Preaching") is the need for each of us to be aware of and to name the socio-historical reality from which we come, and not to presume to speak for others -- for members of another culture, class, age, gender, physical ability, sexual persuasion, race, or religion. The second theme, highlighted especially in the sermon on Thursday afternoon, is that of speech and silence.

First, some reflections on the first theme: For the past several years I have been trying to acknowledge -- first to myself -- the context from which I come and its effects on my work. The process is like that of peeling off layers (peeling off layers of unawareness) and of dropping assumptions. The process takes time and considerable effort. (As Chris Smith said in the opening plenary session: "Preparing for this conference is one of the hardest things I have ever done.") Just when I think that I have begun to make progress in understanding how I am an oppressor from the fact of my being a white person in this society -- just then I am asked to consider the fact of my being a member of the middle class, or my being able-bodied, or a U.S.

citizen. I appreciated Chris Smith's not only naming who she is...but also stating that she is just as fundamentally shaped by who she is not..."It is," she said, 'getting more and more difficult to realize who I am and to stay clear on that.'

Especially helpful to me in raising my awareness were Hea Sun Kim's comments about the difficulty of talking to a non-Korean audience. Such an audience lacked an understanding of the cultural history. Hea Sun had to choose how much to explain or how much to concentrate on making connections -- and thus risk misunderstanding. Joan Martin challenged me when she talked about our approach to preaching. It is not just a matter of asking, "What does the Bible say?" as if we come as blank slates! Rather, Joan reminded us, where we locate ourselves is important -- for this includes our relationship to the text. But important for me to hear also was her call to look at the source of revelation as well as to look at the cultural tradition through which we have received this revelation. It was important for me to be reminded that black preachers were told which scriptures to preach, and that there has been a history of the suppression of book learning for black children.

The point was also made that it is important for us to know our hearers. Based on her perception of her audience, Hea Sun chose to address imperialism rather than sexism. Joan noted that she would preach differently about internal oppression to a black audience rather than a white one. This point raises questions for me. Since I have Sunday evening worship services on campus, I am available to do supply work on Sunday mornings. Since January, I have been supplying

A REACTION TO WOMEN AND THE WORD

two or three Sunday's a month at a congregation in my denomination (ELCA) that is without a pastor. That leaves, however, ample opportunity to preach at congregations where I know even less about the concerns, attitudes, or needs of the members.

I turn now, to a few reflection on the second theme --that of speech and silence. Several years ago, I read Nellie Morton's book, The Journey Is Home. The book was very important for me. I have returned again and again to the phrase, "hearing to speech," the notion of the necessity to hear each other to speech....[and I acknowledge the] moments when I have been heard to speech. A theme that surfaced for me this semester was "finding my voice." Part of this arose because of the rerecognition that at least part of my voice is silent now....Another awareness from this spring was the seeming paradox that in order for me to find my speaking voice (one that is not falling all over itself, one that has something to say) I must find silence. I need times ^{apart}, I need times to be still, I need silence. For it is often in those moments of silence that insights and new understandings come. (In the words of Chris Smith: "Out of that silence speech will be born. Out of that speech, silence.")

I particularly appreciated the sermon entitled, "Silence and Speech," with each part followed by the prayers of solidarity. I heard a variety of voices, and they called forth a response in me. These words, especially, I wish to hear again: "Silence can be empowering, speech inspiring: but there are times when silence is devastating, when speech is violating." "Is it strategy, or fear, that keeps me talking too much or that keeps me silent?" [Chris

Smith] "As black children, our speech was suppressed, as otherwise it could lead to trouble upon trouble." "We learn that there's much not to talk about; and we learn to stuff it deep down." "Afro-Americans had been taught to speak in ways that really spoke silence." [Joan Martin] "There are times when I am silenced...there are times when I silence others." "The ability to know the right time to be silent and to speak is an act of faith, a gift of wisdom. God grant us that wisdom and courage in our lives." [Hea Sun Kim]

In our differences, from our various contexts, we speak and we are silent. For my own preaching I must always be aware of my context and of how this impacts my preaching. I must also strive to find my voice in that preaching. Even though I may admire and wish to emulate someone else's "style," that might not very well be my legitimate voice. (In this regard, I very much appreciated the comments that Sandra Rehe and Margaret Montjane had for each other at one of the preaching workshops. Their styles, their cultures are vastly different. Each expressed open admiration for the style and quality of the other, while recognizing the need to preach from their own context.)

So once again, the Women and the Word event is over. But in many ways, it has only begun and continues to challenge and inspire.



A WOMAN'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE 1848



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON (1815-1902): After seeing the cruel and unjust treatment of women before the law, in the office of her father, Judge Cady, she vowed, even as a child, to find a way to help change these laws. Her marriage to the abolitionist leader, Henry B. Stanton, swept her swiftly into the current of national politics. This laid a firm foundation for the political experience to wage the battle for woman's rights in which she was to become a most inspiring leader. Together with friends, she planned and executed the first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, July 19th and 20th 1848. Her life story is truly the history of the Woman's Rights Movement.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this let facts be submitted to a candid world

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half of the people of this country, their social and religious degradation — in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the state and national legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this convention will be followed by a series of conventions embracing every part of the country.

Resolutions

Resolved, That all laws which prevent women from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of man, are contrary to the great precept of nature, and therefore of no force or authority.

Resolved, That woman is man's equal — was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such . . .

Resolved, That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise

Resolved, That the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit and for the securing to women an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce.

Resolved, therefore, That, being invested by the Creator with the same capabilities and the same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is demonstrably the right and duty of woman, equally with man, to promote every righteous cause by every righteous means; and especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking, by any instrumentalities proper to be used, and in any assemblies proper to be held; and this being a self-evident truth growing out of the divinely implanted principles of human nature, any custom or authority adverse to it, whether modern or wearing the hoary sanction of antiquity, is to be regarded as a self-evident falsehood, and at war with mankind.

Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments July 19, 1848

RESOURCE LIBRARY UPDATE

The Shaw Center library continues to be a first-class resource library of theological and other materials by, for and about women. Many new additions to the stacks have been made in the past year. Most recently, The Reverend Dorothy Paine donated several hundred volumes from her own library to the Shaw Center library.

Other contributors in the past year include: Carmen Ward, Janet Wallace, June Goudey, Christine Wagner, Margaret Wiborg, Faith Richardson, Mary-Scifres Petrick, Paul Deats, Ruth Duck, Liz McNenny, Louise Cunha, Linda Clark, Betty Allen, Dorothy Rogers, and Divinitas Bookstore. The Shaw Center is most grateful for the generosity of these and other individuals who are making the Shaw Center library expansive.

While space does not allow us to list all of our latest acquisitions, some recent additions to the stacks include:

*Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse - Joanne C. Brown and Carole R. Bohn, editors

*AIDS: The Women - Ines Rieder and Patricia Ruppelt, editors

*Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols - Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Herrell, Paula Richman, editors

*Pioneer Healer: The History of Women Religious in American Health Care - Ursula Stepsis and Delores Liptak, editors

*Women Mystics in Medieval Europe - Emile Zum Brunn and Georgette Epiney-Burgard

*Speaking of Christ: A Lesbian Feminist Voice - Carter Heyward

*Jubilee - Margaret Walker

*Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and About Asian-American Women - Asian-American Women United of California, editors

*The Fact of a Doorframe: Poems Selected and New, 1950-1984 - Adrienne Rich

*The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions - Paula Gunn Allen

*Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources - Rachel Biale

*Women with Disabilities: Essays in Psychology, Culture, and Politics - Michelle Fine and Adrienne Asch, editors

*Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist - Hazel V. Carby

*More than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities - Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak

*Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America - Jonathan Kozol

*I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse - Ellen Bass and Louise Thornton

*Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church: Toward a Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology - Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Yolanda Tarango

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 14-15, 1990 - 7th Annual Fall Women's Retreat for BUSTH students, spouses, faculty and staff. This year's retreat will be at Camp Harrington.

OCTOBER 11, 1990 - A Faith Event, a fundraising event in honor of Faith Richardson, Anna Howard Shaw Center Advisory Board Member, author, historian, and linguist. For more information, contact the Shaw Center, (617) 353-3075.

NOVEMBER 3, 1990 - Anna Howard Shaw Center Women's Studies Event. This year's topic: Women, Work and Wholeness. Location to be announced.

NOVEMBER 12, 1990 - Women's Spirituality Retreat for clergy and lay women. Facilitated by Dr. Linda Clark.

MARCH 14-15, 1991 - Women and the Word 1991 "The Living Word: Scriptural Context and Mutual Ministry". Leadership includes the Rev. Dr. Renita Weems, author of Just a Sister Away, and The Rev. Dr. Lynn Rhodes author of Co-Creating: A Feminist Vision of Ministry.

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The challenge presented by Women and the Word 1990 was to listen carefully and openly to the cultural realities of others. The goal was not consensus, but dialogue. And the dialogue continues.

(Portions of this article appeared in the following sources: "Women Urge Preaching Out of Own World View," by Ann Whiting, Zion's Herald, May 1990; and "Women Say Their Culture Has Affected Their Preaching," by Susan Keane, Boston University Today, April 9-23, 1990.)

SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER VOL. 6 No. 3

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