

# Anna Howard Shaw Center

NEWSLETTER

Volume 30 • Issue 2 • Spring 2014

## “Leadership: Women and Power Dynamics”

### Reflections from Women in the World Conference

*By Rev. Dr. Choi Hee An and Jessica Roffe*

For the last several decades, women’s leadership has been an increasingly public, difficult and important topic in the religious sphere as well as the social and political sphere. Women’s ordination has been officially sanctioned by several religious institutions, and women leaders continue moving into the public eye with increasing visibility. The Shaw Center Board Members decided that the theme of this Women in the World conference would be about how women leaders navigate and negotiate complex power dynamics, among themselves and also in the world at large. Our wonderful guests spoke, presented, and preached with deep conviction, sharing their faith as well as diverse experiences, wisdom, and insights.

Our first panelist was Ms. Monique Nguyen, Executive Director of MataHari: Eye of the Day,

which empowers immigrant women and women of color to end gender-based violence and exploitation. She opened by talking about some of her own struggles around identity and marginalization based on her legal status. She shared from the heart about recognizing how her personal history has shaped the way she chooses to use power in her current position. “As a gatekeeper of sorts, in my position, I have to cultivate the power that comes with that. I need to... share power with others.” She explained it requires a high level of self-awareness, and serves as a constant reminder to be in solidarity with other women and oppressed groups. “I feel powerless when I am alone in thought, voice, and action; and that is why solidarity with other women is vital for survival.”

Ms. Yara González-Justiniano, a current student leader at the School of Theology starting her Ph.D. this Fall, responded to Ms.

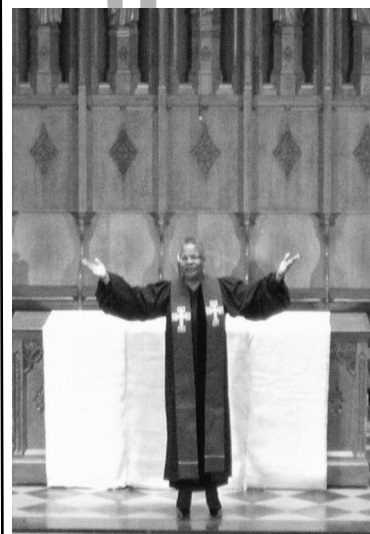
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Panelists Rev. Dr. HiRho Park, Dr. Nancy Neinhaus, and Rev. Tsitsi Moyo



Panelists Ms. Katie Omberg and Ms. Myung Eun Park



Rev. LaTrelle Easterling preaches at Marsh Chapel

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## Haciendo de tripas, corazones: The Creative Ethos of Latina Women



By Yara González-Justiniano

*“Pero yo estaba hecha de presentes, y mis pies planos sobre la tierra promisoría no*

*resistían caminar hacia atrás, y seguían adelante, adelantando las cenizas para alcanzar el beso de los senderos nuevos.”* Julia de Burgos- Yo misma fui mi ruta.

Like many other Latina women, I grew up with the expression *hay que hacer de tripas, corazones* (we have to make hearts out of tripe). If you can get past the literary imagery of the expression and into the metaphor, you will find the core *lo cotidiano* of many Latin@ families, where achieving what was needed only came by using what you had. This is one of the reasons why familial ties are so important for a majority of the Latin@ community, both in and outside of the United States. These same family models are being transported into the academic sphere and are transforming academia from an individualist environment into a communal endeavor.

Colorado State University ran a study which showed that

between the years 2006-2007, of the doctoral degrees conferred to women in the U.S., only 3.08% were given to Latinas in contrast with 61.9% given to White women. They adjudicated these numbers by attributing it to the broken educational pipeline Latina women go through, which devalues their cultural upbringing and reinforces social inequality within the school system. The same can be said for Latino men but on a different scale than women. This underrepresentation of Latinas limits their possibilities for acquiring a degree in higher education, limiting their possibilities in broader areas of society.

Dr. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, feminist theologian, coined the term “kyriarchy” to describe the interrelationship among different systems of oppression. In the kyriarchal society that we live in, Latinas have found a way of *hacer de tripas, corazones* by maintaining a network of support and mentorship of other Latina scholars who have gone through it already. It not only helps them achieve their ultimate goal, but achieve it while keeping their sanity and embracing their cultural identity. In a 2009 article in *Perspectivas*, journal of the His-

panic Theological Initiative, Dr. Loida Martell-Otero argued that they learn how to “negotiate the structures of power and privilege in the academia” while becoming a community, as it “challenges both the Church and the academy in prophetic ways.” One of many examples of this is within Rev. Dr. Cristian De La Rosa’s mentorship of the BU STH Hispanic/Latino Student Association. De La Rosa is the embodiment of our *Familia Latina* at BU School of Theology. Women like her, who use their position within the Academy to empower other women to achieve a greater level of education, make a monumental difference in our academic ethos through fostering creativity and providing affirmation. She shows there are other ways of looking into our contextual realities while using whatever tools we manage to gather, in order to build better and sustainable social systems. We honor our roots and our mentor, not only by recognizing her work, but by continuing in her footsteps by bridging cultural gaps, affirming all identities, and using what we have to make what the community needs. As in Acts 3:6, “...silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you.”

## Leading and Learning in the Vision of God



By Rev. Karen A. Greenwaldt

After my ordination in 1975 as a deacon and as an elder in 1978 in the United

Methodist Church, my Bishop

welcomed me “to the brotherhood”. A couple of years later, I met with my new Bishop who said, “Women in ministry is a thing whose time will come”. With each comment, I felt my brain shift. Yes, I was the first woman to be ordained in my annual conference (regional organ-

ization of the church), but I had experienced few times of outright discrimination and anger directed toward me as a clergywoman. However with these words ringing in my ears, my internal world changed. I saw the world differently.

No longer complacent about

*Continued on page 3*



## The Anna Howard Shaw Center is Going Green!

The Shaw Center has been moving towards a vision of responsible creation care and stewardship. We now offer organic fair trade coffee, re-useable k-cups, and re-useable mugs. As part of our efforts we are changing our newsletter format to be more environmentally sustainable. This issue will be our last printed newsletter.

Please contact us to either [join our e-newsletter email list \(shawctr@bu.edu\)](mailto:shawctr@bu.edu), or to request a [PDF copy of future newsletters](#) on eco-friendly paper (call 617-353-3075).

To contact the Shaw Center please visit our website at [www.bu.edu/shaw](http://www.bu.edu/shaw).



Art by Rev. Nory Leacham, BU STH '12

## Leading and Learning in the Vision of God *cont'd from page 2*

my place in ministry, I claimed internally a strong sense of leadership. From early childhood on, I had assumed leadership but took for granted the responsibilities placed on me as a leader. In the wake left by the comments of my Bishops, I knew I had to take responsibility for my own ways of being in ministry and needed to support the leadership of other people, women and men.

Now as I move into retired relationships with the Church, I see how these two comments made all the difference in my life. I chose to be a leader, to take responsibility for my leadership, and to learn as much as I could about being an effective leader, role model, mentor, and guide for others. I enrolled in classes, read countless books and articles on leadership, pondered deeply the examples of Jesus' leadership, and watched and learned from others whom I experienced to be effective leaders.

I have chosen to lead from whatever place I found myself to be. I raised my hand (actually and

metaphorically) and offered myself for leadership roles. I looked forward to see what opportunities might await and learned all I could about what it would take to be a leader in those places. At times, I actually moved into leadership roles I imagined. At other times, I gained insights and knowledge from exploring how I might have been a leader in those places.

Mother Teresa said, "Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person. Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies." (Australian Centre for Leadership for Women).

Jesus said in the Parable of the Talents, "... you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things..." (Matthew 25:23 NRSV)

Always I have seen things that could be done – in ministry and in my larger life. I often have moved into those spaces by providing leadership. At times, I have acted singly, and at other times, I've joined others who sought similar

activity. I rarely have waited to be asked to provide leadership. I have acted, and the formal title of 'leader' or public affirmation of my leadership has come -- directly or indirectly.

Most importantly, I have sought to be a leader who would be seen as a follower of Jesus Christ. I continue to ponder how Jesus lived, what he said and did. I take seriously a question asked at my ordination, "Do you expect to be made perfect in this life?" "Yes," I answer as I seek to live each day faithfully as a leader and as a follower in response to God's commandments.



Bishop Susan W. Hassinger, Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, and Rev. Karen Greenwaldt serve on a panel

# Muslim Women and the Challenge of Authority in Religion and Politics



By Dr. Shahla Haeri

For well over a decade I have been fascinated by and studied the apparently unprecedented and paradoxical emergence of large numbers of Muslim women as political agents. From women's impressive mobilization and participation in the Iranian presidential election of 2009 to their vocal presence in the North Africa and the "Arab Spring," Muslim women are energetically marshalling their resources and participating in the public domain. Brief though the "Arab Spring" seems to have been, it has already engendered a more vocal gender reflexivity and rekindled political awakening in the region. Veiled and unveiled, women have found common grounds, joined forces and have mobilized. Globally, modernity has resulted in tremendous social changes and structural transformations in traditional and patriarchal institutions: the most conflictual and anxiety producing of all is the changing gender roles, statuses and relations. Similar to women from other world religions, Muslim women demand legal equality, political representation, and economic participation. My interest was first sparked when the tightly veiled, and highly educated and articulate Mrs. Moloud Shahid Salis told me that she saw no incompatibility between being a woman and becoming the president of a country like the Islamic

Republic of Iran. She was one of the forty seven presidential contenders in 2001, six of whom I interviewed for my video documentary, *Mrs. President: Women and Political Leadership in Iran* (2002). Ten years later and in another Muslim society, the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Tawakkol Abdel-Salam Karman, also veiled, legitimated her political leadership on the basis of her religious beliefs in equal citizenship. She reached back in history, tracing her noble genealogy to Queen Arwa al-Sulayhi, who exercised political as well as religious leadership in Yemen from 1067 to 1138.

History of Islam and the Muslim world, in all its geographical, political and cultural diversity, bears an overwhelmingly masculine imprint. As the sole custodians of religious and political authority, male jurists and scholars have monopolized and "arrogated to themselves" the sacred knowledge. They have historically functioned as the only interpreters of the Quran, the Hadith (tradition of Prophet Muhammad), and jurisprudence. Muslim women's leadership in religious and political domains, however, has received less attention, if not almost "forgotten." With appreciable reflexivity presently Muslim feminists and scholars are seriously tackling subjects of religious and political authority and leadership, and are determined to contribute to the process of knowledge production. Globally

and locally, they have challenged not only the essentialist Orientalist stereotypes of women, gender and veiling, but also the patriarchal and doctrinal monopoly of sacred knowledge and the medieval reconstruction of the Quranic revelations. At a conference organized in March of 2014 at Princeton University on "The Past and Present of Female Religious Authority in Shi'i Islam" (I was unable to attend), the organizers addressed the serious obstacles faced by women to serve as religious leaders, "despite the fact that most schools of jurisprudence recognize women as muftis, and that, historically, local Muslim communities did recognize women as religious scholars and leaders over sometimes substantial periods of time" (from the poster). Islamic scholars' attempt to reconstruct women's past contribution to religious knowledge, "reveals a large number of women who are described as jurists (faqihat), and who are asserted to have attained a level of competence that qualified them to issue fatwas" (Ibid.)



Sacred Worth Club and classmates open mail for Black & Pink's incarcerated LGBTQ pen pal program.



## Racehorse

### Poem of a Woman's Transformation

by Ho-Soon Han

All my life I ran  
With blinders  
Facing only forward  
I ran I ran I ran  
To prove that I'm worthy

One day while running  
A voice whispered  
"Be free, be happy"  
Time stopped running  
So did I

Spectators screamed with boos  
and woes  
Then one by one  
Walked away  
Shaking their heads  
Putting their thumbs down

From well-liked to disliked  
From favored to abandoned  
Tempted to gallop again  
Begging them to come back

Then the voice whispered  
"Take off your blinders"  
After a long silence, thick and  
heavy  
With shaky hands  
I took off my blinders

Exposed,  
Frightened,  
Vulnerable,  
Yet for the first time  
I saw my life with clarity,  
Faced the truth of  
Who I am

I am not a racehorse  
And I  
No longer want to be one

## Women in the World Conference *cont'd from page 1*

Nguyen's presentation. She added her own comments that "overcoming" a relationship of unjust power isn't something one just moves on from, but an experience that leaves a lasting impression. It's something one has to learn to sit with, which just becomes part of one's existence. She empathized with Ms. Nguyen's dislike for the word "overcoming," explaining that it makes sense when dealing with an ongoing struggle. Coming out of a colonial context, she herself is accustomed to thinking of power in a negative sense, from the perspective that "power over" leadership seems very inaccessible. But she emphasized that power isn't inherently good or bad. Considering relative privilege and feelings of guilt, she introduced covenantal language to explain how we should "try to transform that guilt into a commitment, and a responsibility, and an entrustment" to share power with others. She added the question: "How do we walk with the people who have [power], but don't see it because they've never lost it; and make them part of the whole community and the whole struggle?"

Dr. Nancy Neinhaus, from Andover Newton Theological School, talked about the importance of recognizing 'the other' in order to build relationships across difference. She explained that she always carries multiple identities with her when she enters a room, and tries to approach any situation in "apprentice mode" - recognizing she is not an expert. "The only way to ensure that women in the

world work to support each other is to carefully build coalitions across the chasms that divide us." She called us to see that otherness is really just God's creation through a different perspective, and shouldn't be used to foster fear, distrust, or hatred. This undermines our attempts at solidarity. "The borders between our communities, whether gated or not, create a divide that systems of power...are designed to reinforce." She really brought home the point that until we understand how all systems of oppression are connected, we are in danger of undermining *each other* rather than the oppression that is the true source of our pain. We need to all work together for a transformed world.

Rev. Tsitsi Moyo then shared about her experiences dealing with the nuanced intersections of xenophobia, sexism, racism, and homophobia, and how she used the gifts of genuine curiosity, willingness to learn, and relationships built *over time* to navigate situations of power and powerlessness in her personal and professional life. She used her experience pastoring a white church to talk about the importance of relational power and authority that goes beyond the title "Reverend." Religious leaders need to cultivate a deep faith, and make use of congregational covenants, to resist oppression while in positions of leadership. This is especially relevant where they are sometimes a part of dominant culture, and sometimes targeted by it themselves. She offered: "Lord help me not to hang up my harp on the willow

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## Women in the World Conference *cont'd from page 5*

tree." She and Dr. Neinhaus talked honestly about navigating privilege and power dynamics in their own friendship, highlighting that they give each other "gifts of grace" by being sensitive to cultural differences, forgiving honest ignorance, and remaining in relationship through conflict.

Rev. Dr. HiRho Park, Director of Clergy Lifelong Learning for the UMC General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, responded to Rev. Moyo by recounting what she once heard from a group of UMC women while facilitating a "Grace meets Power" seminar. She was thoughtful and honest in talking about the stratification of women within the church, implicitly calling for more cooperation and integration among churches, extension ministries, ordained and lay leaders, deacons, local pastors, and ethnic and racial minorities. Emphasizing that power is *within* us, the kingdom of god is *within* us, we can be aware of and resist the kyriarchal ethos that might characterize religious leadership. We need to learn about and be aware of the cultural politics of recognition, and who we choose to see in their wholeness vs who we unconsciously dehumanize for not being "like us."



Dr. Kathryn P. Darr and Rep. Shirley Owens Hicks at the Conference

She raised up the Bantu term "Ubuntu" as a way of grounding us in the deeply mutual bond and relationship we have with all of humanity. Rev. Dr. Park mentions that one powerful way of addressing this is through engaging ideas about the economic politics of redistribution. Another way is to seek out theological lenses grounded in different cultural traditions. For example, Minjung theology emphasizes that Korean women can use silence as means of power, to "manifest dignity and integrity" when that silence is finally released. This not only resists Western misinterpretations and challenges stereotypes, but reclaims the experience of non-English speaking immigrant women as one of powerfulness. This echoed back to Ms. Nguyen's work with immigrants who are often ostracized for not being native English speakers. From the liberating perspective of Minjung theology, Korean women have incredible power in being able to be heard and make their presence felt through wielding silence.

Representative Shirley Owen Hicks talked about growing up proud of her race and heritage because of her father's influence as a Baptist Minister, and how it helped to form her as a servant leader. Even as a politician, her leadership style is grounded in a religious conviction that she must work for justice in the world. Her statement that "I want to live with myself, so I want to be fit for myself to know," rippled through the audience and eve-



Ms. Yara Gonzalez-Justiano and Ms. Monique Nguyen at the Conference

ryone took out their notepads. Dr. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr added another observation about going beyond servant leadership. She said that many women undermine their authority to lead in hierarchical structures by being overly apologetic for their own abilities and power. As she reflected on her experience of being the first woman from STH to be the Chair of Boston University's Faculty Council, she demonstrated courage in supporting equality among women and minority faculty. She took heart from the practice of prayer as a way of sustaining her leadership, regularly reciting the words "God, enable me to see myself as you see me."

The conference featured two different panels highlighting voices from a younger generation and an older generation. Katie Omberg, a first year M. Div student, shared her experiences of being a young queer person in positions of power. She especially highlighted the complexity of receiving aspects of masculine privilege as a woman, sometimes benefitting from sexism and sometimes being marginalized by it. She also pointed to the influence of white

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## Women in the World Conference *cont'd from page 6*

privilege and class privilege in queer politics, calling on us to expand our agenda past marriage equality to intimately related issues such as poverty, incarceration, and immigration. Myungeun Park, a recent alumna and current S.T.M. student, talked about her first year of ministry as a local appointed Senior Pastor. She is the youngest *and* the first female pastor at her current church. Grounded in God's love through the holy spirit, she said she has been able to use the practice of celebration to build trust in her congregation, and affirm a commitment to mutual growth. It has taken time to adapt to a new style of leadership, but spiritual authority from within gave her



Susan W. Hassinger receiving the Anna Howard Shaw Award.

the confidence to step aside from society's expectations. This

empowered her to lead as a woman in a woman's role, rather than a woman in a man's role.

The next panel consisted of Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, Rev. Karen Greenwaldt, and Bishop Susan Hassinger. With their vast experience and seniority, they shared realistic advice for how to navigate systems of power and privilege as religious leaders. Rev. Greenwaldt memorably reminded us that it's important not to undermine or devalue ourselves when we know we have done our best in a situation. She talked about the personal resolve it took to march into positions where others didn't think she belonged as a woman, and pointed to the rightful authority that we have in participating in God's vision. Bishop Middleton gifted us with wisdom about how to empower others by remaining connected with God. She emphasized that sometimes we lead by walking in front of others, sometimes alongside them, and other times by walking behind them and pushing. Bishop Hassinger then shared personal anecdotes giving us insight into moments

she claimed her own power as a woman leader. She called up the visceral memory of a male clergy member telling her not to put her name in for Bishop, because he had a dream in which God personally warned him it was a bad idea. In response Bishop Hassinger replied that she, too, had personally talked with God, and discerned that God was calling her in this direction. This is an example of how women can recognize the authority of their own call to leadership, even within patriarchal power structures, and how empowering it is to claim one's religious authority regardless of institutional opposition and prejudices.

After these powerful testimonies, we had the great privilege of honoring Bishop Hassinger as the 8th recipient of our Anna Howard Shaw Award. Her life and her testimony are a noble example of how women exercise their power in service of empowering and raising others up. Her life and ministry are devoted to being in solidarity with others, overcoming prejudices against people who are powerless, and amplifying the voices of those who are oppressed. With endless testimo-

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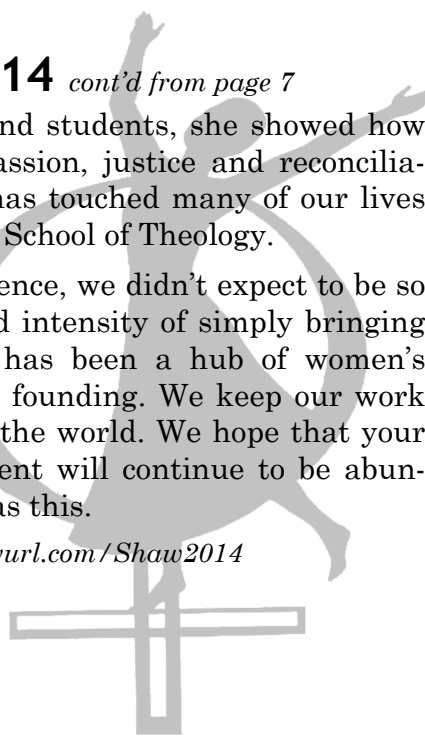
## **Women in the World 2014** *cont'd from page 7*

nies by colleagues, family, friends, and students, she showed how women in leadership practice compassion, justice and reconciliation, and transform the world. She has touched many of our lives and we are blessed to have her at the School of Theology.

As we prepared for this conference, we didn't expect to be so humbled and awed by the power and intensity of simply bringing people together. The Shaw Center has been a hub of women's scholarship and leadership since our founding. We keep our work as a call to serving God and serving the world. We hope that your support, donations, and encouragement will continue to be abundant, and inspire us to projects such as this.

*See our conference livestream at <http://tinyurl.com/Shaw2014>*

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## **ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER**

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