

Anna Howard Shaw Center

NEWSLETTER

Special Edition: Celebrating 30
Years of Women in the World

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Spring 2015

30 Years and Still Going Strong

By Choi Hee An and Kaci Norman

Over 30 years the Shaw Center has offered a place to explore questions ranging from the uniqueness of women's preaching, preaching wholeness, honoring difference, privilege, and finding voice, to interfaith dialogue, immigration, economic injustices, leadership and power dynamics. The wide range of conversations and speakers has held the attention of School of Theology students, female clergy, board members, faculty, lay members of the church, and all those willing to question and converse with us. This year's conference, '30 Years and Going Strong' spoke to all the creativity, passion, and brilliance of the history of Women in the World.' Throughout this conference, we looked back at this history to understand where we are today, and envision together what questions we need to continue asking and what work still needs to be done.



Dr. Diana Swancutt, professor at Boston University's Graduate Department of Religion, Xochitl Alvizo, a PhD candidate at BU who recently accepted a professorship at California State University: Northridge, and Rev. Dr. Julie Todd, Affiliate Faculty for Justice and Peace Studies at the Iliff School of Theology, commenced the conversation with an invigorating and challenging discussion on the difficulties faced by LGBTQI peoples every day in conversation with poverty. Dr. Swancutt began by examining the common source for both sexism and homophobia, each being rooted in misogyny and the need for control. Swancutt explored how these two underlie multiple forms of oppression, noting that this highlights an interconnectivity for them all. She also discussed the economic and political implications of control and misogyny, and how people are often intentionally pitted against one another making progress exceptionally difficult. To realize our connectivity elicits a call for solidarity and action with our community. Xochitl Alvizo then continued the conversation by locating it in the church and the household. In these places, it is possible to practice new models of inclusivity. Alvizo noted too that the church still has work to do in its acceptance of heteronormativity, and reminded the audience that the gospel is good news for all people. Because of this, the church should reexamine the implications of heteronormativity within its theology and teachings on sexuality. Julie Todd, as an activist involved with LovePrevails, then brought this panel to a close discussing how misogyny and control continue to exist in the church, and that disruption is needed. If the status quo of the church is to be toppled, more people need

Save the Date:
31st Women in
the World:
April 13, 2016

Inside this issue:

30 Years and Still Going Strong By Choi Hee An and Kaci Norman	1
Theology and Practice Through the Ages By EunJoo Mary Kim	3
How Many Women Have you Heard Preach? By Margaret Wiborg	5
In the Beginning by Mary Elizabeth Moore	6
Re-Imagining Redemption: The Shaw Center at its Best! by June Goudey	7
Donor's List	9

to consider themselves agents of change, keep a strong back bone, walk like a lion, and network so that we can support each other in the struggle.

In the second panel, Dr. Eun Joo Kim, Dr. David Jacobsen, and Rev. Jackie Blue discussed preaching from different perspectives, and the importance of putting these different perspectives in conversation with one another. Kim framed the conversation in an address on the direction and impact of women's preaching, mentioning the reality that many factors (sexual discrimination, globalization e.g.) continue to impact the reception of women pastors. Globalization, especially, begs the question of shifting contexts and the necessity of relevancy in preaching. Kim argued that shared ministry, the extension of preaching to include the congregation and a redefinition of authority, offers the tools and space to deal with constant change. The pulpit should be a place from which the church can experiment with different ways of participating in the life of the church. The directive of a preacher should be to expand her capacity for imagination and creativity, constantly reevaluating the identity of the church; this is also one of the most difficult things to cultivate. Jacobsen then expounded on the importance of cultural competencies and cosmopolitan personalities for the formation of theological knowledge, which blossoms when God's presence is made known in the complexities of race, culture, and gender. Theological knowledge leads to a



transformative impact on gender and mainline church disestablishment and re-imagination of where God is in the world and what shared ministry will look like. Finally, Rev. Blue offered an analysis of the call of the preacher from the perspective of the black church, where the call is indicative of a mystical divine partnership. Blue spoke about how the black church exists in and because of community, and how the preaching of the black church flows from the experiential reality of shared suffering and oppression. Blue discussed then that Kim's shared preaching has the potential to help people to continue to 'name the evil in the room.' Blue ended with a call to keep showing up and preaching the truth of the gospel.

In the final panel of the day, Bishop Hope Ward, of the southeastern jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, along with Dr. Cristian De La Rosa, and Jordan Zepher, a first year MDiv student at the School of Theology, gave poignant observations on the current atmosphere within churches and the multiplicity of contexts the church must be ready and willing to address. Ward

began with what she called a reality check—a temperature gage on how clergywomen perceive themselves in ministry. Her correspondence with several clergywomen showed by an embrace and continued questions of how to balance the many expectations and roles of women. This includes family obligations as well as inclusive language. Bishop Ward pointed out that while women bring unique and helpful gifts to the life of the church, such as collaboration, sharing of power, mentoring, and listening, the church often mirrors broader culture, which does not espouse these traits as highly as their masculine counterparts for a leader. For many of the clergywomen she consulted though, other women have been a source of strength, with one of them writing, "Women bring a collaborative energy bring to the table. They've always been the ones who were willing to walk beside me and wipe my tears. To tell me when I'm off my rocker. To trust my decisions to have my back. To be my surrogate sisters and mother." While the news is not all good, and there are certainly things to lament, women have worked with each other to find their own space within the church, and this work is not going to end anytime soon. Dr. De La Rosa joined the conversation, noting the particular experiences of Latina women in the church and remembering the



important work for 'little justice' these groups have been doing within the institutional church, even when it is difficult to participate. According to De La Rosa, Latina women bring specific strengths of flexibility and the ability to live in the in between spaces. She argues that in order to do this, epistemological retrieval, recontextualization, and a 'redirection of subjugating powers and institutionalized violence,' is necessary. "This process begins with telling our own stories difficult to do," said De La Rosa. Jor-tion, discussing her journey in dis- These particularities lend them- but also to different forms of faith. She notes that while it might united front, "we become more when we know who we are and we neers. We are the ones who are Even in all of the manifestations of beauty of the truth of the Gospel, ence concluded with a celebration beautiful history of Women in the ated a time of sharing from long-Shaw Center community. Margaret cussing the cause and struggles for the conference on women's preaching, followed by, Rev. Dr. June Goudey, who talked about the Anna Howard Shaw scholars and the influence that feminist theology events had on the STH community. In the memories of Dr. Carole Bohn and Dr. Kathe Darr, the Shaw Center has provided and continued to be a space to explore the new questions of feminist scholarship, such as Dr. Darr's first book, *Far More Precious than Jewels*, and in solidarity with struggling female faculty in both the life of the church and academia. Many other participants also had opportunities to share the profound influences the Shaw Center has had on their lives, in the remembrance of liturgies, friendships, and the powerful messages of women.

For 30 Years, the Shaw Center has continued to work on supporting women in their ministry and advocating for the people who are marginalized and oppressed. The Anna Howard Shaw Center is proud to continue to participate in the legacy of all the amazing women who have been bold enough to push the boundaries in their explorations of what it means to be church. Although we had difficult times and struggles to sustain ourselves, because of support from our donors, friends, alums, and STH community members, for the last 30 years, we have flourished and thrived, and we believe we are 'still going strong!'



from within privileged spaces, and this is dif- dan Zepher added her voice to the conversa- covering her identity, voice, and community. selves to different experiences in the church, preaching and participating in the life of seem more pragmatic for women to present a powerful and more enriched within ourselves know who we represent... We are the pio- constructing the picture, forming the image." what it means to be a woman, we have the which is a story worth sharing. Our confer- dinner, where we celebrated the long and World. Dean Mary Elizabeth Moore moder- standing and foundational members of the Wiborg began the sharing of memories dis-

cussing the cause and struggles for the conference on women's preaching, followed by, Rev. Dr. June Goudey, who talked about the Anna Howard Shaw scholars and the influence that feminist theology events had on the STH community. In the memories of Dr. Carole Bohn and Dr. Kathe Darr, the Shaw Center has provided and continued to be a space to explore the new questions of feminist scholarship, such as Dr. Darr's first book, *Far More Precious than Jewels*, and in solidarity with struggling female faculty in both the life of the church and academia. Many other participants also had opportunities to share the profound influences the Shaw Center has had on their lives, in the remembrance of liturgies, friendships, and the powerful messages of women.



Theology and Practice Through the Ages

by EunJoo Mary Kim

I was invited to speak at the 30-year anniversary of "Women and the Word" at the Anna Howard Shaw Center. For this occasion, I was asked to answer the questions: What have been the major transformations in the history of women's preaching? What are the major difficulties and struggles that women face as preachers today? And, how does the history of women's preaching help create a new vision for preaching? With regard to these questions, my book, *Women Preaching: Theology and Practice through the Ages*, is resourceful. In the past, the focus on the history of preaching has been dominated by male preachers. In this book, however, I highlighted the voices of female preachers worldwide, from the New Testament to the early twentieth century, as main characters in the arena of God's transforming activity through preaching. Their styles of preaching vary greatly in context, substance, and style, and helps us see diversity within the tradition of Christian preaching. Throughout history, there have been numerous women who rose to challenge of preaching in a male dominant society. Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, Anna Howard Shaw, and

Wha Soon Cho, to name a few, form a “great cloud of [female] witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) who followed after the example of Mary Magdalen and provide powerful examples of female preachers. A defining aspect of female preaching is the strong sense of a calling to preach. Women have had to defend their rights to preach not only by appealing to the Divine call but also by affirming the Divine call through theological and biblical claims. Jarena Lee, the first AME female preacher, stated that “if a man may preach, because the Savior died for him, why not the woman? Seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole Savior, instead of a half one?” In hearing women preach, we receive more fully the total human consciousness of the Divine and hear more completely the wholeness of God.

Pertaining to the differences in style, women utilize rhetoric to establish the authority needed to substantiate their voice in a patriarchal system. In doing so, they appeal to a higher authority than the church, that is, God who called them to preach. They used speaking techniques, such as the “rhetoric of reverse” and “visionary rhetoric,” to use their voice and their abilities to contribute to God’s humanizing activity. Women also used feminine imagery and feminine language in describing the nature of God in order to better understand, as women, who God is and what God is doing in the human world. They also used a wider range of techniques than only expository or point-making preaching to convey a message. Some examples of this include private letters, poems, dramas, testimonials, public speeches beyond the pulpit, defense statements in courtrooms, etc. By maintaining a wider repertoire of stylistic preferences, these women were able to preach to the community at large on the social issues of temperance, suffrage, and social purity.

Female preachers are becoming increasingly more common as the figure of the pulpit is less and less a privileged place for male clergy only. The tide has begun to change towards the reception of female clergy members, so much so that many seminaries and theological schools have female students making up more than half or a little less than half of the student body. But the context for preaching is more complex because of the rapid change of our world toward globalization. Female preachers in the U.S. face double or triple discrimination not only by sexist mentality but also by racial prejudice and cultural conflicts within and beyond the church. Churches are expanding away from homogeneity into multicultural gathering spaces for worship. Female clergy, experienced in fighting to obtain authority within the church, are more equipped and experienced to respond flexibly to the trend towards multiculturalism. This environment begs the questions, “How can my preaching be more relevant to my multicultural congregation and be more faithful to the Christian gospel?” The vision for the future of women preaching should be constructed by taking these two issues seriously: sexist mentality and multiculturalism within and beyond the church in our globalized world.



For me, the future of preaching should be a shared ministry, originating from the partnership between God and female preachers and extending it to the congregation. In shared preaching, the locus of control no longer rests solely on one person’s relationship with God, and authority is no longer understood as something to be possessed. Those who have a sexist mentality are used to understanding authority as the power of control possessed by the person who stands at the top of a hierarchical system, and they do not want that person to be a woman who has traditionally been regarded as inferior to a man. In shared preaching, however, authority is “abundant commodity” to be shared with others, and the shared ministerial role of the preacher includes teaching, facilitating, directing, and encouraging her preaching partners to participate in the ministry of preaching with joy and confidence. Throughout history, there have been numerous women who rose to challenge of preaching in a male dominant society. The model of shared ministry is beautifully depicted as a

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Theology and Practice Through the Ages

a kaleidoscope. The image of the kaleidoscope represents not only the diversity of the listeners but also the dynamic interaction of different experiences among them toward the newness of their shared identity and a new vision for a multicultural community. Preaching as a shared ministry will challenge the church to rethink its identity and mission and contribute to revitalizing the church with fresh insights into and passion for a communal and collaborative ministry.

How Many Women Have you Heard Preach? *By Margaret Wiborg*

This may sound like a foolish question nowadays...but thirty years ago was another matter. The summer before I began as the first full time director of the Anna Howard Shaw Center, I had already talked with a number of women students. One of their primary wishes was to have the opportunity to interact with clergywomen. My challenge was how to get these very busy pioneering women to come to BUSTH. In August I attended Southern New England's clergy and spouses retreat with my husband and spent time in conversation with some of the clergywomen present, including BU grads Shirley Hoover and Betty Schraeder. I simply asked, what would bring you back in to BU? I asked them to think about it, discuss it with other women and get back to me. They did and on the last day, they had an idea, "We never get to hear other women preach. If the Shaw Center could have an event providing that opportunity, we would come." Some of them even came earlier than that because the next thing I did was to form a committee! With parking passes and lunch as bargaining chips, a group of women gathered and began to plan—who did we want to preach; what would we call the event; how would we advertise and to whom; what would we say in the short descriptive paragraph; what spaces in the school would we use for preaching workshops and plenaries?

The women suggested that Rev. Rebecca Dolch who some of them had heard preach at a Northeast Jurisdictional gathering be the primary preacher. We offered her a \$1,000 stipend (with which she bought a computer--they used to be that expensive) if she would come. We also invited several other clergywomen from our conference to preach so that participants could hear a number of diverse preaching styles. When the day arrived, clergy and lay women came to the Marsh Chapel worship service filled their voices raised in song and praise. The preaching was excellent, the liturgy inclusive. Then the group divided into preaching workshops to hear some of their colleagues preach.

At the final plenary session we talked about the difference in women's preaching styles and the attributes that women brought to preaching. Although I can't remember them all, I do remember the excitement as the groups identified qualities...story-telling, expanded imagery. They named and claimed the unique gifts of women preachers and we wrote them on big sheets of newsprint in the basement of STH. Preaching women naming and claiming their gifts and feeling assured and affirmed in a way they had never done before! Like any good conference, in the packet was an evaluation sheet. The first question was "How many women have you heard preach? The numbers varied—many none, more one, and not many had heard more than three. They also said DO THIS AGAIN NEXT YEAR! So we did; and we did it again and again. After about the third year we quit asking the question of how many women preachers they had heard...that was no longer the most important issue.



In the beginning were women with passion and wit
But they were regarded as just so much twit,
And yet some among them would not stay still
They moved and they spoke by pure acts of will.

Deborah and Ruth, Miriam, and Mary
Acted in ways that were oh so daring.
They chose to act boldly, not follow the crowd,
Joining Martha, Priscilla, and a woman-filled cloud.
They were women and people of all gender hues
Who followed God's call into the new –
Unimpressed by restrictions, conventions and traps,
Determined to travel off of the maps,
Determined to speak and to act and to give,
Determined to live so that others might live.

Think of Shiprah and Puah birthing babies' new breaths,
Doing midwifing acts under loud threats of death;
And the Zerephath widow with no money, no name,
Who chose to feed Elijah just the same.

These are women like our own Anna Howard Shaw
Who were more concerned with life than they were with the law.
These are the women we celebrate tonight,
The women who have guided the Shaw Center's might.
These are the women who will tell their stories,
Whose very lives witness to God's grace and glory,
As revealed in women, transgender, and men

Whose lives have touched others, friend to friend,
Who publically advocate justice that flows,
Who act every day so that beauty can grow,
Who are courageous and bold beyond compare,
Who have guided and gifted in ways that are rare,
Who have made the Shaw Center what it is today
And whose visions continue to point the way!



Re-Imaging Redemption: The Shaw Center at its best!

By Rev. Dr. June Goudey

Let me begin by saying how thankful I am that I was offered the opportunity by Margaret Wiborg and Mary Lou Greenwood Boice to be the first Anna Howard Shaw Scholar in 1987. I was privileged to work closely with Margaret for the next six years overseeing many Women and the Word events as well as share my own research on Re-Imaging Communion in 1994. I was also profoundly influenced by the Center's 1989 Re-Imaging Redemption Symposium marked the importance of this of their July 11, 1990 issue to Imaging Redemption". In the to the editor decried this symposium as nothing more than a new age phenomenon male as the devil incarnate and this because the symposium were looking for "alternative power that saves and heals us".

Because we were living "depatriarchalize" the Bible, cover presented 8 panels representing the male angel and the emerging of the reference to the role that re-

**the Re-Imaging
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in feminist and womanist theologies. To be clear, The Re-Imaging Redemption Symposium was not breaking new ground; it was taking seriously the work already being done by thoughtful and articulate women!

In 1973 Phyllis Trible's "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation" appeared in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion. In 1974 Beacon press published Mary Daly's groundbreaking book *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. In 1978 Phyllis Trible's *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* challenged patriarchal readings that diminished the role of women, particularly Genesis 2-3. At the same time psychologists were redefining women's experience.

The self-in-relation research of the Stone Center at Wellesley College was empowered by Jean Baker Miller's 1976 book, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. This critical work transformed our understanding of ourselves as separate and independent beings. As women reclaimed their voices from the long-imposed silence of internalized oppression the stage was set for a new wave of research that would transform notions of redemption and atonement and shake the foundations of Christianity far more than Paul Tillich could ever have imagined.

Indeed Carter Heyward's 1982 publication of her Doctoral dissertation *The Redemption of God* relied heavily on the power of relation. In Heyward's words, to worship a messianic figure is to lose touch with our power in relation and ultimately distance ourselves from God. In 1982 Carole Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* revolutionized women's experience by allowing women's voices to have their own integrity. Her work was followed in 1987 by Mary Field Belenky's *Women's Ways of Knowing*. This "knowing" by women took seriously the role that Christianity played in the continued domination of women and the undermining of women's well-being.

I'm sure any one of you could name a number of authors that influenced your own maturation on these issues; but for me the 1989 publication of *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse* edited by Joanne Carlson Brown and STH's own Carole Bohn offered a major life-line of clarity for my own concerns regarding the Eucharist. The first essay, "For God so Loved the World" written By Rebecca Parker and Joanne Carlson Brown allowed me to postulate my own feminist critique of atonement imagery that ultimately became my doctoral dissertation. As you can see the context for our Re-imaging Redemption Symposium was

um. *The Christian Century* effort by devoting the cover my article "Theologians Re-following issue three letters posium as nothing more presenting the patriarchal bordering on idolatry: all suggested that women ways of understanding the

then in an era that sought to *The Christian Century's* sending the fading out of a female angel: a not so sub-imaging was coming to play



Re-Imaging Redemption

well-established and building momentum even as we gathered.

The six presenters at the symposium appealed to art and imagination to “challenge old assumptions about human life, divine power and Jesus Christ as the only true redeemer.” Artist and United Church of Christ pastor Barbara Gerlach was moved by the poet Muriel Rukeyser to demonstrate her own courage by sharing through art the story of her own recovery from childhood abuse. Rukeyser once wrote: “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.” Gerlach encouraged those present to acknowledge and utilize their own painful memories and experiences and then to work out their own salvation “in fear and trembling.” In this symposium and in the years to follow women were indeed empowered to tell the truth about their lives using their own ethnic lenses to challenge all variations of oppression.

Carter Heyward, professor of theology at the Episcopal Divinity School broadened the concept of divine redemption by suggesting that redemption is in part our mutual responsibility. Through right-relation with one another, she argued, “we can and must lay claim to the christic power inherent in our humanity.” Rita Nakashima Brock, professor at Pacific Lutheran University, used the insights of her 1988 *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* to express her understanding of the Christa community. Brock challenged the “eraser theory” of male theologizing that “rubs women out of the picture,” even when the Gospels herald their perseverance and faithfulness. In her own words, Brock argued: “We cannot rely on one past event to save our future.” Instead it takes each and every one of us to appreciate the “fragile, resilient interconnections” that we share with others to empower us in the face of suffering and pain. New Testament scholar Gail Paterson Corrington documented the ways that the female image has been excluded from the personae of the deity in Christianity and found her images of redemption in pre-Christian figures such as Isis and Sophia.

What was new, though, was women's ability to give voice to their own experience and to have women scholars in positions of power to make a difference in the collective consciousness of women.

Womanist Theologians Jacquelyn Grant of The International Theological center in Atlanta and Delores Williams of Drew University Divinity School, challenged their feminist sisters not to allow their own anti-sexist critiques to ignore the injustices borne by women and men of color. Grant took the notion of servanthood to task by saying that black people know all too well that “some are more servants than others.” Redemption, she argues, “happens wherever the struggle for liberation is” present. Delores Williams explored the painful ambiguity of coerced and voluntary surrogacy as a structure of domination in black women's lives.

Williams focused on the role of “mammy” whereby black women stood in the place of the slave owner's wife and were given considerable authority in domestic matters by their owners. And yet Williams reminded us Mammy remained a captive. To re-image redemption, Williams offered this ruling principle: “To re-image redemption is to re-image creation and to re-image creation is to re-image relation.” This insight into the power of relation was hardly a new concept. An ancient African Proverb proclaims, “I am because you are.” What was new, though, was women's ability to give voice to their own experience and to have women scholars in positions of power to make a difference in the collective consciousness of women.

Our Symposium ruffled feathers. But ours was an academic exercise. Ritual, with the exception of a closing spiral dance, was absent. To that extent we were spared the venomous reactions that followed Re-Imaging, the 1993 global interfaith conference that gathered twenty two hundred clergy, laypeople, and fem-



Re-Imaging Redemption

inist theologians in Minneapolis in response to the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women 1988–1998. The repercussions of this event were felt far and wide as conservative groups such as the Confessing Christ movement in the UCC and the Good News people in the Methodist tradition vilified anyone who dared to salvation through sacrificial that female metaphors for God ence Christianity anew seemed to even as inclusive language be- women and men alike.

Some 26 years later, the power dared to tell the truth of their open the world. These women, who experienced sexual abuse in have moved the church to the it resides to this day. It remains church can recover from its self-



unleashed by women who own story has indeed split joined by women and men the Roman Catholic Church, margins of spirituality where to be seen if the institutional inflicted wounds or whether

the power of relation and the power of re-imagining will be able to transform the nature of ministry handed down to us. There will always be tradionalists who cling to constricted images of the divine and humanity itself; but re-imagining is the genie in the bottle that can never be put back.

Women and the World, its predecessor Women and the Word, and the Re-Imaging Redemption Symposium of 1989 played a key role in the breaking open of numerous oppressive worlds. For this critically important work I heartily acknowledge the courage of Anna Howard Shaw and the women who seek to make her legacy as relevant as ever to people of faith everywhere. For this I say, **“Deo Gratias!”**



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Thank you for you generous and continued support!

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without you!



30 Years

And Going Strong:

Celebrating Women in the World

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