Boston University School of Theology

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER

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Celebrating Women of the World
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** Contributor Note– Due to her belief that she is not free until all of the community (biological and spiritual) is free, shaunesse’ prefers her name be lowercase as a resistance to hegemony.**
“Whether we serve in academic, church, or civic arenas, women are faced with particular dilemmas in leadership. Should we transcend negative experiences, trusting that if we sufficiently perform and conform, our institutions will protect us? Should we engage from the margins, striving to subvert or flip dynamics of power and privilege? Institutions have potential to serve as sanctuaries and as mission fields, and this conference gathers women leaders in the space between our institutions to challenge well-known strategies and devise new ones.” These are the words and phrases that gathered us, grounded us and propelled us into deeper community at the 2019 Women in the World Conference. Led by our brilliant panelists, Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai and Dr. Virginia Sapiro, we were challenged to respond to the aforementioned questions—reshaping the way we engage in our communities. We opened the day with a joyful worship service where we heard from STH alumnae and Anna Howard Shaw Board members, Rev. Laurel Scott and Rev. Lourey Savick as they strengthened the biblical and spiritual voice of Tamar.

After a energizing community lunch, Dr. Choi opened our panel discussion with the reminder that women are not only the victims of the struggles within institutions, but women are also the agents of transformation and healing within those spaces. Those powerful words were met by Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai and Dr. Virginia Sapiro. Each woman responded to the history of institutions and women’s role in challenging those institutions within and beyond our own time and space.

Rev. Bigham-Tsia, the Chief Connectional Ministries Officer of the United Methodist Connectional Table, draws on biblical narratives from the Book of Judges and the Book of Esther. In her recounting of the story of Deborah and Jael, Rev. Bigham-Tsai demonstrates that women are not limited in the ways they can transform institutions. In her reading of the story, Deborah leads from the center and Jael leads from the margins. Drawing on Vashti and Esther, Rev. Bigham-Tsai asserts the need for prophetic resistance and strategic conformity. In summation, Rev. Bigham-Tsai invited us to see women as having the ability to change institutions no matter their social location.
Dr. Virginia Sapiro, Dean of Arts & Sciences Emerita and Professor of Political Psychology at Boston University, reminded us that sometimes we can be are shocked when we find out that institutions that define themselves by “higher ideals” —religious, educational, social service institutions— are afflicted with many of the same dynamics of subordination and occasionally abuse that our institutions experience. She probed us with this question. Why don’t those ideals protect these institutions from racism, sexism, homophobia, class subordination, and the like? She encouraged us to remember that, as leaders we have the skills to confront these failings in productive, constructive, and healing ways.

Participants were then able to ask our panelists questions that deepened all of our understanding of our role in navigating institutions. We were offered wisdom in reframing the biblical text, ways of coalition building, the necessity for self care practices and the importance of institutions to societal health and the need to be prophetic within those institutions to bring prophetic and redemptive healing to those spaces.

Our afternoon continued with workshops offered by our panelists. Rev. Bigham-Tsai led a workshop titled Sanctuaries of Care for Women Leaders. In it, she offered ideas about the necessity of women’s leadership, the dangers of that leadership, and the radical habits of self-care and soul-care that are necessary to thrive. The workshop approached these topics from an experiential and narrative framework.

Dr. Sapiro offered a workshop titled Subordination and Power in Institutions Defined by “Higher Ideals.” In it, she centered on this question. How should the recognition of these failings of some institutions affect the way we think about idealistic institutions? Participants shared their personal stories and the group came up with best practices to move forward.

Our day ended with a dinner in the Anna Howard Shaw Center, with friendship and fellowship. We are immensely grateful for the wisdom and support of our panelists, board members, participants and so many more.
When I was 8 years old, we moved into a single-family house next door to a single, childless woman in her late 40s who lived in the corner house. It wasn’t long before she was regularly inviting us 3 kids into her house, sometimes for treats, other times just to hang out.

Katherine was a chemist by profession, for Dennison Manufacturing Corporation, a company that probably did many things but what I knew was that they made stickers; stickers of things like stars, rainbows, and cartoon characters. That made her cool.

She had grown up as the only child of a man who owned a locally successful carpet company. I know that she had a mother who was a homemaker but I know little about her. I wonder now whether Katherine welcomed us as a way to reflect on growing up without siblings.

As I think back on those days, I see her sometimes looking on us as if we were a show for her pleasure and other times with curiosity, as if her scientist-brain just didn’t quite know what to make of us. I can still hear her laugh with delight.

The welcoming attitude went both ways. It wasn’t long before Katherine was being invited to our house for holidays and other family celebrations.

But the depth of Katherine’s hospitality emerged fully a couple of years after we arrived in the neighborhood. Our family was graced with the arrival of a new baby, Constance Anne, or “Connie.” Katherine agreed to serve as Connie’s godmother, in spite of (because of?) the fact that Connie was born with Down Syndrome. Even today, there is no question that a child with Down Syndrome has special needs and agreeing to support such a child, even if only in her spiritual growth, is a considerable responsibility. While relatives sometimes are willing to undertake a burden out of a sense of familial obligation, it is especially impressive when a neighbor embarks on such a journey.

“Katherine’s imitation of the Good Samaritan was not just about addressing an immediate need, she covenanted to walk alongside Connie and the family for the long haul.”

Her model of active service to God’s call, and her constancy (on behalf of Constanse and the rest of us) have been beacons for me in my own attention to friends and neighbors. On the one end of the spectrum, the Vang children who lived next door to me in Minnesota were in and out of my house all the time, often bringing back memories of my time in Katherine’s house. I am currently working to set up a Special Needs Trust (as Katherine did for Connie) for a friend of mine.

Katherine’s hospitality is what has inspired me on the active side of my faith commitments. Connie’s unconditional, exuberant love is what inspires my ongoing quest to cultivate the receptive side of my faith commitments.

My first memory of strangers staring at Connie was in a Star Market near the Woburn/Winchester line.
Hospitality and Grace

“It was as if she saw the world as one big manifestation of God’s love and she was always ready to dwell in that love.”

Connie must have been around 2 years old because she could sit up in the seat in the shopping cart. I would have been about 13.

I was pushing the cart and making sure Connie didn’t fall out while my mother went through her list and added items to the cart.

I especially remember one woman and her 8-ish year old son staring, and I was furious at her, about her own stare and for not teaching her child better! I wonder now at her motivation. Had she never seen a child with Down Syndrome before? Was she shocked that my mother would bring such a child out in public? Was she just curious and fearful that such a child could be born to her? But those are my adult questions. I had been taught that it is rude to stare at anyone and I was enraged that these people were staring at Connie. Happily, Connie was oblivious to them.

Yet by the time she was in high school, she knew the stares and they hurt her. Occasionally her response would be to stare back but more often she would just ignore them and turn toward someone neutral or friendly with a smile and usually a hug. Her hugs were so prolific that a few of her educational and day programs over the years articulated learning objectives for her to be less demonstrative in her affections.

It was the endless hugs and smiles that marked her graceful attitude toward the world. She was open to, or maybe expectant of, love from everyone. It was as if she saw the world as one big manifestation of God’s love and she was always ready to dwell in that love.

That boundless, grace-filled receptivity to love is the faithful response I know I need to cultivate in the next stage of my life. Connie experienced the slow decay of Alzheimer’s disease in the final few years of her life and that called my brother and I to the active kind of love Katherine had demonstrated. But with Connie’s passing, I have the flexibility to modulate my own response to God’s call. I am learning to be more receptive to God’s love in its endless forms. I do not offer hugs as often as Connie, social norms inhibit me some. But a posture of open, soft, patient, quiescent tarrying is my new aim as I learn how to stop “doing,” and enjoy “being” in the infinite expression of God’s love.

Eileen Daily, Lecturer and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Degree in Transformational Leadership
Now there was a certain woman. A “certain woman” appears several times in the bible when it is read in the King James translation. These unnamed women are defined by their actions and relationships to others. They are grounded in specific stories pertaining to Israelite history that often center on major male figures; nevertheless, they stand on their own as their presence determines the future of nations. “But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone...” “A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha”; “Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years...” “And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him....” I believe that at some point in her life, every woman is a certain woman. At times named, other times unnamed. At times her own person, other times representative of all people. She makes her presence known, and every story is unfulfilled without her. She changes history. She stands apart from the traditional narrative. And she is defined by her actions. These are the characteristics imparted to me by a certain woman who defined the trajectory of my womanhood and life.

Now there was a certain woman by the name of Lucille who was born to Mariah and Anthony, the eldest of five, in Carmel, Louisiana. She was wife of Joseph and mother of Ella; grandmother of Terrence, Chaunda, and Felicia; great-grandmother of Tarlissea, Daniel, D’juan, shaunesse’, Jasmine, and Shamariah. She was quiet yet bold, small in stature yet larger than life, meek yet elegant. She served her local church the majority of her life by cooking meals each Sunday, singing in the choir, participating with other women to keep the grounds and building well kept, and surviving as a deaconess to prepare communion sacraments monthly. She served her family by sharecropping with her husband to acquire several acres of land in hopes of providing financial stability for future generations, raising several generations of children and serving as spiritual guide to dozens, participating in a six-decade long marriage as an example of replicable love, moving to a larger city where more opportunities existed, then working as a housecleaner to ensure that her children were educated beyond the sixth grade out of the necessity to help provide for others.

My certain woman, my great-grandmother Lucille, loved others above herself and gave unconditionally from her heart at all times. She prayed over my premature body when I graced the planet and shared her love, wisdom, knowledge, and faith with me from my infancy to her death. She exemplified the best way I have ever known of honoring God and self throughout all my relationships as I constantly strive to be the best version of myself.
A Certain Woman

She lived by her personal mantra, “do the right thing and the Lord will bless you.” Lucille was more than a mother and matriarch; she was the closest lived example I have witnessed of a person striving daily to be Christ-like. She is the standard by which I live out my personal ethic to be one with God and one with Creation. She is the grace I aspire to offer to others and the humility I aim to share in all relationships. She is my motivation as I strive for excellence and the beauty I hope to produce in my microcosm of the world. Being in her presence was a cross somewhere between my interpretation of Moses’s feelings upon encountering the burning bush and the elation of the “certain woman [who] had a flow of blood for twelve years” finally being seen by Jesus after pushing her way through a hostile crowd. Knowing her was knowing all the goodness and holiness that God embodies and manifests in Creation.

To date my great-grandmother has been the woman that has had the greatest impact on my life. Not only did she shape me by her lived example, she also shaped me by what she imparted to me. She taught me to love the soil and care for the earth, giving me a passion for gardening and farming. She taught me how to pick the ripest fruits and vegetables. She handed down secret recipes that I incorporate in my kitchen to bridge people across differences. She left songs that are still lifted in my heart when I’m at peace or weary. She gave me words of wisdom that still me in troubled times and give me hope to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” She gave me laughter that bellows throughout hallways and is unashamed of its grandeur and presence. She shared healing remedies for any scrape, cut, or burn that continue to be more effective than western medicine could ever aim. She gave me a passion for education, a thirst for all kinds of knowledge, and a duty to honor all who sacrificed that I may be the best version of myself and my ancestors. She gave me patience for people as they grow towards betterment. She shared with me a strength that cared for generations, wrestled bulls to the ground, and carried church and Jesus into the highways and byways.

I lived next door to my great-grandmother for seventeen years reaping the benefits of the life she lived and the love she gave. I was privileged to love her back in major and minor ways, from walking through grocery stores for hours and checking ever few dollars spent to caressing her hand as she died. I am beautiful because she was gorgeous. I am kind because she was loving. I am spiritual because she was Jesus incarnate for ninety years. I am me because she was her.

“A certain woman transcends time and space. At times her own person, other times representative of all people. She makes her presence known, and every story is unfulfilled without her. She changes history. She stands apart from the traditional narrative.”

And she is defined by her actions. These are the characteristics imparted to me by a certain woman who defined the trajectory of my womanhood and life. The aforementioned words can never fully encapsulate all of my great grandmother; however, they are but a fragment of all the ways she exists within and beyond me. I hope by reading this piece, each reader is reminded of a certain woman who is the indescribable.

** Contributor Note- Due to her belief that she is not free until all of the community (biological and spiritual) is free, shaunesse’ prefers her name be lowercase as a resistance to hegemony. **
Two women who continue to inspire me to work towards advocacy, social justice, and equity are my older sister, Dasom Yang, and my wife, Joanne Kang. Through their life and work, they exemplify what it means to be a strong and generous advocate for justice. Looking at her, you would not think much. Dasom is 5’2”, small, petite, and seemingly soft-spoken. But beyond her first impressions or physical appearance, Dasom is a strong and fearless advocate for justice and equity. Growing up in New York City in the late ’90s and post-9/11, xenophobia was all over; people constantly lived in a heightened state of anxiety and panic over “TERROR”. For immigrant families, the terror came from being labeled as the “TERRORist” so throughout the five boroughs, immigrant families desperately tried to display their “American patriotism”.

I remember my dad filling our apartment and car with U.S. flags, hoping it would deter people from vandalizing our car or apartment door. In the public-school system, things were no different. It was “assimilate or perish”; that was the name of the game. If you flaunted your “foreignness”, “exotic” culture, or the not-yet “trending” cultural food, you’d be targeted. But despite the fears and risks of becoming the object of xenophobic hate, my sister never denied the call to stand up against injustice. Even when she was just in middle school, I remember how her whole class organized to bully the “immigrant” kids, but Dasom would not be afraid to stand with her marginalized peers and stare down the rest. No matter how much they teased or shamed her for “foreign” physical features, or threw racial slurs at her, Dasom always advocated against injustice. When our own familial prejudice would come out, Dasom would not shy away from breaking cultural hierarchy or social authority by rebuking our elders or even our parents.

Whether it was people suffering from homelessness or the highly stigmatized issue of mental illness, Dasom would petition and fight against the systemic injustices perpetrated on these communities. Growing up in an age of “TERROR”, it was incredibly empowering to see someone who was not “TERRORified” nor would be “TERRORized” by the forces of racism, xenophobia, prejudice, and injustice.
Even today, my sister continues to speak up against prejudice, racism, sexism, classism, and all the other “ism’s” whether it be the old prejudices of our culture, the sexism of our churches, or the systemic injustices in our city.

Dasom continues her work of advocacy as a social worker in the city of Boston, standing for and alongside families and children who are marginalized and traumatized by an unjust social system. Learning from such a strong pillar of justice, it is tempting to adopt an “absolutist” mentality. Either something is just or unjust, there is “no in between” or “transitional” phase.

Joanne’s strength and wisdom deters this kind of thinking, encouraging in its stead a generous mentality for advocacy of justice. At first, it may not seem the same as the bold-faced, stare Yang 2 down injustice kind of strength, but the strength of patience and generosity is of the same essence as courageous strength. Joanne’s work in Higher Education revolves around advocating for students from marginalized community as well as educating students on the issues of social justice. Her role demands both a firm and generous mentality on the issue of advocacy. Joanne has had to firmly stand in support of students who advocated against injustices on campus. Joanne has also had to invite students who never had to face the realities of injustice into conversation about oppression and systemic marginalization of certain communities. The dynamic needs of her students have pushed Joanne to a generous advocacy. An advocacy that is not quick to correct the inept response of those speaking the words of social justice as a second language, but patient and generous enough to make space for the messy and clumsy process of learning. An advocacy not built on the legalism of a broken, retributive justice system, but the generosity found in a restorative justice framework. It is the advocacy of coalitions, standing firm against issues of injustice and continually inviting newcomers to stand as well. Through their life and work, Dasom and Joanne are witnesses to the works and movement of a restorative justice, which calls its advocates to boldly stand against the forces of injustice, racism, and prejudice; And yet, advocate for a generosity that invites and hopes in the participation of all people.

“Through her example, I learned the strength and courage it takes to stand up against injustice and be identified with marginalized people.”
Meet STH New Female Faculty and Staff

Sadiqa Delaney
*Graduate Assistant, Anna Howard Shaw Center*

Sadiqa Delaney, born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, and serving as a Youth leader at Berean Baptist Church, is an awesome role model for young people trying to navigate in the world while maintaining a set apart attitude and putting God first. Sadiqa is a graduate of Virginia State University where she received her Bachelor of Science in Business Management and is a rising 3rd year student at Boston University School of Theology where she is pursuing a M.Div. with a concentration in Pastoral Ministry. She served as Vice-President for the Association of Black Seminarians. Her goal is to become a Youth Minister where she can continue to do God’s work in serving Young People and being a voice for them.

Chasity Jones
*Graduate Assistant, Anna Howard Shaw Center*

Chasity Jones is a rising 2nd year M.Div. student at the Boston University School of Theology. She spent two years in Seattle, Washington as an Interfaith organizer through the US-2 program with the United Methodist Church. It was during this time that she became passionate about racial justice, Black Liberation, and an anti-oppressionist Womanist. It was Black Liberation Theology and Womanist theology that led her to pursue the qualifications needed to be a college professor. She is a certified yoga teacher of the lineages of Pantanjali Raja Yoga and Krishnamacharya and is passionate about making yoga and its benefits accessible to communities of color. which is what inspired her to pursue an M.Div. She is a lover of sunsets, nature, water, and poetry.

Maddie Henderson
*Senior Program Coordinator, School of Theology Registrar*

Maddie Henderson moved to Boston from Macon, GA where she taught high school English for five years before coming to the School of Theology for a Master of Divinity. She earned a B.A. in English from Samford University in Birmingham, AL. Maddie loves the community at STH, having brunch with friends, reading novels for fun, and writing letters. She hopes to serve the community well as Senior Program Coordinator.
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Spring 2019

Thursday, Feb. 21
12:30-1:30PM
STH 320

Thursday, Apr. 4
12:30-1:30PM
STH 320

Thursday, Feb. 15
12:30-1:30PM
STH 320

Thursday, Mar. 7
12:30-1:30PM
STH 320

Thursday, Mar. 28
12:30-1:30PM
STH 320

Thursday, Feb. 28
12:30-1:30PM
STH 320

Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lecture:
“Working with ex-combatants”
Ana Maria Rodriguez
MDiv. 2021

Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lecture:
“Does it get better? LGBTQ+ Sexual Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, and Faith”
Jeremy Schulz
MDiv. 2019

Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lecture:
Loving One’s Identity
Christina Richardson
MDiv Student 2019

Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lecture:
“Dual Calling: Scientist and Deacon”
Gail Bucher
Chaplain and Trustee at MCPHS University

Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lecture:
“Navigating Distinctions”
Amanda Corella
MDiv 2020

Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lecture:
“The Divine Feminine in Hinduism”
Sagar Rajpal
Project Manager, Acting Dir. & Asst. Director, Center for Spirituality, Dialogue, and Service (CSDS) Northeastern University

Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lecture:
“BUSTH What is the way forward?”
Nina Levine
BUSTH Admissions Coordinator

Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lecture:
“How my passion for food and community became a part-time Social Media business”
Nora De Aaro
MDiv 2020
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