

Boston University School of Theology

Anna Howard Shaw

Center

Volume 37 Issue 1 Spring 2020

Community Strength and Resilience

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IN THIS ISSUE

Letter to the Community concerning COVID-19

Rev. Dr. Choi Hee An Director of the Anna Howard Shaw Center 3-4

Thinking into Uncertainty

Kimberly Bress MDiv '21 5-6

Credo de la Misa Camesina/

The Creed from the Peasants'

Composed by MassCarlosMejia,

Translated by Laura Montoya, M.Div 2022 7

Meet Our New Staff

8

Anna Howard Shaw Thursday

Lunch Lecture Series Schedule 8-9

Hope Remains,

Jasmin Figueroa, STH Ph.D Candidate 10-11

Letter to STH Community concerning Fall 2020

from Outgoing Dean Moore 12-13

List of Donors

14



Letter from the Director

Dear beloved Anna Howard Shaw center friends,

The COVID-19 pandemic is greater than we could have ever imagined. Not only are the people in the US impacted but also many around the globe have lived in illness, fear, stress, hopelessness, and despair for the last several weeks. All activities that we used to take for a granted have been paused and prohibited. Many Asian and Asian migrant communities have experienced anti-Asian violence from shunning, to stabbing and gun threat. Many Black and Latinx communities are are bearing the brunt of the illness and face more fatalities. Many have lost their jobs while still many more battle with their psychological struggles.

Our frontline workers, doctors, nurses, firefighters, emergency respondents, delivery workers and other essential workers sacrifice their lives to save others and in the service of others. Our educators have ben challenged with transforming class formats and teaching styles by diligently learning how to teach remotely and lead online classes with their best capacity. Our students struggle to adopt and accept this learning as well as struggle to concentrate. We have lost many lives. We have lost many jobs. We have lost many physical community gatherings. Yet, still we try very hard not to lose hope, and not to lose our sanity in our daily lives. We want to hold ourselves with our best strength.

How are you doing, honestly?

I invite you to reflect on your wellbeing and the ways in which you sustain your life.

As director of the Anna Howard Shaw center, I have had a hard time adjusting to this change and dealing with this trauma. Our Stress support group program that has continued weekly online has been one of the most important programs simply because we need to support each other now more than every before. However, our programs and events including Women in the World conference have been cancelled and postponed. After a serious conversation with our Latinx groups and other groups who want to co-sponsor our Women in the World conference, we as a group decide to have this conference next year. It was not an easy decision but a necessary move that we had to take at that moment.



The Shaw center as a community comes with many different approaches and solutions to move forward to enhance our programs and research projects now. The good news is that our new research project, women and leadership, is now launched. This research is to understand how women form and develop their leadership in religious institutions and non-profit organizations. The goal of the questions asked are to demonstrate the current leadership that female leaders perform and to understand how they maintain their leadership under the certain circumstances.

It will be important to observe how women encounter these circumstances, change, and transform them to meet the needs of others in their leadership, especially now. The ultimate and overarching goal of this project is to show how women show their leadership continuously fighting against institutional religious cultural hierarchy. These findings will encourage our current and future generation to reflect on the history of women's leadership and to develop their own leadership based on failures and successes of women's leadership and their practices. There are two ways that you can help us to move this research forward. You can choose only one. First, you can take these questions online. Copy and paste link into browser (https://bostonu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1NgIwV77z2qi6nH). Second, you can contact me (hchoi@bu.edu) to set up an interview (in person or zoom) with me.

As we go through this difficult time, we experience the importance of leadership and the roles of leaders in our communities. I trust that this research will help not only our religious leaders but also everyone in our communities to understand the importance of leadership and innovative practices of leadership. Though, we try to sustain hope and our community life in the Shaw center, without support from you, we know we cannot survive. We also trust that without our solidarity and collaboration, you might have a hard time to connect with each other. Let us work together and support each other. We are not alone. We are in this together. We can do this together in hope and joy. Please join us!

From Rev. Dr. Choi Hee An
Director of the Anna Howard Shaw Center



Anna Howard Shaw Center Newsletter
Volume 37, Issue 1



This is a time of collective stress, fear, pain, and loss. Our daily lives have changed drastically over the course of the past few weeks. Unfortunately, this crisis has served to highlight the massive structural inequities faced by people of color and the working class. From the beginning of this crisis, access to food, safe working conditions (or paid time off from work), housing, and supplies have been largely determined by patriarchal, capitalist, white-supremacist economic structures. These structures have left those at the bottom of the hierarchy helpless, vulnerable, exposed and ultimately more likely to get sick, die or spread this disease. Statistics show that African Americans are disproportionately dying of COVID-19 in almost all major American cities. African Americans must decide between police brutality and health when deciding whether to wear a homemade face mask in public. Adults and children without computers are unable to join their classmates for virtual lessons, and many children can no longer count on a free school lunch. Amazon workers, rideshare employees, grocery workers, and other service industries (mostly people of color) are either being forced to work in dangerous conditions or to take off without pay. Although some communities are finding this to be a convenient time for relaxation and rejuvenation, many more communities (disproportionately communities of color) are working in dangerous conditions, getting sick, and going broke.

This global pandemic has exposed the cracks in our nation's infrastructure, but at the end of this those cracks will most likely remain in place. The effects of COVID-19 are felt not only on our daily routines and plans, but also in our sense of spiritual wholeness. This is inevitably a moment when all of us are soaking in massive amounts of collective trauma, whether we are aware of it or not. No matter who we are, what our history is or what it is we value or love, our spirits are crying out for peace, for calmness, for reassurance.

Suffering requires us to dig deep, to search for relief from our pain, answers to our uncertainty, and connection amidst our isolation. While living in constant fear and uncertainty is a new experience for many, it is important to note that for many others holding traumas such as the one we are experiencing now is nothing new. Amidst the injustice, anger, isolation and grief, what and whom can serve as collective resources for survival, uplift, connection and nourishment? Here, in the midst of this pandemic, it seems even more true that “we cannot have change, we cannot have justice if we do not reclaim and repair the human spirit” (Syedullah et al., 2016). How do create space to encourage and empower one another to respond to the suffering we see and feel in ways that are careful, introspective, generative, nurturing, trust-building and sustainable?



Some of us may have practices or traditions we can reawaken our hearts towards, while for others this may be a period of spiritual seeking.

More than ever this is a time that calls for sharing of spiritual and material resources, of reaching out and asking for what we need and of providing others with some of our own abundance. We must find and cultivate a spiritual ground and nurturing community where we are. I invite each of you reading this to carve out space for spiritual practice and nourishment in your everyday life and to let that practice carry you forward into supporting others with compassion as well.

A practice I have revisited recently is chanting the Enmei Juku Kanon Gyo (A Japanese Buddhist Soto Zen Sutra) out by the Charles river about 50 times every morning and evening with a few of my neighbors. The Enmei Juku Kanon Gyo is a sutra that is chanted for the purpose of protecting life and has traditionally been used as a sort of healing/protective mantra for those experiencing pain, loss or disaster. The sutra invokes Kan Ze On, the Buddhist Bodhisattva of compassion, and cries out for the realization of the compassion and wisdom in one's own heart. After chanting, we offer a dedication to those on our hearts and minds and do a few bows to the river. This twice daily ritual has been a unique way to honor the passage of each of these new days of transition.

I offer this story to inspire you to let your souls cry out into the universe calling forth your deepest desires. As Audre Lord says, "when I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid" (Lorde, 1975).



Enmei Juku Kanon Gyo

Kanzeon

namu butsu

yo butsu u in

yo butsu u

en buppo so en

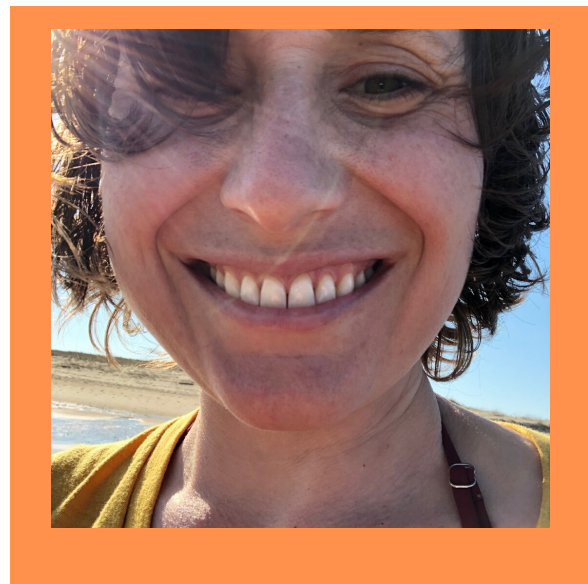
jo raku ga jo

cho nen kanzeon bo nen

kanzeon nen nen

ju shin ki nen nen

fu ri shin



Kimberly Bress, M.Div 2021



Creo, Señor, firmemente que de tu pródiga mente todo
este mundo nació
Que de tu mano de artista,
De pintor primitivista la belleza floreció
Las estrellas y la luna, las casitas, las lagunas
Los barquitos navegando sobre el río rumbo al mar
//Los inmensos
cafetales
Los blancos algodones
Y los bosques mutilados
Por el hacha criminal//

CORO

Creo en vos
Arquitecto, ingeniero, artesano, carpintero
Albañil y armador
Creo en vos, constructor de pensamiento
De la música y el viento, de la paz y del amor

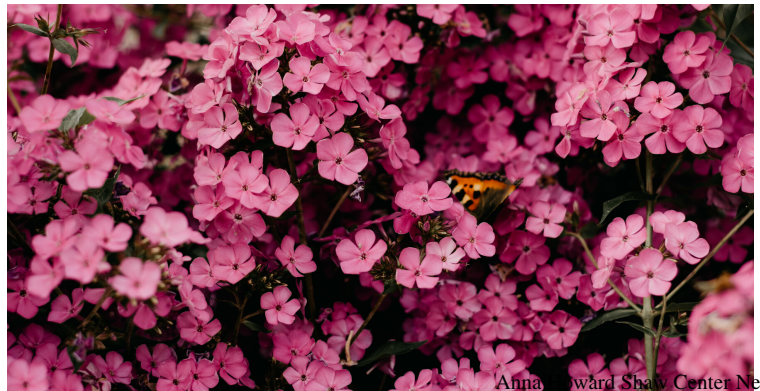
Yo creo en vos,
Cristo obrero
Luz de luz y verdadero, unigénito de Dios
Que para salvar al mundo
En el vientre humilde y puro de María se encarnó
Creo que fuiste golpeado
con escarnio torturado
En la cruz martirizado
Siendo Pilatos pretor
El romano imperialista Puñetero y desalmado
Que lavándose las manos
Quiso borrar el error
Yo creo en vos
compañero, Cristo humano, Cristo obrero de la muerte
vencedor. Con tu
sacrificio inmenso engendraste al hombre nuevo para la
liberación. Vos estás
resucitado en cada brazo que se alza para defender al
pueblo del dominio
explotador. // Porque estás vivo en el rancho, en la
fábrica, en la escuela,
creo en tu lucha sin tregua creo en tu resurrección.

I firmly believe, Lord, that from your prodigal mind, this
whole world was born.
From your hands as an artist, as a primitivist painter, the
beauty in the world flourished.
From your hands, the stars and the moon, the little houses,
the lagoons, the little boats sailing on the river towards the
sea.
The huge coffee plantations, cotton fields, and rain forests
mutilated by the criminal ax.

CHORUS

I believe in you, architect, engineer, craftsman,
carpenter, laborer and builder.
I believe in you, Creator of thoughts, of music and
wind, of peace and love.
I believe in you, Christ the worker
True light, God's only begotten.
Who to save the world, in the humble and pure belly Of
Mary became incarnate.
I think you were hit, tortured with derision and martyred on
the cross, Pilate being the Praetor. That Imperialist roman,
damn and heartless, who washing his hands wanted to erase
the error.

I believe in you fellow, human Christ, working Christ,
the conqueror of death. With your immense sacrifice you
engendered the new man
for liberation.
You are resurrecting on each arm that stands to defend
the people from the exploitative domain.
Because you're alive at the ranch, at the factory, at
school, I believe in your struggle without truce, I believe in
your
resurrection.

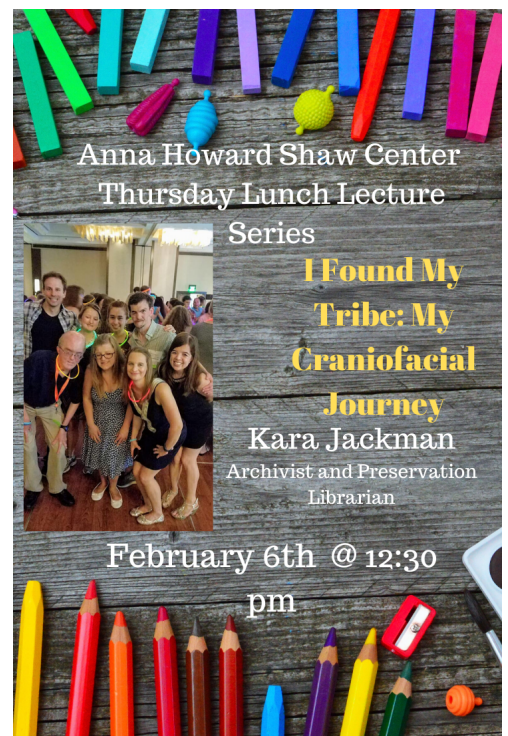
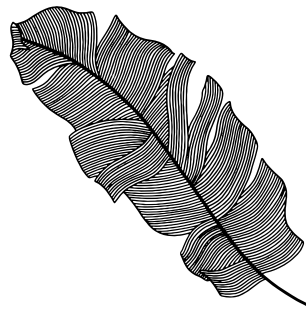
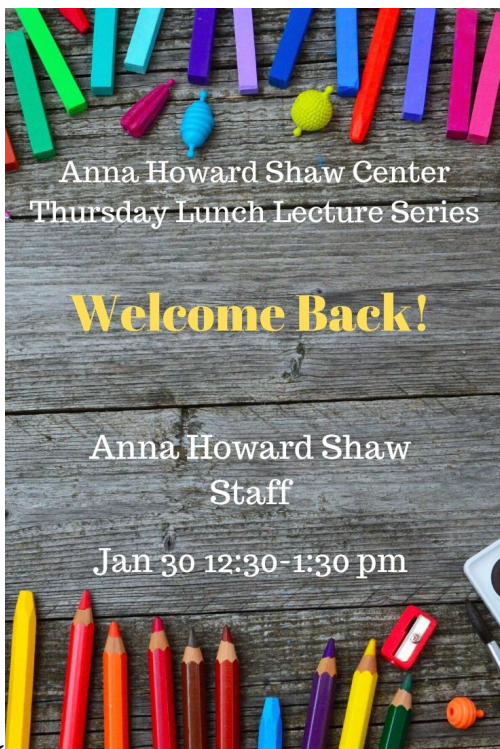


Laura Montoya Cifuentes



Laura is a Psychologist that graduated from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in 2011, now, a first Year Student at Boston University – STH. Born-and-raised in Bogotá, she was an active member of Alianza Cristiana de Colombia church and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) until 2016. Her life experience in the evangelical/Pentecostal context prepared her to work for seven years with non-profit organizations serving churches committed with peacemaking in war territories in Colombia, particularly among indigenous communities of Cauca.

Anna Howard Shaw Center Thursday Lunch Lectures



Anna Howard Shaw Center Thursday Lunch Lectures

9

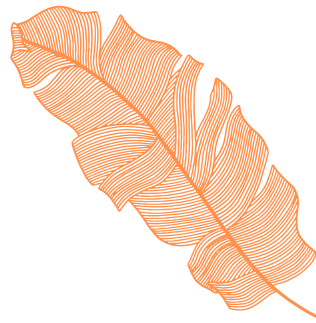
Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lectures




**Wangari
Maathai meets
Maya Angelou;
An
Intercultural
Love Story**

Maya Aggen & Brian Samuel Opati
1st year MTS students @ STH

Feb 13 @ 12:30 p.m.



Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lectures

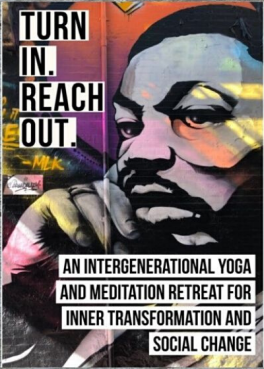


**What's
"Normal"?
Unpacking
Whiteness in
Community and
in the Academy**

Dan Hauge
PhD Candidate @ STH

Feb 20 @ 12:30 pm

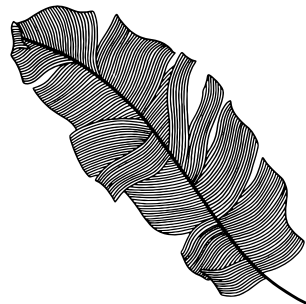
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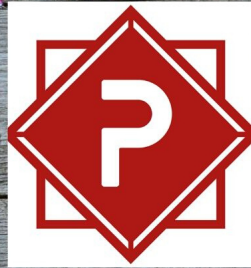
**Turn in
Reach Out**

Kim Bress
2nd Year
M.Div

Feb 27 @ 12:30pm



Anna Howard Shaw Center
Thursday Lunch Lectures



**Elevating
Femme
Voices**

The Prophet
A Student Blog
@ STH

March 5th @ 12:30 p.m.

The rest of the lunch schedule was cancelled
due to COVID-19.



Hope Remains

As I sit writing this, I cannot help but notice all the birds chirping out the window. It is a gorgeous sunny day, still and serene, which makes me recall the phrase “March comes in like a lion, but goes out like a lamb.” But while this beautiful weather would typically be enough to shake off any remnants of the winter blues, the calm seems almost eerie in the midst of the chaos that is surrounding us right now. COVID-19 is wreaking havoc around the world; our governor had to call in a favor from the New England Patriots in order to secure protective equipment because the Federal government kept swiping our supply; public parks are turning into temporary burial grounds; and the video technology that everyone is using to maintain some sense of normalcy is regularly hacked into by trolls.

March certainly entered in like a lion, but it seems like we can still hear it roaring with no end in sight.

As a practical theologian in training, I am hyper-aware of all of the theologies swirling around to try and help people make sense of what is going on. Churches around the country have been forced to decide whether it is more faithful to meet in person or to suspend in-person activities, televangelists have been trying to use theodicies of judgement to explain why we’re in this mess in the first place, and everyone is worried about their safety, as well of that of their loved ones. Some people are clinging to the notion of a God who saves and protects, while others are sitting with the reality that these (often preventable) losses are happening, whether we want them to or not.

While a part of me recognizes that we may not fully understand the breadth of the damage this crisis for years to come, I cannot help but be sensitive to the ways that women, especially multiply minoritized women, are disproportionately put at risk. I am worried for our elders and their care-providers [like my grandmother’s home attendant, a Dominican woman in her 60s who takes the bus to work] and other caregivers who cannot self-quarantine and care for the immuno-compromised at the same time. I think about the teachers who are learning new technologies and worrying about their students’ safety. I think about all of the retail and farm workers who are neither getting hazard pay, protective equipment, nor the comfort of knowing that they and their families will be okay should they get sick. I think about the people, mostly those of Asian descent, who are at greater risk of hateful behavior, harassment, and lost business because of this country’s ignorance.



Finally, I think of the women like PBS News Hour journalist Yamiche Alcindor and One America News's Chanel Rion, who are receiving condescension and disrespect from the president instead of the answers they're seeking.

I do not have much to offer in this reflection by way of "traditional" spiritual, physical, and mental health resources, although I'm so relieved and encouraged that many can be found and shared online. What I do have to give you is permission to sit still and notice what is happening. To name the injustices, to embrace grief and anger, and to do what you need to do to take care of yourselves. In the meantime, I'm grateful for the leadership of the women prophets, truth-tellers, caregivers, justice-seekers, and dreamers who both work for alternatives to the chaos that reigns in the present and hope for a future where everyone is safe and our needs are met. While each of our responses will be different, perhaps there is a comfort in knowing that our presence (even physically-distanced) is contributing to a new way of doing community together. And in that, there is hope.

Jasmin Figueroa
STH PhD Cadidate



Letter to STH Community concerning Fall 2020

12

Dear STH Community,

Many of you have asked about the shape of Fall 2020, and this letter to the community is an update, building on my weekend letter to the faculty.



First I offer ALL of you a huge thanks! STH faculty and staff have excelled in their quick transitions to remote teaching and services to students, making the initial changes in less than a week, and then continuing to change as the pandemic spread and you listened to one another. Students, you have done a remarkable job in rising to challenges of this dangerous time, losing travel seminars, changing your living arrangements in many cases, and shifting to remote courses in the space of a few days. You have invested extraordinary effort in your courses, showing flexibility and eager learning even as you care for your families and your jobs, your church and public service, and in some cases, your loss of jobs and illness. The COVID-19 situation has asked a lot of you, and you have handled it well.

We know that some of you are faced with unusually tough adjustments, and we want to support you in any ways we can. Please contact Deans Hickman-Maynard, Stone, or Moore if you need support. Dean Hickman-Maynard is addressing spiritual, community, and mental health supports; Dean Stone is providing academic and financial support; and Dean Moore is supporting both of them and coordinating overall STH responses. We are here for you!

Some of you have expressed eagerness, even anxiety, about the shape of the fall. BU is working intensely with all the colleges to develop plans for mostly hybrid/simultaneous courses in the fall to ensure excellent education and care for your safety and health, as guided by public health experts. The plans will be adapted as BU tracks the pandemic in the next few weeks; however, the plans will ensure appropriate levels of social distancing and allow full course participation by students who are not able to be in Boston at the opening of fall semester. The form of STH classes will vary, but we expect that our masters programs will be offered primarily in hybrid/simultaneous format, allowing students to participate both on campus and online. News about Phase One of BU's course development is rolling out this week.



Letter to the Community Concerning Fall 2020

Our graduate professional programs will come in Phase Two, and the news about those will arrive a bit later. This means that you will not receive direct news during the Phase One rollout, but STH has begun preparatory work and you can be assured that we are planning to maintain high quality and maximal opportunities for academic and human engagement, while making provisions for your health. We will let you know as plans develop.

My note is to let you know that BU and STH are developing creative options for your studies in the coming year, and we will keep you informed as plans develop. At the center of our planning are the quality of student education and the safety and wellbeing of the whole community – faculty, students, and staff. At the same time, we will support faculty and doctoral research in whatever ways are possible, so they can continue the groundbreaking work that generates fresh perspectives and new life in intellectual, religious, and public communities. Thanks to all of you for your continuing flexibility, and we will continue to be here for you.

With deep appreciation,
Mary Elizabeth Moore
Outgoing STH Dean



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Volume 37, Issue 1 Spring 2020

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