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Boston University School of Theology

# ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER

*Volume 38 Issue 2 Spring 2021*

## THE WISDOM IN OUR LAMENT



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## Latinas and Religious Leadership

On March 26, 2021, we held our annual Women in the World Conference: Latinas and Religious Leadership. Through our wonderful keynote speakers, Rev. Dr. Daisy Machado and Dr. Mayra Picos-Lee, and fruitful small group discussions, we were empowered and refueled to continue our work as women in religious leadership grounded in the strength of our culture.

Our first keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Daisy Machado shared a powerful presentation about the challenges that Latina women in religious leadership face and how Latinas can be empowered to show up fully as themselves. Dr. Machado began by contextualizing the experience of Latina leaders in the U.S. The pervasiveness of patriarchy in the church causes women's gifts to be underestimated; violence and abuse is done to the female body by men in power in the church; and the rejection of queer women exists because of the privileging of heterosexuality and monogamy.

When we can see the church struggling with racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, we wonder how the church will move to the world if it needs internal healing and restoring. Research shows that

*“As women, we always feel like we have to do everything. Or maybe, we don't but it is the way that we have been taught, at least this is the way that we internalized this. However, we feel in our inner self that this should be different. [...] Sometimes we would like something different than this, however, if we don't do it, who will do it. And here we go again, serving, studying, raising our families, doing ministry, taking care of others, and suddenly we forget about us...until somebody reminds us.”*  
 – quote from a participant



*Rev. Dr. Daisy Machado and Dr. Mayra Picos-Lee during their keynote lectures*

women tend to be given smaller parishes, or parishes that are near to closing. Because of their placement, female pastors show greater resiliency, confidence, and optimism as they engage their roles as leaders. Women will lead the way as healers. Women's love provides comfort and joy. Their strength has sustained others. Their imagination sees a better world. Their faith has helped revive hope in despairing times.

Dr. Machado introduced us to Dr. Ana Nogales who claims, “Contrary to what many people think about Latino culture holding back, the reasons for women's success lay in the very qualities which have their roots in our cultural origins.” She rethinks the values found in the Latin culture and takes on a strengths-based approach to encourage Latinas to utilize what they already have:

- The creative spirit – *Espíritu creativo*
- The survivor spirit – *The Aguantadora* – Passionate, determination
- The Girlfriend spirit – *La comadre* – Networking ability
- The diplomat spirit – *La diplomática* – Discretion
- The risktaker spirit – *La atrevida* – Courage
- Multitasker spirit – *La malabarista* – Balance
- A queen spirit – *La reina* – confidence

Dr. Machado explains that Latina leaders do not have to give up being who they are as Latinas in order to become leaders in a white majority context.



Dr. Mayra Picos-Lee continued on Dr. Machado’s theme of drawing strength from Latin culture in her lecture on how Latina women demonstrate leadership in church and religious organizations. She articulates that Latina women are grounded in personal stories, faith, and culture. Dr. Picos-Lee encourages everyone to learn about other cultures because “if you know one culture, you know no culture.” Only in one’s awareness of other cultures can they truly understand our own, and understanding one’s own culture is foundational for Latina leaders. Latina leadership requires *conciencia* of who they are—their giftedness and intuition—and requires Latina leaders to expel the demons of oppression and the forces that exclude them. Resistance and demonstrating passion and purpose help Latina leaders lean into *coraje*. The Spanish word for courage is *coraje*, which is more accurately translated “with heart.”

because *comunidad es familia*. Finally, Latina leadership is characterized by generosity, joy, and diversity. She expresses, “We celebrate (Latinx ethnic) diversity by breaking bread together, sharing stories, and dancing.” Dr. Picos-Lee, herself, shared diversity, joy, resistance, and *conciencia* through her art. Photos of painted masks and a mural that she worked on were embedded into her presentation.

*“Our [Latinas] laughter is one of our strengths. It is some kind of psychological makeup, and we can make fun of ourselves. In our culture we celebrate the Day of the Dead, even though it is a day to remember those who are now in the presence of God, it is also a day to remember, to cook food, to bring the family together around the table, and share stories, to see the past and to see the present and future with a sense of connection with your family roots, heritage for the present.”*  
 – quote from a participant



*A mural that Dr. Picos-Lee collaborated on and shared during her presentation*

Dr. Picos-Lee shared that her parents encouraged her to love what she does and do what she loves. Working is much more than making a living. She also shares our histories, our families, and our well-being are our roots. As a result, Latina leaders are welcoming and hospitable, qualities carried over from living in multigenerational households. In Latina leadership, the personal and the professional is intertwined because Latinas are oriented towards people and intertwine personal and professional

Both Dr. Machado and Dr. Picos-Lee concluded that Latinas in religious leadership can support each other by encouraging dialogue, creating together, critiquing together, dreaming together, and strategizing together with women in and outside the church. As they seek to heal the church, Latina leaders also need healing because they know



*Two members of ACLAMEN who led our closing ritual*



firsthand that their struggle is hard. *¡Qué difícil es la lucha!* But they have God's gifts – their Latin culture – to strengthen them as leaders.

In addition to our two lectures, we received wisdom from our participants. Some quotes have been included throughout this recap. After each lecture we broke into small groups where we listened to each other's experiences in ministry, the academy, and society as women of color. The lectures and the small group time helped participants reflect upon their own experience as women of color: the joys, the challenges, and the opportunities to serve our communities. In general, the participants expressed that they needed this space. They needed to know that they are not alone in *la lucha*. This experience gave us hope.

In the words of Dr. Machado, walk in confidence of who you are and the call you have received. Hold close the partners you've found in *la lucha*. *¡Hermanas del alma, Adelante!*



*“Our advice to young Latina girls, trust yourself, you are worthy, you are unique. Don't allow the many voices that you will hear to silence your dreams...we are here praying for you, and when you forget about your dreams, we will remind you about them. Your dreams are our dreams.”*  
 – quote from a participant

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER  
 WOMEN IN THE WORLD:

## Latinas and Religious Leadership

Virtual Zoom Conference on  
 Friday, March 26, 2021 | 10 am - 3:30 pm EDT

**Keynote Speakers**  
**Rev. Dr. Daisy Machado**  
**Dr. Mayra Picos-Lee**

RSVP: <https://tinyurl.com/fjcxebvm>

Co-sponsored by The National  
 Association of Latina  
 Methodist Clergy Women  
 (ACLAMEN)



*“Faith is what helps us to move on, to conquer every day what is waiting for us.”*  
 – quote from a participant

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER  
 WOMEN IN THE WORLD:

## LATINAS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Friday, March 26, 2021 | 10 am - 3:30 pm EDT

10:00am	<b>Welcome and opening ritual</b>
10:30am	<b>Keynote speaker – Dr. Daisy Machado</b>
11:30am	<b>Responses in small groups</b>
12:00pm	<b>LUNCH Break</b>
1:00pm	<b>Breathing exercise</b>
1:10pm	<b>Keynote speaker – Dr. Mayra Picos-Lee</b>
2:10pm	<b>Small group systematizing</b>
2:40pm	<b>Break</b>
2:50pm	<b>Plenary reporting</b>
3:10pm	<b>Closing ceremony and ritual</b>
3:30pm	<b>Closing remarks</b>

**Featured Speakers**

**Rev. Dr. Daisy Machado**, Union Theological Seminary  
 Professor of Church History at Union Theological Seminary

**Dr. Mayra Picos-Lee**, Palmer Theological Seminary  
 Senior Lecturer in Counseling & Director of MTS in Latino/a  
 Ministry



## Life of the Mind

May 2019 - August 2020

“Be careful where you take your steps  
In that place  
They did not build it with your face in mind.”

I did not know that the life of the mind could  
teach me how to dance  
But I have learned how to let others lead  
To protect my space and yours  
While we appear to be in sync  
I am minding my feet  
Hoping I don't step on you  
Hoping you don't step on me  
Knowing that with every twist of my wrist  
I am aware that you are telling me with your  
eyes  
Which way I should turn

I did not know the life of the mind could  
Teach me how to embody apology  
I am sorry that I am here now  
And you must deal with me  
While I deal with myself  
And no one deals with you.  
This is just the way things are—

The metal box that takes me there  
Trains me to look down  
I hate its screechy sounds  
It is never on time but I am always late  
Out of breath and  
Out of place.



The metal doors do not promise safety  
They promise to promise in as many words as  
one can use to sentence  
Me into a prison of gratefulness.  
They are heavy with welcomes  
That close too fast behind someone  
Who has never learned to look over their  
shoulder

The Negroes of the Past line the walls across  
from the elevator  
You tell me we are proud of them  
The metal box takes us up again  
I do not have enough seconds to tell you  
How often I second guess myself

Before I came here  
I felt who I was  
Now I think too much about her  
As I wish I did not know this life of the mind  
Would be a life in your mind



**Rose J. Percy** she/her  
writer, teacher & preacher  
Third Year Masters of Divinity, STH



# DARING TO BREATHE IN THE FACE OF CAPITALISM / 7 SQUARES ON A SCREEN

## Daring to breathe in the face of capitalism

My lungs are an ocean of air  
With sweeping waves  
Heaving from shoreline to shoreline  
With the stillness of settled water  
The smallest of ripples

Why do my breaths only dip their toe?  
In fear of alerting the sleeping beasts  
Uncertain of the depths they may reach

When was the last time you submerged  
Let the beasts awaken  
Push yourself below anyways

The exhale is yours for the taking,  
The one thing in your control

Will you let that infinite power  
Fall prey to the state?

Right hand to your heart,  
Left hand to your diaphragm  
It's time to take a swim



**Jocelin Thomas** she/her  
First Year Masters of Divinity, STH

## Squares on a Screen

I prop up my cardboard self  
Smile big for the screen  
What you see is an apparition  
A shell of the true state  
A shell that smiles well

Well over a year in  
Constant vigilance becomes  
Consistent exhaustion  
Coping mechanisms run dry  
Unfulfilling like a mirage in the desert

My smile isn't working so well  
I string it up with copper wire  
Tightened into position  
You mustn't forget to smile  
Else the screen might know

A square of your existence  
Is all you show  
Better make it a happy one  
Fill it with bright colors  
You might even convince yourself

I dare not drop  
From head to heart  
Who knows what I'd find there

Can the screen handle pain?  
All I offer is tension  
Tension in the twists of my copper wire smile  
And the bust of my cardboard self





### About the Artist:

Jocelin Thomas (she/her) identifies racially as Asian American, and ethnically as Indian. She is an MDiv student interested in womanist theology, aesthetics, and the intersection of spirituality and social justice. Though her career began in public accounting, she has long been on a journey towards spiritual care work and artistry. Jocelin is a poet, writer, collage artist, drummer, and climber.



There is *something* about “The Cross.” I make this statement thinking about its meaning to Black church mothers with their hats, big smiles, and shoulders carrying weight only God can fathom as they greet you on that glorious Sunday morning! The *something* they are referring to is what has gotten our people through the terror of this country and beyond. That something is what has gotten me through the terror of this country and beyond.

There is something *else* entirely about The Cross that isn’t sitting right with me this year. In my denomination we look at Easter as a time of God’s “resurrection power,” which becomes available to us through Jesus’ death on The Cross. This “truth” does not feel resonant today as I read about: the attack on Vilma Kari, anti-Asian violence, Arkansas’ ban on health access to trans-children, “11th transgender victim of violence in 2021”, the lack of indictment for murders of Black people at the hands of police, and more. This season I am not sure I can celebrate another murder, even one on The Cross.

It was *indeed* Jesus’ embodiment that triggered the state (authorities). It was indeed his call to another way of living that embodied justice and righteousness which left him bleeding and hanging. And yet here I am, like clockwork, preparing a table (*both literal and figurative*) to celebrate the day of “the Risen King” and the resurrection power Jesus brings. But what is risen or resurrected about the state of fear by which our AAPI siblings are living in? What is risen or resurrected about George Floyd being murdered by the knees of a police officer? What is risen or resurrected about our trans/LGBTQ+ siblings not being able to live freely and fully in their bodies? What is risen or resurrected about Vilma Kari being assaulted while bystanders simply watched?

In this season, mourning seems to permeate far beyond Friday. There is more to mourn than a Friday afternoon can handle as we watch reprise after reprise of the crucifixion on the streets of New York City, across San Francisco...

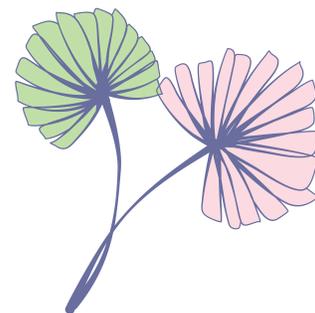
Moment after moment the cross flashes before my eyes, as I wonder is there truly *anything good about “Good Friday”?*

## **Homage to those Crucified**

You hung  
She bled

You died  
She cried

you spoke out “my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”  
she yelled “why aren’t you helping?!”



for 30 pieces of silver you ratted me out  
for a \$20 bill you suffocated me until I could breathe no longer

I cried out “Mama”, you silenced me  
with no more breathe, I lay

my body uncovered naked for all to see  
will I rise? was there ever any hope?

*\*I use Christian language without nuance in this piece with intention. I do this in order to depict the wrestling I am doing within my own tradition, and to express raw theological processing regarding the implications of journeying alongside one another in the face of death and suffering.*

**Zoë Towler** she/her  
Second Year Masters of Divinity, STH



My hybrid identity as a half Korean and half white North American has deeply shaped my academic and vocational journey in explicit and implicit ways. This hybridity has cultivated a *both-and* outlook and encouraged a posture of nimbleness and savviness. It has taught me the importance of naming, embracing, and nurturing a deep inner core of who I am and then cradling that core with humility, compassion, and openness to questions, including healthy self-interrogating practices. This has become one the deepest *both-and*s of my person—both embracing core convictions that ground who I am *and* intentionally fostering practices of humility and openness to new ways of thinking and being. In the following, I highlight key lessons from three stages of my academic journey that are shaped in some way by this *both-and* orientation.

I started out as a somewhat typical Asian-American undergraduate at Emory initially declaring a path of pre-med. I took pre-med courses in my first year while “dabbling” in religion on the side—except that I soon discovered that my so-called “side interest” was really my passion. By sophomore year, I declared a double major in religion and psychology. By junior year, an interest in the history of Christian-Jewish relations emerged as a focus of study, and I added as many history classes as I could fit into my coursework. By senior year, I wrote an honors thesis on Christian-Jewish dialogue.

I name three key learnings from this early stage. First, follow your passion! Academic and vocational journeys are challenging and entail seasons of hardship and self-doubt. Choose something that matters to you, that will sustain you during times of uncertainty or despair. Second and closely related to this, ask yourself, “What is my driving question?” What is that deep question that resonates with and moves my whole being? My experience affirms that if your vocation can connect in some way with that deep question, it provides a level of meaning and resolve that can profoundly sustain you through adversity or seeming obstacles. A key question that emerged for me was “How can I be a faithful Christian in the face of Christianity’s histories of oppression, beginning with its oppression of Jews and Judaism?” That question has taken various forms over the years; yet, at its heart, it has been one question asked in different ways. Third, through studying Christian-Jewish history and dialogue, I began to grasp the *both-and* of the necessity of embracing one’s identity and convictions *and* doing so in a manner that not only allows but *affirms* others to embrace their full identity. In other words, I can be proud to be a Christian *and* I should do so in a manner in which a Jew (or multiple other identities) can be proud to be a Jew.

The doctoral studies stage offered me other key learnings. First, there is the lesson of being open to surprises. I had pursued a Master of Theological Studies (MTS) focused on Christian Origins and New Testament studies. In my last semester of the MTS, I took a history class that I was required to take to replace the core history class (out of which I had advance-placed). That class (which I took simply because I *had* to!) ended up changing the whole course of my studies. It was a class with Dr. David Steinmetz, who had pioneered the field of the history of biblical interpretation. He ended up

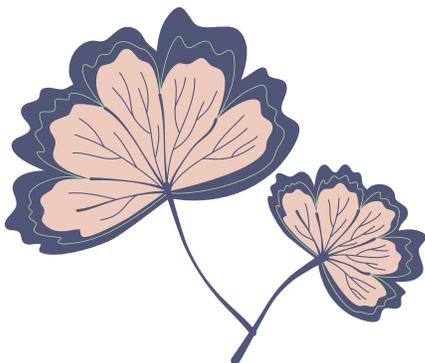


calling me up and asking me if I was interested in being his doctoral student. Thus, surprise of all surprises, a year later, I entered a PhD program in historical studies, rather than biblical studies. It was a surprise, and one I have never regretted.

A second lesson from these doctoral studies years is that you need not demean others in order to be ambitious. Here's what I mean. Doctoral studies can make you question your own worth. It can make you feel like an imposter. It can place you in a constant state of comparing yourself to your peers. It can make you think that in order to "succeed," you have to do so at the cost of another looking "less successful." By the way, that is not only true of doctoral studies; it is a disease that can permeate all of academia. Such assumptions foster isolation; they foster an incredibly lonely, unsustainable, and ultimately empty ambitious spirit. Ambition itself is not a bad thing. So, here's another *both-and* that I have learned: I can be ambitious, *and* I can genuinely celebrate the accomplishments of my colleagues. The accomplishments of my colleagues need not threaten or diminish my own confidence and my own ambition. Indeed, when my ambition is rooted in my own deep sense of vocation (rather than in a competitive spirit constantly comparing myself to others), I find a much more lasting joy and sustaining inspiration.

Lastly, I offer a lesson from my earlier years as a faculty member and administrator. Entering a tenure-track position at Duke University as a female, Asian-American, junior-level faculty member, the weight of what I imagined it took to make tenure was often unbearable. It was my usual practice when I entered a new place to take a year to listen and get to know the landscape. But three years in, I was still silent. I was struggling to find my voice. Then something unexpected happened. I was asked to take on a senior administrative role (even as I was a junior-level professor). It seemed from one perspective a crazy thing to do, but I discerned a calling, and I discerned an opportunity. It opened a new space from which to speak. It offered a renewed, healthy sense and expression of my own authority. Administration also expanded my awareness of my gifts and, thus, my vocation. Now, this is not to say that everyone should go into administration when they find they are struggling to find their voice. Rather, the lesson I learned is to be open to *unexpected*, even *unconventional* opportunities. They just may lead to the best vocational journey of your life. For me, the hybridity of faculty-administrator is another *both-and* that has proven to be a beautiful, generative space.

G. Sujin Pak  
Dean, Boston University School of Theology



# THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURE SERIES

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER  
THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURES

## THE LORD'S PRAYER • A CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE

GUEST SPEAKER



**LaTonya Zibi**

3RD YEAR  
MTS BUSTH

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12-1 P.M.

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURES

## NAMING IT AND HEALING A CONVERSATION ABOUT ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE

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AHSC  
STAFF

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12-1 P.M.

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## TRANS RESISTANCE AND THE SPIRIT OF LIBERATION!

GUEST SPEAKERS



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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURES

## REFUSING TO BE A VICTIM - ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY

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**SHARAYA  
JOHNSON**

2ND YEAR MDIV  
PRESIDENT OF ABS

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GUEST SPEAKER



**CRISTINA  
HERNANDEZ**

BU MASTER OF SOCIAL  
WORK & 3RD YEAR MDIV

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURES

## MY LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH ENGLISH

GUEST SPEAKER



**SORI  
KANG**

2ND YEAR MDIV

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12-1 P.M.

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURES

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE

GUEST SPEAKER



**KASEY  
KELLY**

2ND YEAR DUAL DEGREE  
SOCIAL WORK AND  
THEOLOGY

THURSDAY MARCH 4  
12-1 P.M.

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURES

## IMMIGRANT JUSTICE IS RACIAL JUSTICE

GUEST SPEAKER



**DAVID  
JAIMES**

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12-1 P.M.

MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGY  
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## SOMOS

GUEST SPEAKER



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KONDOR**

3RD YEAR MDIV

THURSDAY FEB 18  
12-1 P.M.

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURES

## I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW! BUT NOW I KNOW

WITH



**LAURA  
MONTAYA  
CIFUENTES**

2ND YEAR MDIV

THURSDAY FEB 11  
12-1 P.M.

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THURSDAY LUNCH LECTURES

## SELF DOUBT OR SELF CONFIDENCE?

WITH



**REV., DR.  
CHOI HEE AN**

THURSDAY FEB 4  
12-1 P.M.

CLINICAL ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PRACTICAL  
THEOLOGY, BUSTH, DIRECTOR OF THE ANNA  
HOWARD SHAW CENTER

MEETING ID: 957 1192 5882  
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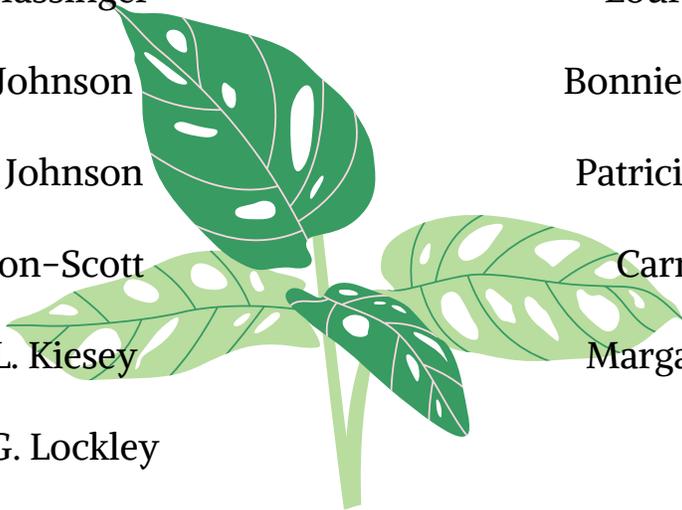
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Volume 38, Issue 2 Spring 2021

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