



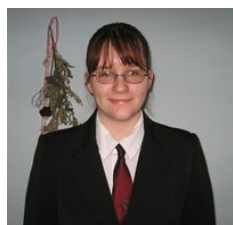
Anna Howard Shaw Center

NEWSLETTER

Volume 31 • Issue 1 • Fall 2014

“Sacred Sexuality and the Political Body”

Dear Friends of the Anna Howard Shaw Center,



By Samantha Ball

The Anna Howard Shaw Center was an inviting place when I first came to Boston University School of Theology. It was always full of people having animated discussions about their classes and ministry, or relaxing during the rare downtime that graduate school allowed. Slowly the space morphed to become my home at the School of Theology, and home for all of the people who came and went regularly. Students, faculty, and staff alike attended the Women’s Retreat, and guests from across the country came to speak at the Thursday Lunch Lecture Series and at the Women in the World Conference. I sometimes felt that I learned more in conversations with these guests and with my fellow students in the Shaw Center’s comfortable setting than I did during class. Student groups were welcomed into the space, and the students themselves were empowered to take part in shaping the Shaw Center to reflect their values and meet their needs. The Spiritual Growth and Stress Support Group helped me and many others shoulder our seminary burdens with grace and mindfulness to our health. I also saw how the Anna Howard Shaw Center reached out beyond the walls of the School of Theology. The Clergy Women’s Support Group and the Shaw Center’s various academic studies showed me that even beyond my immediate needs as a student the Anna Howard Shaw Center is there supporting women in ministry. As a student office assistant the director Dr. Choi often scolded me, telling me I worked too hard and that I should go home. Of course, the reality was that I was already home, and there was nowhere on campus I felt as comfortable, welcomed, and valued as I did in the Anna Howard Shaw Center. I am not the only one with special memories of this place, and it is my deep desire that the Anna Howard Shaw Center be able to continue its valuable work. Please consider making a donation to the Anna Howard Shaw Center this year. Any amount that you give will ensure that more young women and men are shaped in the legacy of Anna Howard Shaw and those who came after her, and I thank you in advance for making that possible with your generosity.

March 25, 2015
30th Women in the World Conference
9:00am–5:00pm
Anna Howard Shaw Women in the World Banquet
5:30pm–8:00pm

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All women, and those who love and support women, are welcome at the Anna Howard Shaw Center. This includes women of the LGBTQ community. The center was established to provide support and sanctuary for women in the midst of the male-centered world of seminary, and this remains its purpose today.

The Anna Howard Shaw Center is a space named in memory of the woman who broke the first layer of the stained glass ceiling in the Methodist Church in the United States of America. Shaw was ordained by the Methodist Protestant Church in Massachusetts after being rejected by the Methodist Episcopal Church. One of only two women in the 1876 class of forty-two men at BUSTH, Shaw is quoted to have said that she always felt the “abysmal conviction that she was not wanted there.” Notably, Shaw was also an immigrant, her family having immigrated from England when she was four years old, even though this fact did not seem to affect her acceptance among her peers. Her legacy is one of persistence, defiance, and courage, and that is the spirit in which the Center continues to do its work.

This Spirit should be a clear signal to any woman within the BUSTH community who feels unwanted, rejected, ostracized, unheard, or in any other way marginalized, and those who support her, to find a place of welcome, comfort and exploration in the Anna Howard Shaw Center. I remember my own introduction to the Center. I was new to the school, new to the city, trying to find my way around in a place full of strangers. And then a stranger took notice of me and invited me to the Center’s Open House.

On the night of the Open House, I wound up arriving at the Center approximately fifteen minutes before the end of the session. I was nevertheless welcomed warmly by those in attendance and ever since that night in early 1999, I have been a part of the Center’s activities. I have served as a work-study student, a scholar and research assistant, and I now serve on the advisory board.

I believe that all happened because someone (Faith Richardson) took the time to seek out this stranger and invite me into the community of women that made up the AHSC; but it did not end with Faith’s invitation. Others followed up on the invitation. All of the women, who as I recall were of various ages, welcomed me to a warm and friendly space where I could relax, study, and participate within a supportive community. What stood out to me at the time was that there were few women of color in the community. Yet, this woman of color felt welcome.

As I remember the hospitality of the AHSC, I know and believe that we, the AHSC, are and will do more to intentionally seeking out and extend a welcome to those in need of support and sanctuary. We welcome all women. We try to be present in the places where these women are to be found so that we might extend an invitation to them. Appealing to, and participating in, the community around BUSTH is one area of potential outreach for the Center.



Sharing food and stories are a couple of ways the AHSC fosters inclusivity.

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This can be accomplished by deploying ambassadors into the Greater Boston Community to encourage women who are not otherwise connected to BUSTH, to both to use the Center's resources and make contributions to it. In thinking about how the Center can use resources in the greater community to further Anna Howard Shaw's legacy, I remember my dear friend and colleague, Bishop Martin McLee, who sadly passed away a few months ago. Upon hearing the news, I called my friend the Rev. Karen Peters to commiserate. Karen was also a friend and colleague of Bishop McLee who, along with another member of the AHSC Board, the Rev. LaTrelle Miller Easterling and myself, were part of a supportive community around Bishop McLee in his journey towards the episcopacy. One of Karen's first reactions to Bishop McLee's death was to be angry with God. She questioned who was going to carry on the work that Bishop McLee had started, and why he had to die at this particular time. In his short time in the episcopacy, Bishop McLee had advanced the cause of the LGBTQ community, most notably declaring, after the Rev. Thomas Ogletree had been brought up on charges, that there would no longer be church trials for clergy who had performed wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples in the New York Annual Conference where he was the resident bishop. Bishop McLee affirmed that another way (other than clergy trials) would be found to address these issues. That declaration took courage, the kind of courage that is a part of the Anna Howard Shaw ethos.

In reflecting on Karen's question as to who will continue Bishop McLee's advocacy of the LGBTQ community, I've recognized that the Anna Howard Shaw Center has supported the lives of Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgendered, Queer and Questioning women. While the AHSC cannot support the LGBTQ community in exactly the same way as Bishop McLee did, it has been and will do more its part to embrace the LGBTQ community so that women in that community and their supporters can fully feel the encouragement of the Center. The door to this opportunity to make a difference in the lives of women who still feel marginalized, is open. The time is now for the AHSC to seek out the women who need our support and sanctuary and offer it to them; in this way follow the spirit of Anna Howard Shaw and Martin McLee.

What's the Difference?

Understanding Complexities of Gender, Sexual, and Romantic Identities

By Nathan Bakken



As my mom and I were reminiscing after my graduation, we reveled in joy at the memories of my donning my best friend's tutu and dancing around the house, and when I detached my Barbie's head so I could flush it down the toilet. I revealed my confusion when, as a 6 year old, I used the girls' bathroom solely because it smelled better than the boys' bathroom. I cherish those memories of me; I saw myself, even then, defying societal expectations of how boys and girls are supposed to act. But when my mom said, "I really thought you were asexual," I realized that my education in queer theory and gender studies has given me a vocabulary and understanding of the complexities around

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gender identity and sexual orientation that a majority of people in the U.S., and in the Church, don't have. I am not asexual, which is defined as a person who does not feel sexual attraction. I recognized that my mother's comment was speaking towards my gender expression and my gender identity, not my sexual identity. Our westernized, heteronormative, cissexist U.S. culture, however, tends to conflate sexual orientation, romantic orientation, and gender identity.

Gender identity is how a person identifies himself/herself/hirself/themselves, among many other pronoun forms. However, gender expression is how that person chooses to express or perform their gender identity. For example, "He/She/Ze/They look/s like a boy/girl," speaks to how that person's gender expression is read by the reader, in relation to stereotypes and ideals as to what a "man" and "woman" are. This becomes problematic when the reader presumes "He/She/Ze/They *is/are* a boy/girl" based on normative assumptions regarding gender expression. To do so is to "gender someone," and if the gendering doesn't line up with the person's identity, that is "misgendering". Misgendering is a source of trauma and anxiety for many trans people and non-binary people. The easiest solution to avoid misgendering someone is to not make assumptions about anyone's gender identity. The only way to truly know someone's gender is to ask them, and to remember that for some, identity changes and we are called to be supportive and respectful.

The easiest solution to avoid misgendering someone is to not make assumptions about anyone's gender identity.

Gender identity is not romantic attraction or sexual attraction. Have you ever met someone and thought: "Wow that person is really hot!" and then you talk to them and there wasn't that "spark"? This is an instance of experiencing sexual, but not romantic, attraction. If one can experience the sexual without the romantic, then it is possible to experience the romantic without the sexual. A person's sexual and romantic orientation can exist together in infinite combinations.

My mother's characterization of my behavior and expression as being "asexual" happened in the mid-90s, before the Trans movement was discussed within mainstream academia, let alone the media. Therefore, people outside of the academy had no accessible language to discuss aromantic identities. My mother used the word "asexual" as a way of trying to understand what she was seeing. She used the term "asexual" because the term "agender" wasn't known to her, but she did know that I was different. My mother witnessed her child breaking gender norms and she responded by encouraging and allowing her child to explore themselves. We are called to witness the authentic experiences of all people, even if we don't know the words. Gendering, misgendering, and placing gendered stereotypes to assume someone's gender, sexual, and romantic orientation isn't the way to witness the truth that gender, sexual, and romantic minorities hold within our world. Providing the space to listen and learn their truths from them on their terms is the best way. Even if you don't know the words to hold someone's truth, it does not mean that you cannot listen or learn to. To learn how to listen and hold someone's truth requires a process of unlearning, imagination, and education. That process begins with you.

In my last year of seminary at BUSTH, a friend recruited me to join the Reconciling United Methodists in their “Open the Doors” campaign at the 1996 General Conference. We asked people to sign cards which publicly affirmed that the United Methodist Church should open their doors to all people, regardless of sexual orientation. As I asked my soon-to-be-ordained liberal United Methodist colleagues to sign, I ran up against an astounding level of fear: fear about their names being seen on a list, about being labeled as gay or pro-gay in their annual conferences and ordaining bodies. Some of these folks likened their potential persecution and marginalization for supporting gay people to the *actual* exclusion of gay people from the church itself.



Dialogues at the Anna Howard Shaw Center provide a safe & transformative space for disruptive love and creative risk-taking.

At the conference, I was horrified by my first witnessing of public hate speech and by the fact that it happened in my own church. As I listened to United Methodists degrade and dehumanize gay and lesbian people, I began to understand the pain and suffering the church had wreaked on queer folks and their families. This experience galvanized my commitment to work for change and marked my entry in the Reconciling movement. I met fun, creative, big-hearted risk-takers with whom I first learned what it meant to actively and collectively resist injustice. We made incredible witnesses of disruptive love throughout that General Conference. Over the years, however, I have become disheartened that as the movement has become more main stream, people have relied on institutional channels of change. While approaches such as legislation-writing and holy conference have served a purpose and remain important, more (non)violent, confrontational approaches are necessary to end discrimination.

Since the 2012 General Conference, I have become involved with Love Prevails, an organization whose commitment to non(violent) resistance encourages a 3-fold strategy of change: Disclose. Divest. Disrupt. I cannot believe that people of conscience, including our bishops, who believe in their hearts in the full inclusion of LGBTQ folks in our denomination, do not openly, publicly speak or act in defiance of our polity. The majority of our leaders and most folks at the grassroots know what is right, believe our *Book of Discipline* needs to change, and simply fail to act. I am as appalled by the fear and lack of leadership and moral courage as I was during my seminary years.

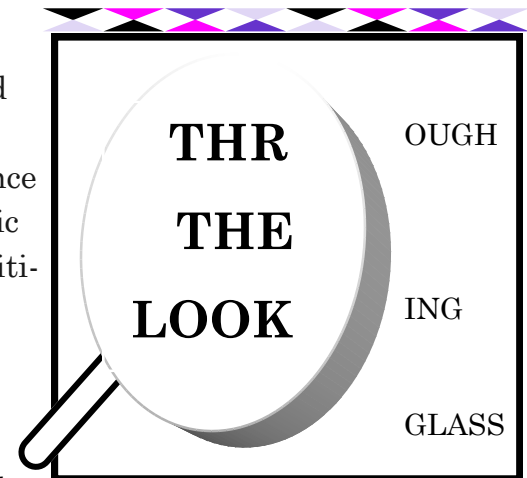
I remain committed to change. It is freeing and fun to resist with folks who live and act in the knowledge that love casts out fear. I pray the numbers of creative, committed, big-hearted, United Methodist risk-takers grow.

Recently, I read an article on BuzzFeed LGBT entitled, “70 Thoughts You Have When You Realize You’re A Stereotypical Lesbian.” Bullet points twenty-five through twenty-seven get right at the point. “[Reaches to put on shoes] Docs, Chucks, or Nike...CRAP! Or I could wear a vest — they’re both fashionable and practical. Listen, I just look good in these things okay?! I’m doing me.” While, I neither agree with all of the stereotypes, nor with the sentiments that were derived from this author’s experiences and opinions, I have experienced first hand the struggle to make sense of my own sex, gender, and sexuality through the pervasive politics of dress.

Each morning I have a routine of getting ready which is a conscious process incorporated into how I engage the world, or how I situate myself, but also how the world engages me. What an individual puts on while “getting ready” can imply a great deal. What is it exactly that we get ready for though? As a woman and as a lesbian, I have become acutely aware of how deeply ingrained gender performance, such as wearing dresses or walking a particular way, directly affects how I understand myself. As noted in the BuzzFeed article, the way that a lesbian dresses and behaves both constitutes, and perpetuates, a specific normative image and personality. However, this understanding of sexuality, by means of gender performance (i.e. clothing, mannerisms), reduces the sacredness of each being into expressions devoid of emotion and humanity. The depth and uniqueness of the person is lost and the understanding of sexuality becomes a discussion about what is on the surface.

On a practical level, the degree to which the public and private spheres are linked needs to be carefully examined. Among public spheres of school, work, and worship, appearance affects perceived capability, competency, worthiness, economic status, and more. The deeper aspect of this is dynamic is political influence. As someone who identifies myself as a woman and as a lesbian, I have become acutely aware of how deeply this influence is rooted. On many occasions, I have felt completely overwhelmed by the many implications of what an outfit represents. I often feel stuck and defeated when considering what to wear. Over time, I have learned to recognize this tension as awareness of normative boundaries.

While I feel fairly comfortable wearing whatever I want among friends, there are many women, no matter their sexual orientation, who feel the political implications of dress just as intensely in both spheres. These implications of dress are complex and integral to restoring the sacred humanity of all persons in social, political, economic, and faith structures. While there are many who do not believe in, or belong to, organized religion, I suggest that religion is precisely where the past wounds needs to be confronted and healed. Only after radical shifts in attitude and tradition among the many layers of everyday life will the politics of dress change.



Welcome to the Boston University School of Theology!

Hannah Brents, 1st year M.Div and new intern at the Anna Howard Shaw Center, graduated from Abilene Christian



University in 2012 with a B.A. in Biblical Text. In a year-long mission trip called The World Race, Hannah visited Ukraine, Moldova, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozam-

bique, Nepal, India, Thailand, Malaysia, and Cambodia. She worked as an assistant youth pastor at a satellite campus of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio before moving to the North for the first time in her life to begin the M.Div. program at BU STH in Fall 2014.

Eileen Daily serves as Lecturer and Director of the New Doctor of Ministry degree in Transformational



Leadership. She is especially interested in how technology can (and should) mediate theological and religious education and is the author and architect of art/y/fact.Xn,

an app for mobile devices that helps users make sense of or mediate with Christian artworks in museums, in churches, on the tourist trail or on the Web. Her other research interests are in interfaith religious, education, public religious education, and religious education through visual art.

30 Years and Going Strong: Celebrating “Women and the Word”

March 25th, 2015

Plenaries (9:00 am-5:00pm) Women in the World Banquet(5:30pm-8:00pm)

Featuring: Rev. Dr. Eunjoo Mary Kim, Rev. Dr. Cristian De La Rosa, Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, Rev. Jacqueline Blue, Rev Dr. David Schnasa Jacobsen, Ms. Xochitl Alvizo, Dr. Diana Swancutt, Rev. Dr. Julie Todd

From the Director

Rev. Dr. Choi Hee An



I had never met someone who openly identified with the LGBTQ community in my native country, Korea. However, when I started my theological education in the U.S., many classmates and professors identified themselves as LGBTQ. One day, one of my lesbian classmates shared a personal story which shook my soul. Her partner had been in a car accident. When my classmate visited the scene of the accident, however, the police fought her off because she had no legal relation to the victim. While her partner received critical care, she had to wait outside of the hospital all day, with

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no one to comfort her as she cried. When her partner died, she was also prohibited from attending the funeral and had to watch from a distance, alone. Through my classmate's words and tears, I realized that although I understood LGBTQ issues academically and theologically, I had to struggle with them spiritually in front of God. When I came to the Anna Howard Shaw Center, it was already advocating on behalf of the LGBTQ community. The former director, Margaret Wiborg, and all the board members vigorously engaged LGBTQ issues both in theory and practice, within the academy, local church contexts, and social movements. Some received backlash for their work and were accused of being "dangerous feminists." Nonetheless, these women maintained their commitment to social justice and supported the Anna Howard Shaw Center in its engagement with issues of sexuality and racism, among many others. I pray that Shaw Center friends and donors continue to empower our work so that we may be a beacon of hope and grace.

Dr. Cristian De La Rosa speaks at Thursday Lunch Lecture Series



Please send donations to: *Boston, Massachusetts 02215*
Boston University School of Theology *Or submit online at*
Anna Howard Shaw Center
745 Commonwealth Avenue *www.bu.edu/shaw/donations/*

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER

*Volume 31, Issue 1
Fall 2014*

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