



Anna Howard Shaw Center

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 21 ♦ NUMBER 2 ♦ SPRING/SUMMER 2005

REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN OF THE WORLD 2005

Karrina Hull

The Anna Howard Shaw Center's annual Women of the World (previously "Women and the Word") conference was an amazing event this year. Held on April 13, the conference offered lectures from women with Buddhist, Islamic, and Shamanist perspectives. For the third year, the conference was organized by Karen Alley, who graduated this spring. The Shaw Center would like to wish Karen peace and blessings in the next chapter of her life. The Shaw Center would also like to thank the Women of the World Steering



The presenters: The Venerable Man-Ching Shih, Dr. Eun Hye Shin, and Dr. Shahla Haeri.

Committee and the Shaw Advisory Board for supporting the event with their donations of time, money, and energy. Special thanks are also extended to Cherlyn Gates for the beautiful podium,

LaTrelle Miller Easterling for the all-inclusive worship service, and all those who attended the event and ensured its success.

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MINISTRY AND MULTICULTURALISM: AN INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

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

The Anna Howard Shaw Center starts a new conference, Women of the World, this year with a hopeful vision and great joy. Honoring the legacy of our past conference, Women and the Word, we have considered seriously the meaning of women's ministry and decided to offer a new vision of ministry with our new conference, "Women of the World." In a *Boston Globe* article (April 9, 2005), we presented the vision for our conference: we seek to "explore cultural bridges" through this conference and find a way "where faith and gender intersect." With these serious intentions and visions, and with the great support and help of many board and steering committee members, we have successfully completed our conference this year.

Our new conference brought several distinctive meanings for women and ministry. Over the past year, the Shaw Center provided the "Mosaic of Voices: Multicultural Biblical Lecture Series." We started this program as the first step of investigating multi-

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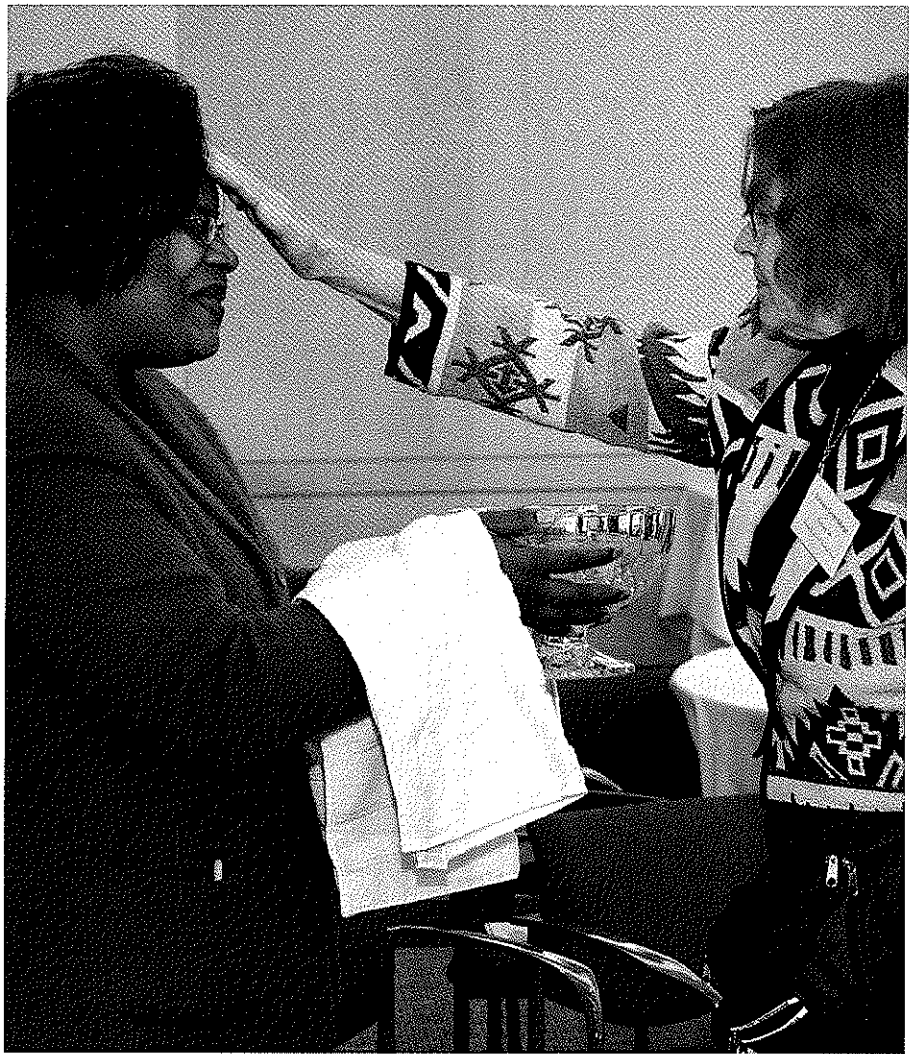
MINISTRY AND MULTICULTURALISM

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cultural ministry. We tried to listen not only to white feminist voices but to the various voices of women within the church. In our ongoing vision, we draw our attention to seeing ourselves as part of a multicultural body. Considering the urgent necessity of understanding our body, we decided to have a new conference as a way of exploring different paths to see who we really are and how we can understand each other.

Listening to Venerable Man-Ching Shih, a Buddhist nun and a director at the Greater Boston Buddhist Cultural Center, we learned about Buddhist women's struggles and stories. Buddhist women's struggles to be ordained as nuns, in particular, have been remarkably similar to Christian women's struggles for their ordination. Dr. Shahla Haeri, an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Director of Women's Studies of Boston University, provided a wonderful dialogue with us about how Muslim women challenge their political lives with their faith toward reaching equality and justice. She pointed out that their faith empowered them to fight against patriarchal institutional structures, instead of submitting to them. Dr. Eun Hee Shin, an assistant professor of Asian religions at Simpson College in Iowa and an activist for Korean unification, introduced us to the Korean indigenous religion, Shamanism, in a comparison between Shamanist Spirit and Christian Spirit. She opened the path of multireligious ways of living and thinking.

This conference provided another step toward envisioning our multicultural ministry. Beyond Christian boundaries, we wanted to experience our faith as a part of the multicultural body of this



The worship service

world. Many religions become a part of our "culture." Christians are not only exposed to Christianity just as Buddhists or Muslims are not only exposed to Buddhism or Islam. Christianity itself became a part of our culture as Buddhism became a part of our way of living. Many religions impact various dimensions of our lives consciously and unconsciously. People no longer live in mono-religious narratives. With their cultures and traditions, people bring their religions and create their own faith. Through Women of the World, the Shaw Center tried to help Christian women understand how these phenomena have been processed and could be explained. In fact, this conference gave us a great opportunity to explore these processes and to commu-

nicate different parts of our bodies and spirits.

Without knowing our "thou," we could not understand ourselves. Without knowing ourselves, we cannot communicate to ourselves. Preparing a multicultural ministry is the most important step of envisioning the twenty-first century's ministry. Without knowing our multicultural bodies, we cannot prepare for this ministry. With this intention, the Shaw Center is now preparing to launch another research project for women and ministry. We will share this project in our next newsletter. With your constant support and encouragement, the Shaw Center will keep challenging and exploring new visions of our ministry and work with Women of the World. ♦



WOMEN OF THE WORLD: EXPECTATIONS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS

Katrina Hull

A few days before the Women of the World conference, I decided to do an interview with student Kimberly Fillion. I thought it would be informative to learn her reasons and expectations for the conference. I then thought it would be even more informative to have a follow-up interview after the conference to see how it measured up to her expectations. What follows are the interviews I conducted.

PRE-CONFERENCE INTERVIEW:

Why do you want to attend the conference?

Too often, we hear and learn about world religions through the lenses and interpretations of men. I hope that this retreat will help me understand these religions through the eyes of women, and I hope it will help me learn about the experiences of women in religions different from my own. I have studied feminism in Christianity, and would like to learn about women's roles in world religions. I am particularly interested in Buddhism, and if women can obtain nirvana.

How do you feel about men attending the conference?

I think that to some extent it is good to have men participate in the conference. I think the goal of an event such as Women of the World is to spread the ideas and experiences of women in world religions. Both women and men can learn from these women. However, I think it is important to maintain that Women of the World is run, organized, and headed by women. In this way, the men can come and be active participants, but it should still be a women's conference.

What do you hope to gain from attending the conference?

I would like to understand other reli-

gions simply to expand my personal knowledge about the history and experiences of women in these religions. I would like to better understand "their world around me as opposed to my world around them." In this way, I hope to be better equipped to sympathize with women from other religions and gain a deeper appreciation of both our similarities and differences.

Is it important for the Shaw Center to sponsor events such as Women of the World? Why?

Events such as Women of the World help women from this area gain a better understanding of women from different religions and cultures. Without this conference, someone like me might not ever have this opportunity. Dialogue, communication, understanding, respect, knowledge, and appreciation are all important in the world, and they are all supported by the Women of the World conference.

POST-CONFERENCE INTERVIEW:

Did the Women of the World conference meet your expectations? Why?

The conference was above my expectations. I didn't know exactly what to expect, as it was my first Women of the World conference. However, I was impressed at how well everything was put together and how effectively the event was run. The women were so sharing of their personal stories and experiences. It made me feel proud to be a woman living in the world. It made me appreciate my culture more, and gave me more appreciation for being a woman.

What was your favorite aspect of the conference?

I think the small group discussion was my favorite part. I was able to really relate

to other women in the world. It was interesting to hear more personally and intimately the experiences of a Muslim and a Shamanist woman and people from different walks of Christianity. Engaging in dialogue with women who were mostly older than me made me able to learn from them and what they have already been through in their lives. I also enjoyed hearing the different Christian perspectives. It was interesting to find out that although we might all fit under the



Listening to a lecture

blanket term "Christian," we are all very different, but at the same time very accepting of one another.

Will you attend the conference next year? Do you have any suggestions for future conferences?

Yes, I will attend the conference next year. As far as suggestions, I would only say that it would have been better to have had more student-aged women there. It was such a learning experience for me, and I think having more women my own age could have enhanced some of the discussions. Overall, I thought the conference was fabulous. ♦



MEET THE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Katrina Hull

In mid-April, I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Kathe Darr, Bishop Susan Hassinger, and Reverend LaTrelle Easterling. These women are the new chair and co-vice chairs respectively of the Shaw Center.

I began by asking them, "How do you feel about being chairs of the board? What are some of your responsibilities?"

Susan Hassinger mentioned that as a newcomer to the board, one of the gifts she brings to the Shaw Center is her connection to the church. Susan can provide a bridge between the church and the academic realm. One of those connections, which she highlighted, was the retention study done by the Shaw Center a few years ago. This study focused on women alumni of the Shaw Center—interviewing them about whether they were still involved in local church ministry and why they were or were not. The results of the

study proved to be invaluable for the school, church, the greater New England area, etc. The Anna Howard Shaw Center has a proud legacy, which Susan is pleased and willing to continue.

Kathe Darr discussed her three main responsibilities as chair of the board. The first is to keep alive the history of the Shaw Center. It is important to remember when the center was founded, who founded it, and its original goals and visions. This responsibility changes and evolves each year with the new students and faculty members coming through. The second responsibility is to encourage women and men in STH to become involved in the Shaw Center. This leads into her third responsibility, which is to support the director of the center.

LaTrelle Easterling began by saying it was an honor to be one of the vice chairs of the board. She came into the confer-

ence under Bishop Hassinger, studied Hebrew Bible under Dr. Darr, and has developed great respect and admiration for Susan and Kathe and the immense experience that they bring to the board. LaTrelle mentioned three ways she is equipped to help the Shaw Center. She can both bring the voice of and be a representative for women of color. She is also a pastor and can provide a link to the church. Finally, as a recent graduate of the School of Theology, LaTrelle represents a closer link to and understanding of the students the center will be supporting.

Next, I asked them, "What are the biggest challenges the Shaw Center faces and how can we rise to meet them?"

Similar to Susan's answer, Kathe expressed the need for the Shaw Center to change in order to stay relevant in both the School and society. While it is important to be proud of and to remember the

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REFLECTIONS FROM A GRADUATING SHAW SCHOLAR

Lai Fian Wan

Some thoughts on keeping the faith: what should we do when facing disaster, uncertainty, tension, or fear?

In 1997, I left the continent (Asia) where I grew up. Since that time, I have been away from home, but my heart has never left that land—the most crowded area on earth. It is a land that gave birth to many old religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism, Shintoism, Confucianism, as well as folk religions), and it is a land whose people have experienced lots of suffering. Economic recessions, SARS, tsunamis, atomic weaponry, communism, and military expansion have threatened the lives of many. Imperialism,

colonization, violence, domination, oppression, suffering, death, and tears have been a continual reality. The difficult situation stimulates deep reflection and a spiritual search.

As an Asian Christian woman, I have been overwhelmed by our history and recent news. I cannot help but ask questions: What should I do? What can I do? How can the Church respond compassionately and effectively to these crises?

As a Bible believer and a Christ-centered Christian, I proclaim:

Do believe in the Bible. The description of the Day of the Lord (II Peter 3) in the Bible is only the tip of the iceberg.

Do something!

Do help each other with any religious concerns.

Do face the sins of this fallen world positively.

Do assure each other of God's love and presence, of our commitment to walk with each other and support each other through this valley of the shadow of death.

Do help each other to grieve and mourn our losses.

Do pray with someone. Ask God to give us strength and courage to bear our cross.

Do consult with others in the wider faith community and work hand in hand to face the challenges. ♦



NEWS AND REVIEWS FROM THE STH WOMEN

Katrina Hull

Professor **Katheryn P. Darr** read a paper, "Proverb Performance and Transgenerational Retribution in Ezekiel 18," before the Theological Perspectives on the Book of Ezekiel Section of the Society of Biblical Literature. The reading took place at the Society's 2004 Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, on November 23, 2004. She also gave the keynote address, "Watch What You Put in God's Mouth," at the 2004 United Methodist Annual Conference Convocation at the Boston University School of Theology on November 4, 2004. Kathe has spent her sabbatical semester (Spring 2005) completing her research for and beginning to write a book about proverbs appearing in the canonical prophetic collections of ancient Israel. You can read more about Kathe Darr in the Board Members interview, which appears in this issue.

Professor **Karen B. Westerfield Tucker** has also been busy in the past few months. She published an article, "Back to the Future: The Relevance of John Wesley for Today," which appears in *Sacramental Life* (Winter 2004/2005). Karen gave three lectures this semester. The first was at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music's conference on the "Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer: Christology, Trinity, and Liturgical Theology," in New Haven, Connecticut. The lecture was titled, "But Who Do You Say That I Am? Christology in Recent Hymns," and took place on February 26, 2005. She also gave two lectures and a sermon on March 19–20, 2005, at the Zion Korean United Methodist Church, School of Worship and Spiritual



The gift of others

Formation in Warwick, Rhode Island. Karen will also be presenting two lectures this summer. The first lecture will be on May 24–28 in Singapore. She will be a keynote speaker for the Methodist Church in Singapore's Aldersgate 2005 program under the general title, "Faith and Reason: Wesleyan Perspectives." This year, the Methodist Church in Singapore celebrates its 125th anniversary. While in Singapore, she will preach and lead local church worship workshops. From June 5–19, she will be teaching at Seoul Theological Seminary and the new Graduate School of Practical Theology in Korea. While in Korea, she will also be preaching in local congregations and teaching pastors' groups. Karen was also named a member of the Editorial Advisory Board, Kingswood Books, Abingdon Press (for years 2005–2009).

Professor **Dana Robert** has been busy giving lectures, as well. On October 3, 2004, she gave the Burgess Mission

Lecture at the Luther Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Next, on February 1, 2005, she gave the Fondren Lecture (for Ministers' Week) at the Perkins School of Theology at the Southern Methodist University. Dana has also become an Associate Editor for the journal *Church History*. She has received an ATS Theological Research Grant to assist in a sabbatical for the spring semester of 2006. The Center for Global Christianity and Mission was approved by the Boston University Board of Trustees in 2004. Their website is www.bu.edu/sthblcgm/.

Professor **Shelly Rambo** just received a 2005–2006 teaching grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning for redesigning theology curriculum. ♦



MEET THE NEW BOARD MEMBERS *continued*

center's history and heritage, it's also important to recognize that we must work together to define what the center will be in the future. We need to engage students who come through the School, in order to shape and define the center based on their needs. In this way, we will be involved in a constant state of motion and growth. Because stagnation can lead us to become petrified into irrelevance, the advisory board must encourage change and development and constant interaction with the students in the School.

Recognizing and learning from what has been successful and meaningful historically in the center is also something LaTrelle mentioned as important. The challenge is to remain bifocal—recognizing that the center is housed in a School but also represents women and men of the church. LaTrelle said that the challenge is to go beyond simply being a voice for and about women, but to look at issues facing a more global community. Because the Shaw Center is run by and comprised of women, everything we do will have a woman's touch, a woman's influence, and a woman's nuance. It is important for the center to expand beyond the walls of the institution and church and use its many gifts to benefit both men and women from different cultures and situations worldwide.

Susan began by explaining that every group and organization goes through cycles, and the Anna Howard Shaw Center is no different. Right now, the center is experiencing a juncture. Its priorities and operation are likely to be shifted in the future. It is critical for us to maintain ourselves in a contemporary world. Our biggest challenge is to continue to become an organization of the 21st century. Susan also recognizes that

the center is already working to meet this challenge with programs such as the new research project (mentioned in this newsletter) and the recent Women of the World conference.

The third question I posed was, "What are your short- and long-term goals for the center?"

In the short term, LaTrelle wants to better understand how her specific gifts and graces can be used to enhance the Shaw Center. In the long term, she would like to see the center undertake research projects that are pivotal for the academy and the church. These projects should address contemporary issues and speak to a broad demographic. In so doing, the center will secure its place in both arenas.

The new research project for the Shaw Center is seen as both a short- and long-term goal for Susan. In the short term, she hopes that the project launches successfully next semester. In the long term, Susan would like the project to make an impact on and be relevant to the church and society. There is also talk of a retreat for the members of the advisory board, which would focus specifically on making some definite long-term goals for the Shaw Center. Susan thinks events such as the Women of the World conference do well to represent the ideals of the Shaw Center: research, education, support, and advocacy.

Kathe spoke of the importance to begin next year with initiatives to let new students know about the Shaw Center. When first-year students get to Boston, they have a lot to get used to, and it is often a difficult transition getting settled into a new routine. During this time, it is important to have a series of events that would allow students to be invited into and made to feel an important part of

the Shaw Center. Kathe explained that the center is not just an asset for women, but also for men, and it is necessary to make this fact known to all students. We can support their research and their search for themselves, and in return, the students can help to redefine and mold the center. In the long term, Kathe believes it is important for the center to play a more major role in the School of Theology and be more responsive to students and the community.

Lastly, I asked if there were any additional thoughts or ideas they would like to share.

Susan thought it was important to commend the School of Theology for having the foresight a quarter-century ago to establish the Shaw Center and to support both the center and its director.

Kathe reiterated how important it is for the Shaw Center to avoid slipping into a passive and apathetic mindset. Every generation of students, faculty, and staff needs to take seriously their role and responsibility to the Shaw Center. Most importantly, none of us should ever take the Shaw Center for granted.

LaTrelle wanted to add that she hopes the work of the Shaw Center is seen as both necessary and important by the School and administration. She also hopes that it continues to be supported financially and spiritually. As an appropriate ending to the interview, LaTrelle expressed how excited she was to be working with such dynamic women. She is sure that with the many great minds supporting and working for the Shaw Center, we will be able to continue to do amazing things. ♦



The morning of the conference was spent hearing three separate lectures. The Venerable Man-Ching Shih, who spoke from the Buddhist perspective, gave the first talk. She is a Buddhist monk, and her talk included a video of Buddhist monks which detailed their lives and routines. In Buddhism, the mind is the most important aspect of a person. The mind controls the body, soul, etc.

Dr. Shahla Haeri gave the second talk from an Islamic woman's perspective. She hoped to dissuade people who held previous "assumptions" about Muslim women being passive, submissive, or unintelligent. She emphasized that Pakistan had recently elected a woman as president—something the United States has yet to accomplish. She showed a video interviewing half a dozen women who had run or were running for government positions in Iran. The women—though veiled—were articulate, independent, thoughtful, intelligent, and perceptive. The next focus of her talk was on the misinterpretation of the veil in Muslim society. She explained that there are many reasons why a veil is worn. A veil should not make one unassuming or invisible; indeed it is very possible to be both veiled *and* assertive.

Dr. Eun Hee Shin delivered the third talk from the Shamanist perspective. Unlike most other world religions, the leaders of the Shamanist religion (the Shamans) are 90 percent women. These Shamans are mediators between this world and the spiritual world—similar to priests, prophets, and healers. There are two types of Shamans: possessed Shamans who are chosen by spirits, and hereditary Shamans, who come from Shamanistic families. After the talk, a video was played, which showed the rituals Shamans must perform in order to prove their power, such as licking knives, dancing in different costumes, or sitting on knives.

After lunch, the conference was no longer one person giving a lecture, but small group talks. In the groups of 4–5 people various questions were discussed, such as: What is the role of self in your religion? What is your concept of an afterlife? What would you tell people entering your faith tradition? In these small groups people felt comfortable enough to share some of their personal thoughts and feelings. One participant mentioned that the conference provided a "comfortable space" where she could be open with people that she had just met. Indeed, it was interesting to be in a group where the ideas were so diverse, yet a common thread in everyone's thoughts was respect and acceptance of another and her beliefs.

After the small groups, the larger group reconvened for an interfaith worship. Reverend LaTrelle Miller Easterling led the worship, but there were many participants who added their own touch to the service. During the worship, passages were read from many different faith traditions, including: Buddhism, Shamanism,

Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, and Zen. There were specific times for quiet reflection and meditation. There was also an emphasis on water and how it—as a life-sustaining element—is responsible for nourishing, cleansing, and healing. The service ended with each person turning to the person she or he was standing next to and thanking him or her for being gifts from the beloved to the world.

After the service, there was a dinner and time for last-minute discussions. The Women of the World conference left the participants with many different feelings. Much was learned and much was shared at the conference. Each woman and man who attended the conference learned something about another religion and through that learned something about her or his own religion. The knowledge and insight taken from the conference will no doubt be applied throughout the coming year as we wait for next year's conference. What I personally learned at the event could best be summed up by Maya Angelou: "We are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike." ♦

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW RESEARCH PROJECT

Katrina Hull

The Anna Howard Shaw Center is pleased to announce that this spring, the Center had its research proposal approved by the School of Theology. The research, which will begin within the next year, is aimed at understanding the experiences of immigrant women in their New England churches. The Shaw Center will conduct extensive interviews

with the women in their native languages to gain a better understanding of what they have been through in the United States. As the project gets going next semester and gains some momentum, there will be much more news to report. Look for a write-up in the next edition of the *Shaw Center Newsletter*. ♦





*Here's how you can help
carry on Anna's work...*

The Anna Howard Shaw Center at Boston University School of Theology seeks to support women in ministry through the center's research, education, support, and advocacy. If you would like to learn more about the Anna Howard Shaw Center, please fill out this form and return it to the address below. Thank you for supporting women in ministry!

Name _____

Address _____
Street

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____
(Home) _____ (Work) _____

I have attended a Shaw Center event. Yes No

Please send me information about the Anna Howard Shaw Center.

Please add me to the Shaw Center mailing list.

To help underwrite the Shaw Center's operating costs, I am enclosing \$ _____

Detach and mail this form with your check payable to the Anna Howard Shaw Center to:

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